

The Old Stone House

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THE OLD STONE HOUSE

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ABBREVIATIONS

Because of their frequent occurrence in the footnote references, the following words were abbreviated:

Library of Congress	- - -	LC
National Archives	- - -	NA
Hall of Records, Annapolis, Md.	- - -	HR
Georgetown	- - -	GT

INTRODUCTION

Acquisition of the Old Stone House by the National Park Service because of its architectural merit was approved by the Congress of the United States on September 25, 1950 (Public Law 836, 81st Cong.). Title was vested to the United States on March 17, 1953.

Although there may still remain a few possible sources of information concerning the Old Stone House, it was deemed advisable to prepare this preliminary account based on the original records searched up to the time of writing. It seems very likely that further research, which might be carried on over a long period of time, will fail to uncover any significant facts about the house. The following account, based primarily upon original source material, including recently discovered District of Columbia records never before used, is an attempt to determine and evaluate the historical significance of this early structure.

By virtue of the fact that the Old Stone House was built in 1766 and was for many years a witness to important events in the history of Georgetown and of the National Capital, it possesses a certain inescapable historical value.¹ However, tradition has in-

1. Hearings before the Subcommittee on Public Lands, House of Representatives, 81st Cong. 2d Sess. on H.R. 7722, April 27, 1950. During these hearings the following statement concerning the Old Stone House was made by Mr. William W. Wurster, Chairman of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission: ... it seems to me that the technical fact as to whether the little Old Stone House be proven to be a house occupied by Gen. Washington or not is not too important. At least, it has been proven that it looked out on events that happened in those years, which added such color to that period.

timately connected the structure with George Washington and Major Charles Pierre L'Enfant, the planner of the Nation's Capital. More recently, the house has been associated with that famous and elusive structure of Old Georgetown - Suter's Tavern.

In pursuing the study of the Old Stone House, it seemed imperative that an effort should be made to resolve by means of original historical sources the following four questions:

1. Was the Old Stone House Washington's Headquarters?
2. Was the Old Stone House L'Enfant's Headquarters?
3. Was the Old Stone House Suter's Tavern?
4. What was the actual use of the Old Stone House?

A study of all available original source material bearing on the period when Washington could have been associated with the Old Stone House has failed to uncover any documentary evidence which would prove that the house was used as his headquarters. It should be noted, however, that a vast amount of original records, which might have revealed a definitive answer to this most perplexing question, is no longer extant. The available records for this early period of history, which are incomplete and widely scattered, are thus the only records upon which this documentary study can be based. A close evaluation of facts surrounding the traditional story, however, tends to strongly substantiate the lack of evidence from original sources which would prove that the house was used for Washington's headquarters.



Old Stone House, 1931 (front view of structure facing south on M Street).

In the case of the L'Enfant story, there is proof that Major L'Enfant did not use the Old Stone House as a surveying headquarters.

Research has also proved that the Old Stone House was not Suter's Tavern. This statement is based on documentary evidence from original records of the actual period during which Suter's Tavern existed.

With respect to the fourth question on the use of the house, the examination of original records has revealed that certain prominent personages of early Georgetown were associated with the Old Stone House. The records further portray the house as a residence and as a place of business, which in later years seemed to be primarily used as a painter's and glazer's shop. Although the information derived from original sources failed to connect the structure in any way with George Washington, it should be remembered that the total amount of original documentary material bearing on the structure and its associations is very much limited.

It would seem that further research at such depositories as the Library of Congress, the National Archives, Maryland Hall of Records, Montgomery County Office Building, Title Insurance Companies, and other miscellaneous sources might bear little fruit over a long period of time. The full story of the use of the Old Stone House seems doomed to remain clouded by the passage of time. However, one small fact from original records added to the information thus far uncovered might unlock the door to this mystery. Such information may well exist in certain unknown private collections of documents. Up to

now, however, it has not been discovered.

Although this study based on original sources has been unable to follow the continuous chain of use of the Old Stone House, it has accomplished several important things. It has uncovered evidence which strongly indicates the structure was not used by Washington. It has proved that the Old Stone House was not L'Enfant's surveying headquarters, nor Suter's Tavern. Last, but far from least, it has determined through original evidence the original location of Suter's historic "Fountain Inn," the mystery which has baffled local historians for the last century. In addition, locations of other original Georgetown structures have been determined during the search. The indication that Washington did not use the house should not obscure the inherent value of the structure. For the Old Stone House remains a building of great architectural merit and one which stood witness to important events in the early history of our Capital City and our Nation.

CHAPTER I.

OWNERSHIP OF THE OLD STONE HOUSE PROPERTY

Prior to its purchase by the Federal Government in 1953, original lot 3, the Georgetown property on which the Old Stone House stands, was owned by a long succession of private individuals. In the original survey of Georgetown, which was completed on February 27, 1752, lot 3 was described as beginning at the end of one hundred thirty-four feet nine inches from post No. 1. Fronting on Bridge street, the lot measured 67 feet $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches westerly and 399 feet to the north.¹ On March 24, 1752, less than one month after the original survey of the town had been completed, lot 3 was sold by the Commissioners of Georgetown to John Clagett for 1 pound 10 shillings.²

Mr. Clagett, the first owner of the property, eventually had to forfeit lot 3 for failure to improve the ground with a substantial building in accordance with the requirements of the Maryland Colonial Assembly. On June 11, 1762, lot 3 was resold to John Boone for the sum of 1 pound 10 shillings.³ Boone also failed to fulfill the building requirements of improving the lot, and the Georgetown Commissioners reallocated it to Christopher Layman on June 11, 1764, for the same price.⁴ Layman, likewise, did not improve the property. Upon his

1. Minutes of the Georgetown Commissioners, 1751-1789, Vol. 1, p. 3 (LC).

2. Ibid., p. 15.

3. Ibid., p. 38.

4. Ibid., p. 41.

death, however, the lot came into the possession of his widow, Rachael.⁵ At the meeting of town Commissioners on June 11, 1766, lot 3 was listed as being improved with a substantial stone structure by Rachael Layhman.⁶ Thus, the date of construction of the Old Stone House may be definitely placed in the year 1766. Heretofore, architects of the Historic American Buildings Survey in 1934 had estimated the date of construction as being between 1764-1767. The actual year of construction revealed by the records of the Georgetown Commissioners fits perfectly into the architectural estimates of the 1934 survey.

After improving lot 3 with the Stone House, the widow Layhman married Jacob Furvey. In 1767, the woman who was to become one of the longest owners of the Old Stone House acquired the property, when on June 9th of that year, Rachael and Jacob Furvey sold lot 3 to Cassandra Chew in exchange for lot 62 in Georgetown and the sum of 100 pounds.⁷ Cassandra Chew, the new owner, provided that upon her death lot 3 should become the property of her two daughters Mary and Harriet with the further provision that should both daughters die without having heirs, the property would be conveyed to Robert Peter, merchant of Georgetown.⁸

In Robert Peter's will, signed May 10, 1802, provision was made that Cassandra Chew's daughter Harriet who was then Harriet Bruce would convey all her interest in lot 3 to her sister Mary Brunley.

5. Title Search of original lot 3 in Georgetown by Attorney Alfred B. Baker, Aug. 15, 1930. Case No. 169168 Records of Real Estate Title Insurance Co., and Columbia Title Insurance Co., Washington, D. C. p. 1.

6. Minutes of Georgetown Commissioners, op. cit., p. 42.

7. Liber K, folio 1322, Frederick County Land Records, 1748-1778 (HR) Annapolis, Md.

8. Liber K, folio 1324, Frederick County Land Records, (HR) Annapolis, Md.

In return, Harriot was to receive lot 29 on High street, upon the death of her mother, Cassandra Chew.⁹ Thus, Mary Brumley became the sole legal owner of the Old Stone House property upon the death of her mother in 1808, and continued possession of the property until her own death in 1826.¹⁰

In the will of Mary Brumley dated April 5, 1826, the Old Stone House and lot 3 was divided between her heirs as follows:

- $\frac{1}{2}$ to daughter Harriot Smith
- $\frac{1}{4}$ to daughter Cassandra Chew McKenzie
- $\frac{1}{4}$ to grand-children Sarah Maria and Ann Suter, children of Barbara and John Suter.¹¹

In 1835, Cassandra McKenzie conveyed her interest in the property to Sarah Maria Suter.¹² Harriot Smith and Sarah Maria (Suter) Bowe continued ownership of the property until 1874. On September 7, 1875, lot 3 was sold to Richard R. Marcey and Calvin Payne as tenants in common.¹³

On May 14, 1890, the heirs of Richard R. Marcey and Calvin Payne sold the lot 3 property to Morgan R. and James D. Goddard, brothers, as tenants in common.¹⁴ The Goddard brothers paid the sum of \$10,752.80

9. Liber F, folio 329, Will Book, Montgomery County Records, Rockville, Md.

10. Case No. 169168 Real Estate Title Insurance Co. and Columbia Title Insurance Co., op. cit. Although Mary Smith Brumley did not gain sole legal possession of the property until 1808, the property was listed under her name many years earlier in the Georgetown Tax assessment records.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Record Case No. 169168 Real Estate Title Insurance Co. and Columbia Title Insurance Co., op. cit.

14. Ibid.

for the property at that time.¹⁵ From thence, the property descended to Frederick J. Goddard and his sister, Alice D. Goddard. It was during the ownership of Frederick Goddard and his sister Alice that an historical marker referring to the Old Stone House as "George Washington's Headquarters while Surveying Washington in 1791" was placed on the structure. The owners, Frederick Goddard and his sister lived in their old family residence at 3077 Dumbarton Avenue. For many years Mr. and Mrs. James R. Davis lived as tenants in the Stone House, where they often graciously received the curious and interested visitors.

On April 2, 1940, five years after the death of his sister Alice, Frederick J. Goddard sold the Old Stone House property to Harris Levy and wife Rosa.¹⁶ From Harris Levy and his wife the property passed into the hands of Samuel Levy and other heirs. It was purchased from Samuel Levy and owners for the sum of \$90,000 by the United States Government on March 17, 1953.¹⁷

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15. Brief History of Lot 3 by Artemas Harmon, George Washington Bicentennial Records (MA).
 16. Record Case No. 174779, Records of Real Estate Title Insurance Co. and Columbia Title Insurance Co., Washington, D. C.
 17. Title transfer and acquisition verified by legal files of National Capital Parks.

CHAPTER 2.

CONSTRUCTION AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES OF THE OLD STONE HOUSE

On Wednesday, June 11, 1766, the minutes of the Georgetown Commissioners revealed that original lot No. 3 had been improved with a substantial building by Rachael Layman.¹ This substantial stone structure was the same Old Stone House which stands today at 3051 M Street, N. W., surrounded by the commercial stores and shops of a later and vastly different age.

Believed to be the oldest structure in the District of Columbia, the Old Stone House is a fine example of pre-Revolutionary architecture. In 1934, an architectural study of the building was made by the noted architectural historian, Thomas T. Waterman. Mr. Waterman observed that the house was T-shaped in plan, with a small wing in the rear projecting into the hill. The style was considered to be Pennsylvanian. In his architectural description of the house, Mr. Waterman noted that most of the exterior trim was original and that the east gable was of brick, laid in common bond and dating from about 1800. Various changes in the house seem to have been made about that time. Mr. Waterman found the old sash and frames to be excellent examples of their type and period. "To my knowledge," he said, "the Old Stone House is the only building in the District that the architecture identifies as one of the Pre-Revolutionary period."²

1. Minutes of the Georgetown Commissioners, 1751-1789, Vol. 1, p. 42.
(LC)

2. The New York Times, Monday, April 24, 1950, p. 16C.

Architect Waterman was especially interested in the mantel in the room on the second floor at the back and the fine old paneling, featuring large square panels divided by narrow and small square panes.³ The only similar paneling in America, he declared, is in the American wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.⁴ This similar paneling was that found in a room from Long Island taken from a house built about 1739.⁵

The second floor room in the Old Stone House is paneled on two sides to the ceiling with two closets with arched door heads which balance the fireplace on the north side.⁶ It is believed by architects that the interior paneling and trim were transplanted to the Old Stone House from an earlier location.⁷

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. R. M. Taylor, Washington's Headquarters in Georgetown, D. C. Public Library, p. 2.

6. Ibid.

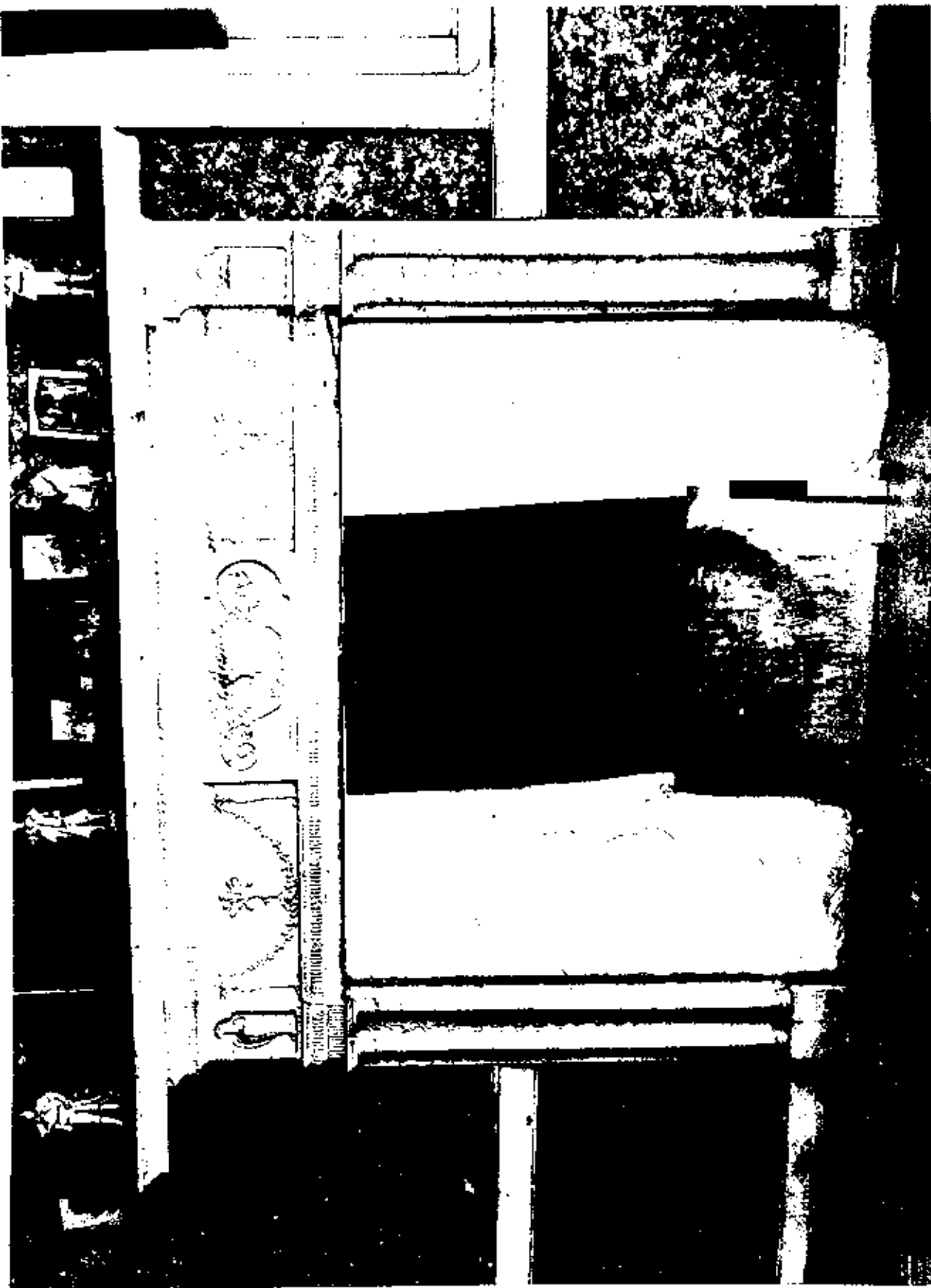
7. Davis, Dorsey, and Hall, Georgetown Houses of the Federal Period, Cornwall, N. Y.; p. 118.



Old Stone House - east elevation in 1934.



Old Stone House - northeast view from the rear in 1934.



Mantel in main room of Old Stone House - 1934.

CHAPTER 3

GEORGE WASHINGTON'S ENGINEERING HEADQUARTERS

The Old Stone House has often been referred to as George Washington's Headquarters. Although numerous attempts to prove this statement by documentary research have failed, the tradition has lingered on. However, a very common misconception of this traditional story has developed in recent years. In speaking to many persons concerning this tradition, it was discovered that the vast majority of them were thinking in terms of a military headquarters when the phrase "Washington's Headquarters" was mentioned in connection with the Old Stone House. This, of course, is a direct contradiction of the older traditional tale. For years, certain residents considered the house to have been Washington's Engineering Headquarters while surveying the new Capital in 1791. The traditional story gave no mention of a military headquarters, nor has there ever been any indications that Washington had any connections with the structure during the Revolutionary War.

As early as 1874, however, there was a plaque on the Old Stone House, stating that it was "George Washington's Engineering Headquarters."¹ A later historical marker placed there in 1899 referred to the structure as being "George Washington's Headquarters while surveying Washington in 1791." Thus it is plain to see that

1. Personal interview with Mrs. Alice Gibson, December 6, 1954.

the original tradition referred to the structure as a Headquarters for Washington only while the new Capital was being planned in 1791. Such a tradition in itself limits the time which Washington could have spent in the Old Stone House to a matter of a few days.

When did this traditional story begin. Mrs. Alice Gibson, a gracious lady now living in Arlington, vividly remembers the Old Stone House. In 1874, Mrs. Gibson, then a six year old child, lived in Georgetown across from the Old Stone House. She recalled that there was a plaque on the house stating that it was "George Washington's Engineering Headquarters."² At that time the structure was being used as a business establishment of some kind. Mrs. Gibson further stated that people commonly referred to the structure as Washington's Headquarters; and, moreover, that the local residents were very proud of the old house.³ Over the years this traditional story became firmly entrenched in the minds of Georgetown residents.

As a result of this lingering tradition, there were intermittent efforts on the part of local citizens to have the structure preserved as a historic shrine. Over a long period of time, however, a veritable army of professional and nonprofessional historians searched for evidence which would prove that the Old Stone House was Washington's Engineering Headquarters.

On December 22, 1929, a bill (H. R. 7393) was introduced in the House of Representatives by Representative Fred A. Britten.⁴ This

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Memorandum from Mrs. V. W. Woods to Sol Bloom, 1-13-32 Records of the George Washington Bicentennial Commission (NA).

bill proposed to make the structure known as Washington's Engineering Headquarters, a national monument and a unit of a national engineering museum.⁵ The sum of \$200,000 was requested for this project.

In the light of this impending legislation, an investigation was launched by local groups to determine authenticity of the traditional claims. Dr. George H. Richardson, a local historian, was assigned by the Citizens Advisory Council to investigate the history of the structure.⁶ Dr. Richardson later reported to this group that he had consulted with "all the present experts on Washington history" and had failed to find any confirmation whatsoever for the story.⁷

Buttressed with report, the Citizens Advisory Council on February 25, 1930 recommended strongly against the project to restore the "Headquarters of George Washington."⁸ With this strong recommendation against restoration at that time based on a near unanimous agreement of local historians that the Old Stone House was not "Washington's Headquarters," the proposed legislation failed to become law. Among the historical authorities consulted at that time was Allen C. Clark, long time President of the Columbia Historical Society. Mr. Clark stated categorically that there was no evidence to prove that the Old Stone House was Washington's Headquarters, and that he was firmly convinced that it was not. He said, "The face of the Old Stone House has been a haven of historical markers. These have been false in their message."⁹ Similar

5. Ibid.

6. Washington Evening Star, Feb. 26, 1930.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Allen C. Clark, "Suter's Tavern." Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Vol. 42-43, p. 117.

views were expressed by other local historians. Everyone seemed to agree that while the traditional story concerning the use of the house had acquired an increasing impetus, the critical evaluation of historical evidence failed completely to corroborate or to justify the traditional claims.¹⁰

A few years later researchers were employed by the George Washington Bicentennial Commission to attempt to find evidence which would prove the traditional story. These investigators also failed to uncover any pertinent evidence. In more recent years other persons interested in local history, including some well-qualified historians have carried on research on the Old Stone House and they too have joined the growing army of persons who failed to locate any documentary evidence to prove this strange tale of the past.

Although the strong tradition surrounding the Old Stone House may not be lightly discarded, a careful evaluation of events surrounding the old structure fails to support or strengthen the tradition in this instance.

The most serious deterrent, of course, is the inescapable fact that neither before nor in the recent research for this report, has any documentary evidence been unearthed to substantiate the claim that the structure was "Washington's Engineering Headquarters."

10. Ibid.

History is dependent upon facts based upon written records. Without such records, even in view of a lingering tradition, history cannot be written. In this aspect of the Old Stone House story, it would be impossible in view of the complete lack of written evidence to refer to the structure as the "Engineering Headquarters of George Washington."

In addition to the lack of documentary evidence to prove that the structure was Washington's Headquarters, there are other facts which strongly tend to bear out this strange lack of evidence. The strictest interpretation of the traditional story tells us that Washington is said to have used the Old Stone House as an Engineering Headquarters while the new city of Washington was being surveyed and planned in 1791. Not only does such an interpretation limit the time in which Washington may have been associated with the house to a single year, or month, but it confines the period to some few days. The question arises: Would George Washington establish a personal headquarters for such a short period of time?

Washington was vitally interested in the establishment of the new city. However, in 1791, he was the President of the United States and was located in Philadelphia, the Federal Capital. Notwithstanding his interest in the new capital on the Potomac, which had been authorized by the act of July 16, 1790, President Washington

was fully engaged in the new and exacting task of directing the new Government of the United States. During the time in which the city of Washington was planned and surveyed by Major L'Enfant, and assistants, it is a matter of record that the President was only able to be in the new federal district for 6 days. These days were full and active ones with numerous meetings and official acts. It would seem strange indeed that the President would have found time alone to set up an Engineering Headquarters. The actual work of effecting the original plan was after all assigned to Major L'Enfant, and much of the supervision of other public affairs was given to the three Federal Commissioners appointed by the President on January 22, 1791.¹¹

Major Charles Pierre L'Enfant, who had been selected by President Washington to plan the new Capital, arrived in Georgetown on March 9, 1791.¹² L'Enfant lodged at Suter's Tavern and immediately began preparations to plan and survey the federal district. The Mayor of Georgetown secured three or four men to assist the able planner.¹³

Toward the end of the month President Washington paid ^{his} first recorded visit of 1791 to Georgetown for the purpose of selecting sites for the public buildings and reaching an agreement with the original proprietors of the area. On the morning of March 28, 1791, the chief executive, traveling from Bladensburg, was met a

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11. Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799, edited by John C. Fitzpatrick; Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, Vol. 31, p. 200.
12. Letter from L'Enfant to the Secretary of State March 11, 1791. Diques-L'Enfant-Morgan Papers. MSS Div. (LC)
13. Ibid.

few miles out of town by the principal citizens and escorted to Suter's Tavern in Georgetown, where a public dinner was given in his honor.¹⁴ The President also lodged at Suter's Tavern in accordance with his long established custom. Prior to the dinner, President Washington examined the surveys of Mr. Ellicot and the works of Major L'Enfant, and made arrangements to examine the grounds the next day.¹⁵ There was no mention of a visit to his Headquarters. In fact, Washington examined the survey and plans at Suter's Tavern, where he had conducted so much official business during his days as President of the Potomack Canal Company.

On the forenoon of the 29th, the President inspected the grounds of the new city and received L'Enfant's suggestions on the location of the public buildings. That afternoon he met with the Federal Commissioners to expedite the arrangements with the original proprietors of the selected territory.¹⁶ In the evening the busy President spoke to the proprietors, whose procrastination was already causing him greatest concern.

On the third day March 30th, President Washington met with the original proprietors of the land on which the Federal City was to be established and reached a satisfactory agreement for the conveyance of lands to the Federal Government.¹⁷ That afternoon the

14. Washington's Diary, Monday, March 28, 1791.

15. Ibid.

16. Washington's Diary, March 29, 1791.

17. Ibid., March 30, 1791.

well-satisfied President left Georgetown for Alexandria and Mount Vernon. During this stay in Georgetown, President Washington resided at Suter's Tavern and conducted his important affairs there. There is every indication that his instructions to L'Enfant and Ellicott were given in Suter's Tavern, which had been the President's "headquarters" during his entire stay in the Federal District. There was never any mention of an Engineering or Surveying Headquarters during President Washington's brief but busy visit to the site of the new Capital.

The President's next visit to Georgetown during the crucial planning of the new Capital came three months later. On June 27, 1791, he arrived at Suter's Tavern in Georgetown to put the finishing touches to the location of the Federal City.¹⁸ Since the President's agreement with the original proprietors had been signed, certain misconceptions and misunderstandings had arisen in the minds of the proprietors. However, upon Washington's reappearance in June, all difficulties seemingly vanished. The proprietors of western and eastern sections of the Federal area cheerfully initiated the arrangements to carry out the requirements of their agreement of March 30th.¹⁹ On Tuesday June 28th, while the Commissioners were preparing the deeds to be signed by the proprietors, Washington inspected the new Federal district with Major L'Enfant and Mr. Ellicott.²⁰

18. Georgetown Weekly Ledger, July 2, 1791.

19. Ibid.

20. Washington's Diary, June 28, 1791.

The next day the President was greatly relieved when the deeds conveying the lands for the Capital were signed. On this day also while the proprietors and Commissioners were gathered at Suter's Tavern the President showed them the approved Plan of the Federal City, which had been completed by Major L'Enfant.²¹ The plan, which met with an enthusiastic response from all, showed clearly that the Capitol building was to be placed on Jenkins Hill on the land of Daniel Carroll of Muddington and that the President's House and other Departments were to be situated on the rising ground adjoining Hamburg, one mile from Georgetown.²²

Thus by June 29, 1791 the basic planning of the Federal City had already been finished. During the time when the new Capital was being planned by L'Enfant, Washington spent exactly six days in Georgetown. He resided at Suter's Tavern during all of that time as did L'Enfant who was working on the plan.²³ Thus, if any structure ever existed which could lay claim to being Washington's place of official business, it was Suter's Tavern. From extant documentary sources, it appears that Washington's so-called "Head-

21. Georgetown Weekly Ledger, July 2, 1791, p. 3.

22. Ibid.

23. John Suter's account against Major L'Enfant, Proceedings of the Commissioners, Georgetown, Jan. 9, 1792 (NA). Suter's original account against Major L'Enfant is quoted by Allen C. Clark in his article "Suter's Tavern" in the Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Vol. 42-43, p. 93, and also by Bessie Wilmarth Gahn in the book "George Washington's Headquarters in Georgetown," p. 36.

quarters" and Suter's Tavern were one and the same structure.²⁴ Subsequently we shall see that the Old Stone House was not Suter's Tavern. Consequently, in addition to a lack of evidence to support an "Engineering Headquarters for Washington," there is the added fact of Washington's steady use of Suter's Tavern - an entirely different structure from the Old Stone House. All that remains of the Old Stone House's claim as Washington's Headquarters is a strange lingering tradition of the past.

24. In the book "George Washington's Headquarters in Georgetown" Mrs. Bessie Wilmarth Cahn attempts to prove that the Old Stone House was Suter's Tavern. Since it was Suter's Tavern where L'Enfant stayed while he drew up the plan for the Federal City and where Washington resided while conducting official business in the Federal District, it was imperative that the Old Stone House and Suter's Tavern be connected as the same structure in order to give added weight to the theory that the Old Stone House was the headquarters of Washington and L'Enfant in connection with the plan and survey of the new Capital in 1791. Mrs. Cahn fails to prove by documentary evidence that the Old Stone House was Suter's Tavern. This failure to prove that the Old Stone House and Suter's Tavern were the same structure greatly weakens the claim of the former structure to be that of "George Washington's Engineering Headquarters" or "L'Enfant's Headquarters."

CHAPTER 4

MAJOR L'ENFANT'S HEADQUARTERS WHILE PLANNING THE CITY OF WASHINGTON

L'Enfant's Headquarters not located in Old Stone House

A second aspect of the traditional story involving the Old Stone House concerns its use by Major L'Enfant. A study of available documentary material shows that this story rests only upon the erroneous theory that the Old Stone House and Suter's Tavern were one and the same structure. Since it will be proven in a subsequent chapter on Suter's Tavern that the Old Stone House was not Suter's Tavern, the case for the Old Stone House as L'Enfant's Surveying Headquarters becomes precarious to say the least.

The attempt to connect L'Enfant with the Old Stone House seems moreover to be of recent origin. The first known marker placed on the structure about 1874, gave no mention of L'Enfant.¹ A later marker placed on the structure in 1899 by the Piram Ripley Society, children of the American Revolution called the building "George Washington's Headquarters while surveying Washington in 1791."² There was still no mention of L'Enfant. When Mrs. Bessie Wilmarth Gahn's book George Washington's Headquarters in Georgetown appeared in 1940, it supported the view that in addition to being Washington's headquarters, the Old Stone House

1. Personal interview with Mrs. Alice Gibson, Dec. 6, 1954.
2. Bessie Wilmarth Gahn, George Washington's Headquarters in Georgetown. Silver Spring, Md.: 1940 Press of Westland, p. 9.

had also been Suter's Tavern and L'Enfant's surveying headquarters.

The evidence gathered by Mrs. Gahn adequately supported the known fact that L'Enfant made both his headquarters and residence at Suter's Tavern.³ At the time, however, Mrs. Gahn was unable to prove by the use of substantial documentary evidence that the Old Stone House was Suter's Tavern. Moreover, recent evidence proves that Suter's Tavern could not have been the Old Stone House. In the light of this situation, it would be impossible to maintain that L'Enfant used the Old Stone House as a surveying office.

When L'Enfant arrived in Georgetown on March 9, 1791, he went directly to the Mayor as he had been instructed.⁴ Then the visionary Major took up his abode at the well-known Tavern of John Suter, and immersed himself in the task of planning the new city.⁵ He was later joined at Suter's by Andrew Ellicott and Baron De Graff.⁶ L'Enfant continued to reside at the famous hostelry and it was there that he executed the original plan of the new Capital. By March 26, 1791, the indomitable Frenchman had completed a full report on the

3. Oliver W. Holmes. "The Colonial Taverns of Georgetown." Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Vol. 51-52, p. 1. In this article Dr. Holmes stated that Suter's Tavern was "where L'Enfant, the city planner, and Ellicott, the city surveyor, had their headquarters and did their significant work. This fact is further supported by the original account of John Suter against Major L'Enfant and Mr. Ellicott thru Dec. 20th, of 1791, which may be found in the Proceedings of the Federal Commissioners, (NA).

4. Letter from L'Enfant to the Secretary of State, Mar. 11, 1791. Digges-L'Enfant-Morgan Papers, MSS. Div. (LC).

5. John Suter's account against Andrew Ellicott, Major L'Enfant, and Baron De Graff. Proceedings of the Commissioners, G. T. Jan. 9, 1792. (NA)

6. Ibid.

location of the Houses of Congress, President's house and other aspects of the new Federal District.⁷

When the President came to Georgetown on March 28 to confer with the original proprietors he was eager to examine L'Enfant's report on the new city. At Suter's Tavern where both men lodged, the President and his chosen planner discussed the proposed development of the new district.⁸ Three months later Washington exhibited L'Enfant's original plan to the proprietors with great satisfaction.

It seems very clear that L'Enfant's so-called headquarters or office was a room in Suter's Tavern. Further evidence supporting this view is given in the words of L'Enfant himself. In December of 1791, he had gone to Philadelphia to confer with the President on the new Capital. In his absence, the Federal Commissioners dismissed his assistant and workmen, adding fuel to the simmering differences that were brewing between L'Enfant and the Commissioners.⁹

In a sworn statement made by L'Enfant in 1803, the temperamental planner said that while he was in Philadelphia in December of 1791, a trunk and several boxes containing his official plans, engravings, and drawings as well as all his surveying equipment, his mathematical instruments and vouchers were "carried away from the place of his abode" by the Commissioners.¹⁰

7. Report of Major L'Enfant to President Washington, Mar. 26, 1791, C.T. L'Enfant Papers 1791-1805, MSS. Div. (LC).

8. Washington's Diary, Mar. 28, 1791.

9. Major L'Enfant's sworn affidavit before William Thornton, Feb. 8, 1803. Digges-Morgan-L'Enfant Papers, MSS. Div. (LC).

10. Ibid.

This statement and other collaborating information provided by L'Enfant shows that his office and his place of abode were one and the same.¹¹ Since we know that his place of abode while planning the city through December 20, 1791, was John Suter's Tavern, the inevitable conclusion is that L'Enfant's office was also located in Suter's Tavern. This information coupled with the knowledge that the Old Stone House was not Suter's Tavern, enables one to firmly state that L'Enfant did not use the Old Stone House in connection with the planning of the National Capital.

L'Enfant and his Difficulties

When Pierre Charles L'Enfant was chosen by President Washington to plan the Federal City, he looked upon his assignment as a great challenge. This brilliant artist who had fought upon the battlefield for American independence would not plan for but a single century, but for a thousand years.

Major L'Enfant was described as "a man marked by a stern independence of character in all circumstances and conditions ... one whom no motive of interest or temptation of convenience could sway from his purpose or induce to alter his plan to suit the taste or the purpose of his employers."¹² Because he had been personally selected for his task by Washington, L'Enfant considered himself accountable to no other authority than the President.¹³ Apparently

11. Because of this fact, it was imperative for Mrs. Gahn to attempt to prove that Suter's Tavern was located in the Old Stone House.

12. Typed MSS on Georgetown and Major L'Enfant. Taggart Papers, MSS. Div. (LC).

13. Ibid.

others in the new Federal District considered his power to be on par with that of the three Federal Commissioners. On April 12, 1792, Samuel Davidson told the Commissioners that L'Enfant's authority was generally considered to be of equal magnitude to their own.¹⁴

In spite of President Washington's great respect for Major L'Enfant's ability, he had entrusted full authority for all matters pertaining to the Capital City to the Federal Commissioners and he expected L'Enfant to cooperate with them. It was not long before difficulties arose between the planner and the Commissioners.

Both the Commissioners and the President desperately tried to soothe the anger of Daniel Carroll of Duddington, when Major L'Enfant had his house torn down because it obstructed the plans. President Washington advised Daniel Carroll that L'Enfant's "zeal in the public cause has carried him too fast."¹⁵ The President personally reprimanded L'Enfant for his action, as follows:

... Having the beauty, and harmony of your plan only in view, you pursue it as if every person and thing was obliged to yield to it; whereas the Commissioners have many circumstances to attend to, some of which, perhaps, may be unknown to you; which evinces in a strong point of view, the propriety, the necessity and even the safety of your acting by their direction ...¹⁶

Approximately three months later, the brilliant planner was relieved of his official duties. Thomas Jefferson wrote Major

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14. Letter from Samuel Davidson to the Commissioners, G. T. April 12, 1792 - Davidson Papers, MSS. Div. (LC).
 15. Letter from George Washington to Daniel Carroll of Duddington. Phila.: Dec. 2, 1791. Archives of Georgetown University.
 16. Letter from George Washington to Major L'Enfant, Phila.: Dec. 2, 1791. Digges-L'Enfant-Morgan Papers, 1778-1792, MSS. Div. (LC).

L'Enfant on February 27, 1792 that he had been instructed by the President to inform him that his services must be at an end.¹⁷ The President also wrote a personal letter to L'Enfant on the following day in which he assured the Major that his retention would have been most pleasing to him. But the Chief Executive also said:

...every mode has been tried to accommodate your wishes on this principle, except changing the Commissioners (for Commissioners there must be, & under their direction the public buildings must be carried on ...) to change the Commissioners cannot be done on ground of propriety, justice, or policy ...¹⁸

Thus the gifted and individualistic city planner was relieved of his official duties. However, for the better part of a year L'Enfant had been vitally concerned with the planning and development of the Federal City. In a few short months after his arrival in Georgetown he completed the original plan of the new Federal City, which was approved by the President and the Congress. Although certain changes and deviations were later made from this plan, the great National Capital even to this day follows the basic design of this man whose tomb now silently overlooks the city of "magnificent distances" which he planned over 160 years ago.

17. Copy of letter from Secretary of State to Major L'Enfant, Feb. 27, 1792. Digges-L'Enfant-Morgan Papers, MSS. Div. (LC)

18. Letter from George Washington to Major L'Enfant, Feb. 28, 1792. Digges-L'Enfant-Morgan Papers, MSS. Div. (LC)

CHAPTER 5.

USE OF THE OLD STONE HOUSE

It seems fairly evident that the Old Stone House was originally erected in 1766 by Rachael Layman as a private residence.¹ In the next year the structure was acquired again apparently for use as a private residence by Cassandra Chew.

Cassandra Chew and the Old Stone House

After long searching of geneological accounts, court records, and other sources, there still remains an aura of mystery about Cassandra Chew of Georgetown. John Chew, the recorded progenitor of the Chew family in Virginia and Maryland, came to Virginia in the ship "Charitie" in 1622.² He and his wife Sarah were living in Virginia in 1648, but removed to Maryland before 1659.³

We later find Joseph Chew, 1st and 2nd respectively, living in Anne Arundel and Prince Georges Counties, in Maryland.⁴ In 1767 Bennet Chew of Annapolis was prospering as a merchant and Samuel Chew of Herring Bay was engaged in shipping.⁵

However, nowhere in the geneological records of the Chew family is there a mention of a Cassandra Chew. This is odd, indeed, for there appears to have been as many as three women by that name;

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1. Minutes of the Georgetown Commissioners, 1751-1789, Vol. 1, p. 42 MSS. Div. (LC)
 2. The Chew Family. Records of Frank Chew Osburn, 1745, p. 3. Hall of Records, Annapolis, Md.
 3. Ibid, p. 11.
 4. Ibid, p. 15.
 5. Maryland Gazette, Jan. 29, 1767, p. 4.

unless, the Cassandra Chew of Georgetown moved about with amazing speed.

In 1764, Cassandra Chew acquired lot No. 62 in Georgetown.⁶ From all indications she was a resident of the town at that time. A few years later, in 1776, she was officially listed in the Georgetown census as residing there at the age of 47 years.⁷ Less than one year earlier, however, a Cassandra Chew of Cecil County, Maryland, was shown as administratrix of the estate of her deceased husband, Phineas Chew.⁸ From all indications this was not the Cassandra Chew of Georgetown. A few years later this widow of Phineas Chew married Samuel Durbin.⁹ In addition to the Cassandra Chews of Georgetown and Cecil County, records show that in 1790, Cassandra Chew was married to Nathaniel Calder in Frederick County.¹⁰ At this very time in Georgetown, Cassandra Chew was listed as being resident of said town and there were no indications of a change in marital status. Thus, it appears that there may have been as many as three individuals bearing the name Cassandra Chew. Yet, strange as it may seem, this name was never mentioned in the geneological Chart of the Chew family.

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6. Minutes of the Georgetown Commissioners, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
 7. Census of 1776 for Frederick County, Box 2, Folder 8, p. 17. Hall of Records, Annapolis, Md.
 8. Accounts, 1775. Liber 12, folio 71. Hall of Records, Annapolis, Md.
 9. Chancery Records 1787. Liber 15, p. 271, Hall of Records, Annapolis, Md.
 10. Frederick County Marriage Records, 1779-1798, p. 35. Hall of Records, Annapolis, Md.

On June 9, 1767, Cassandra Chew purchased original lot 3 in Georgetown from Rachael and Jacob Furvey "for and in consideration of lot No. 62 ... and 100 lbs. current money."¹¹ Thus, she came into possession of the Old Stone House property. On June 10, 1767, one day later, Cassandra provided that upon her death or marriage lot 3 should become the property of her two daughters, Harriet and Mary Chew. In the event her daughters should both die without heirs, lot 3 was to become the property of Robert Peter, the pioneer merchant of Georgetown.¹² The relationship between Cassandra Chew and Georgetown's wealthy merchant and first mayor is further indicated by a Deed of gift, also dated June 10, 1767. In the words of this deed Robert Peter gave to Cassandra Chew and her daughters lot 29 "for and in consideration of the love and affection which I have and do bear unto Cassandra and her daughters, Mary and Harriet Chew and for divers other good causes and consideration."¹³ In the event that Mary and Harriet should die without heirs, the lot was to go to Mr. Peter's brother, Alexander in Glasgow.

Cassandra Chew may have resided in the Old Stone House for a time after she acquired it in 1767, for at that time most of

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11. Frederick County Land Records, 1748-1778. Liber K, folio 1322, Hall of Records, Annapolis, Md.
 12. Frederick County Land Records, 1748-1778. Liber K, folio 1324, Hall of Records, Annapolis, Md.
 13. Ibid.

the structures in the block were being used as private homes. It was only after 1800 that this section of Bridge Street began to house numerous commercial shops.¹⁴

By 1790, however, it appears that she was residing in the structure at lot 29, which had been given to her by Robert Peter. Mrs. Chew and one other white female, apparently her daughter Harriet, were listed as occupying the same abode in the 1790 Census.¹⁵ However, the older daughter Mary who had married Richard Smith, was listed separately in the same Census. From all indications Mary lived in the Old Stone House on lot 3, which eventually became her sole property.¹⁶

The tax assessment records for Georgetown in 1793, show that Cassandra Chew's property at lot 29 was valued at 250 pounds.¹⁷ In this same year the property listed under the name of her daughter Mary Smith, which was in all probability the Old Stone House, was

14. Direct Tax Records for Georgetown 1798, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Md.

15. First Census of the U. S. Maryland, Montgomery County (NA).

16. Robert Peter's Will. Montgomery County Will Book, Liber F, folio 329, Rockville, Md. (Robert Peter provided in his will of May 10, 1802 that within three months after the death of Cassandra Chew, daughter Harriet would convey all her interest in the Old Stone House property or lot 3 to sister Mary Brunley. In return Harriet was to receive lot 29 after the death of her Mother.)

17. Account of Lots and Houses in Georgetown assessment Book, 1793-1797. Montgomery County Records.

valued at 400 pounds.¹⁸ Two years later, the tax records also show that the structure at lot 29 in which Mrs. Chew lived, was a substantial 2-story Brick Dwelling.¹⁹ At this time two household servants, one male the other female, were listed among the personal property of Cassandra Chew.²⁰

In 1800, Mrs. Chew was listed as owning 6 Negroes.²¹ It would appear that her financial circumstances were adequate for a rather gracious mode of living in Old Georgetown.

In 1802, Cassandra was still living at lot 29.²² It had been provided in Robert Peter's will that she would remain there for the rest of her natural life. It is believed that she died in 1808, or shortly thereafter.²³

Although relatively little is known about Cassandra Chew, much is known of the man who showed such kindness to her and her daughters. Robert Peter, Georgetown's pioneer merchant, opened his Rock Creek store in 1752. He soon became a prosperous and highly respected citizen of the community and early engaged in vast real estate speculation. His land holdings became fabulous and they included many tracts in Maryland as well

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18. Accounts of Lots and Houses in Georgetown. Assessment Book, 1793-1797. Montgomery County Records.
 19. Direct Tax Records for Georgetown, 1798, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Md.
 20. Tax Assessment Book, 1798-1812. Montgomery County Records, Rockville, Md.
 21. Georgetown Assessment Book, 1800-07, District of Columbia Records.
 22. Robert Peter's Will. Montgomery County Will Book, Liber F, folio 329.
 23. Title Search of original lot 3 in Georgetown by Attorney Alfred B. Baker, Aug. 15, 1930, p. 3; Case No. 169168. Records of the Real Estate Title Insurance Co. and Columbia Title Insurance Co.

as lots in Georgetown and Washington. It was not unusual at all to see newspaper ads that Robert Peter was selling 12 or 14 lots at a time.²⁴ His house stood on High Street just south of the later Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. He also owned the whole block between Congress (31st) Street and High Street (Wisconsin Ave.) up to Bridge (M) Street. It was known as "Peter's Square."²⁵ However, in addition to his local business and real estate holdings, he was the agent of John Glassford and Company, of North Britain, which monopolized much of the Potomac River tobacco trade.²⁶ He also had the distinction of being Georgetown's first Mayor. At about the age of 40 Robert Peter married Elizabeth Scott of Prince George's County, Md.²⁷ Eight children were born to this union.

Robert Peter's solicitous concern for the welfare of Cassandra Chew is shown by his gift of lot 29 to her in 1767.²⁸ Mr. Peter further provided for the welfare of her two daughters. In the case of the eldest daughter, Mary, his interest reached beyond his own death. For he appointed his relative John Peter to act as trustee for Mrs. Mary (Smith) Brunley (in 1802 after

24. Virginia Journal and Alexandria Advertiser, July 28, 1785, p. 1.

25. Grace Dunlop Ecker Portrait of Old Georgetown, p. 66.

26. Hugh Taggart "Old Georgetown," Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Vol. XI, pp. 167-68.

27. John Claggett Proctor "Early Georgetown History," Evening Star, May 15, 1938.

28. Frederick County Land Records, 1748-1778, Liber K, folio D24 (HR).

after death of her first husband Mary was married to Joseph Brumley) about 1802.²⁹ Upon the death of the first trustee, Robert Peter appointed his own son, Thomas Peter, to be Mary's trustee.³⁰

In 1801, a few years before his own death Robert Peter purchased the five Negro slaves of Mary Chew Smith for the price of \$2,000.³¹ A year later he placed the same Negro slaves "and their future increase unto John Peter ... in trust for the sole and exclusive use of the said Mary Brumley." Mr. Peter also absolved Mary from all debts which she owed to him. In his will signed May 10, 1802 he also made certain that Mary was to receive full title to the Old Stone House property upon the death of her mother.³² Thomas Peter, son of Robert, carried out his father's wishes in assisting Mary in her legal transactions. In 1812 he and Mary Brumley sold a 7-month old Negro boy to Matilda Hawkins for \$1.00. They also jointly gave the Negro servant Matilda her freedom in consideration of \$200.00.

Cassandra Chew's younger daughter Harriet was also assured by the will of Robert Peter of eventually gaining full possession of lot 29, where her mother resided during most of her days in Georgetown. Harriet later married and was known as Harriet Bruce. When she was but twelve years of age, however,

29. Bessie Wilmarth Gahn "Georgetown's Historic Taverns," Washington Post, December 15, 1940.

30. Robert Peter's will signed May 10, 1802. Montgomery County Will Records, Liber F, folio 329.

31. Montgomery Land Records, Liber I, folio 381.

32. Robert Peter's Will. Montgomery County Will Records, Liber F, folio 329.

lot 44 in the Beatty-Hawkins Addition to Georgetown was acquired for her. This lot was purchased on March 15, 1771 for 1 pound and was recorded under the ownership of 12 year old Harlot Peters (alias) Chew.³³ In 1800 it appears that Harlot was still living with her mother Cassandra Chew, at lot 29 in Georgetown, for in addition to Harlot, one free female over 45 years and one free male under 10 years were listed in the 1800 Census as living at the same residence.³⁴ It is strongly believed that these individuals were the mother and son respectively of Harlot Bruce. The view that Cassandra Chew was living with daughter Harlot is further substantiated by the fact that both the 1790 and 1800 Census indicated that two women corresponding in age to mother and daughter were living at the same residence.³⁵ In 1790, however, Cassandra Chew was listed as head of the household; while, in 1800 Harlot Bruce was listed as such.

Upon the death of Cassandra Chew, daughter Harlot received lot 29 on High Street. In 1815 she was still residing at this location and her 2-story brick house was assessed for \$1,800.³⁶ It is most interesting to note that Harriot was also assessed for lot 44 in Georgetown which had been given to her when she was but a child of twelve.

33. Original list showing purchase of lots in Beatty-Hawkins Addition, July 1, 1770. Peabody Room, Georgetown Branch of the D. C. Public Library.

34. Census of 1800 for District of Columbia (NA).

35. First Census of the U. S. for Maryland. (Montgomery County) and the 1800 Census for the District of Columbia (NA).

36. Georgetown Assessment Book D. C. Records.

Mary Smith Brumley and Use of the Old Stone House
1790 - 1800.

In 1790, while Cassandra Chew and daughter Harriot were living at lot 29, the eldest daughter Mary was residing at lot 3 in the Old Stone House. Apparently a widow by this time she was listed as head of the family under the name Mary Smith.³⁷ Although in later years Mary rented or leased the Old Stone House to various persons for a place of business, the first evidence of such a practice does not appear until the year 1800.³⁸ Thus, it may very well be that during the decade from 1790 to 1800, Mary Smith may have used the Old Stone House exclusively as a private residence. Such a use would coincide with the historical fact that prior to 1800 the block of Bridge Street bounded by Congress and Washington Streets was primarily of a residential character. In 1793, Mary was assessed for the Old Stone House and lot 3, the property being valued at \$400.³⁹ The extant tax assessment records follow this same property in the name of Mary Smith without interruption through to 1798.⁴⁰

It would have been during the period of 1790 to 1800, when the Old Stone House was owned and occupied by Mary Smith, the daughter of Cassandra Chew, that the structure could have

37. First Census of the U. S. for Maryland (Montgomery County) (NA).

38. Georgetown Assessment Book 1800-1807. D. C. Records.

39. Account of Lots and Houses in Georgetown. Assessment Book 1793-1797. Montgomery County Records.

40. Account of Lots and Houses in Georgetown. Assessment Book 1798-1812. Montgomery County Records.

been used by George Washington and Major L'Enfant. To date there has not been any documentary evidence uncovered to show that Washington either visited the house or used it as a headquarters in 1791. There is documentary evidence, however, which proves that the structure could not have been used by L'Enfant and was certainly not Suter's Tavern. Thus, on the basis of available historical records, we are confronted with the following picture. In the significant year 1791, around which the traditional story of the old structure has developed, the Old Stone House was listed under the name of Mary Smith, who it appears used the structure for her private residence. Although the very strong indication is that the Old Stone House was never used by George Washington during this time, it is quite possible to assume that many well-known Georgetown residents may have visited in the house. It is certainly very probable that Robert Peter, the first mayor of the town may have visited Mary Smith at her residence by virtue of their close friendship. It was by means of his will that she received full ownership of the property. Perhaps other nearby neighbors such as Thomas Corcoran, the great financier, also may have spent time in the Old Stone House.

Use of Old Stone House after 1800.

In 1800 the widow Mary Smith rented a house and lot on Bridge Street to John Suter, Jr.⁴¹ This appears to have been the Old Stone House itself rather than the structure immediately east of the Old Stone House on lot 3. This brings up the interesting fact that prior to 1800 and for some years later there were two structures on lot 3.⁴² The Old Stone House was located on the western portion of the lot fronting approximately 17-20 feet on Bridge Street. The second structure just east of the Old Stone House fronted Bridge Street for 16 feet.⁴³ John Suter, Jr. did not rent the structure on lot 3 for a residence, but rather for a watch-maker's shop, a business in which he engaged after leaving the Union Tavern.⁴⁴ He also owned a structure on lot 53 in Georgetown which he had been using as a residence.⁴⁵

At this point it should be clearly understood that John Suter, Jr. was the son of Suter, Sr., who had operated the famous Georgetown tavern known as Suter's Tavern or the "Fountain

41. Georgetown Assessment Book 1800-1807, D. C. Records.

42. Early Map of Georgetown prior to 1800.—Copy of original (now missing) from the Archives of the Society of Oldest Inhabitants. This excellent but little known map shows early structures located on the lots and gives names of the residents.

43. Title Search of original lot 3 in Georgetown by Attorney Alfred Baker, Aug. 15, 1930. Case No. 169168. Records of Real Estate Title Insurance Co. and Columbia Title Insurance Co., Washington, D.C.

44. Washington Federalist Nov. 10, 1804, p. 4. (Copy in the Boston Athenaeum).

45. Direct Tax Records for Georgetown 1798. Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Md. (It was also verified by the Census of 1800 that John Suter, Jr. was residing in Georgetown at that time.)

Inn" from 1783-1794. Upon the death of the elder Suter, his widow operated the tavern for one year and it then passed into the hands of other individuals. In 1796, the eldest son John Suter, Jr. operated the Union Tavern at Washington and Bridge Streets in Georgetown. However, this was a separate and distinct structure from the original Suter's Tavern which had been operated earlier by Suter's father. It is important at this point to grasp the simple distinction between father and son. For this very distinction is completely confused and muddled in the account of the Tavern in the W. P. A. Writer's Guide to Washington and other published material.⁴⁶

Thus, the renting of the Old Stone House in 1800 by John Suter, Jr. for use as a watchmaker's shop, has no bearing whatsoever on the supposed use of the Old Stone House as a tavern. John Suter, Jr., of course, did have a close relationship with the family of Mary Smith, since he married Barbara Smith, the daughter of Richard and Mary Smith. This relationship is carefully pointed out by Mrs. Bessie Gahn in her book on the Old Stone House. Mrs. Gahn also states John Suter, Sr.

⁴⁶. Washington City & Capital. Federal Writer's Project (W.P.A.) Washington 1937 U.S. Government Printing Office, p. 724. Herein is given a confused account stating that John Suter who operated the "Fountain Inn" bought the Union Tavern in 1800. Facts of course show that John Suter who operated the "Fountain Inn" died in 1794 and his son John Suter, Jr. acquired the Union Tavern in partnership in 1796. Such glaring discrepancies in the accounts of history do not make the task of historians working in Georgetown history an easy one.

had known Cassandra Chew, the grandmother of his son's wife. However, in attempting to prove that the Old Stone House was Suter's Tavern (1783-1794), Mrs. Gahn's entire case was based on the following assumption:

... It could hardly be surmised, in fact, that Suter would have opened his tavern elsewhere. His neighbor in Montgomery County, Mrs. Mary Smith, and her Mother (Mrs. Cassandra Chew of Georgetown), had an interest in the tavern property on lot 3 ...⁴⁷

The above assumption is not supported by documentary evidence in Mrs. Gahn's book. However, from this assumption, Mrs. Gahn goes on to carefully record the general history of Suter's Tavern as if it had already been proven that the tavern was located in the Old Stone House. It will be clearly shown in the following chapter that the Old Stone House was not Suter's Tavern.

Returning to John Suter, Jr., it seems that he discontinued his watchmaking business in the Old Stone House for a time after 1800, but that he had resumed business in 1804. The Washington Federalist of November 10, 1804, states the John Suter, Jr. has "resumed business on Bridge Street, a few doors west of Union Tavern."

47. Gahn, op. cit. p. 30. Mrs. Gahn offers no documentary evidence to warrant the reference to the lot 3 property as the "Tavern property."

By 1804, Mary Smith had married for the second time to Joseph Brunley. In this same year while John Suter, Jr. was renting the Old Stone House for his watchmaker's shop from her, Mary Smith Brunley, along with her mother and younger sister, who still shared an interest in the property, leased the structure just east of the Old Stone House to Joel Brown.⁴⁸ The lease, which was extended to run 5 years from the date and the death of Cassandra Chew, called for an annual rental of \$12. In this structure which stood just east of the Old Stone House Joel Brown operated a Hatter's shop.⁴⁹

Thus, in 1804, the Old Stone House was being used as a watchmaker's shop and the building adjoining was a hatter's shop. It is not definitely known whether or not Mary Smith Brunley and her husband continued to live in the Old Stone House while John Suter, Jr. operated his watch shop. It is not known exactly how long Suter, Jr. continued his business in the Old Stone House. He was still on Bridge Street in 1805. On August 28, 1808, however, Mary Smith and her mother leased the structure to William Clark for ten years.⁵⁰ In this lease the Old Stone House was described as "beginning at the southwest corner of Joel Brown's Hatter's shop, thence west for 17' 6" ...". This corresponds

48. Case No. 169168. Records of Real Estate Title Insurance Co. and Columbia Title Insurance Company, *op. cit.*

The above title case shows conclusively that he occupied a structure east of the Old Stone House.

49. *Ibid.*

50. *Ibid.*

to the exact location of the Old Stone House. William Clark used the house for a tailor's shop. Here it may be of interest to point out that hardly would a watchmaker and a tailor have rented a structure of such commodious size as Suter's Tavern. However, in the Old Stone House they found a small structure ideal for their requirements. Apparently William Clark was still using the house in 1814, for the National Intelligencer notes that "William Clark, merchant, tailor on Bridge Street has a handsome assortment of fine clothes and cashmeres."⁵¹ It is quite probable that Clark continued business at this stand for the full term of the lease, which would have been 1818. In that year the lot 3 property was assessed under the name of Joseph Brunley and valued at \$8,000.⁵²

Records do not disclose who immediately followed William Clark in the Old Stone House after 1818. Descendants of Philibert Rodier, Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company engineer and designer of the Wisconsin Avenue Bridge, maintain that Rodier and his family resided in the Old Stone House in 1830.⁵³ Although there are no extant records to verify this, it seems quite probable for the Georgetown Directory of 1830 lists Rodier as residing on Bridge Street near Washington Street.⁵⁴ This is about as close a location to the Old Stone House other than the actual address that

51. Gahn, op. cit., p. 24.

52. Georgetown Assessment Book 1818, D. C. Records.

53. C. & O. Canal Records (N.A.) and personal interview with descendants of Philibert Rodier.

54. Georgetown Directory, 1830, D. C. Public Library, p. 13.

can be found. Diverting for a moment from straight historical fact, could it be that the strange tradition of the little structure being known as "An Engineering Headquarters"/^{could} somehow have been connected with C. & O. Canal engineer, Rodier. This French engineer might well have done some of his engineering work at his residence. Of course this would have been 31 years after the death of George Washington. However, it is not out of the realm of possibility that Washington's name may somehow have been associated with Rodier's later activities in the structure. Was not Washington promoter of Potomac Canal Company, and the Potomac route to the west. Even today, many people are confused in believing he also was the active founder of the later C. & O. Canal Company, which began some 29 years after his death. It is, of course, very possible that back in the 1830's, Washington's name (perhaps because of his early canal activities) might have been associated with the activities of the C. & O. Canal engineer, Philibert Rodier. The above statements, of course, are only suppositions; however, they may well offer a clue to the origination of Washington's vague connection with the Old Stone House. How such a distant connection may have been altered to become "Washington's Engineering Headquarters while Planning the City in 1791" it is difficult to say. To repeat, there exists no evidence to substantiate this latter claim.

We have seen from original records that during the critical period of 1791, when the Old Stone House would have been used by Washington according to tradition, the structure was owned by Mary Smith. It is quite probable that the owner resided there for a number of years. In 1800, the Old Stone House was rented to John Suter, Jr. for a watchmaker's shop. In 1808, it was again leased for 10 years to William Clark for his tailor's shop. The use subsequent to 1791, of course, does not help the old tradition. It does, however, show that the structure was used by small businessmen or merchants - a use which continued in later years.

To illustrate this latter conformity in use, early Georgetown resident Mrs. Alice Gibson who lived across from the Old Stone House as a child with her parents Mr. and Mrs. William Collins, remembers that the structure was used as a small commercial shop of some kind in 1874.⁵⁵ She remembers also playing in front of the structure with other small children. It is very significant that Mrs. Gibson keenly remembers that no one ever thought of the structure as Suter's Tavern, which was located in some other part of the city.⁵⁶ This is very important because recent efforts to prove the tradition that Washington and L'Enfant used the house have all rested on ultimately proving the structure to be Suter's Tavern.

⁵⁵. Personal interview with Mrs. Alice Gibson, Dec. 6, 1954.

⁵⁶. Ibid.

An early photograph of the structure judged to be approximately 1879-1890, shows the following sign on the Old Stone House, "House Painting - Graining and Glazing." The second building a one-story frame to the east contains a "Cigar Store."⁵⁷ This photograph conforms precisely to information supplied in the Washington Directory which shows that a John M. Stallings, painter, was using the Old Stone House from 1879 to 1890.⁵⁸

Returning to Mrs. Gibson, this gracious lady recalled that while no one called the Old Stone House Sutar's Tavern, there was mention of the house as Washington's Headquarters.⁵⁹ Could this have developed from the fact that Philibert Rodier, the engineer who worked on the great Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, once lived in the house and there he may have worked on the plans which brought about the realization of Washington's early dream of effecting a continuous water route up the Potomac Valley. Traditional stories have developed and expanded on such slight and distant connections in the past.

57. Photograph of the Old Stone House - with historical notes. Georgetown Branch of D. C. Public Library.

58. Washington Directories, 1860-1890, D. C. Public Library.

59. Ibid.

GEORGE
PEARSON



Old Stone House, 1879-1890. Structure in use by J. M. Stallings, House Painter.

CHAPTER 6

SUTER'S TAVERN

In 1783, John Suter opened the doors of the "Fountain Inn" in Georgetown. Here the best in food, drink, lodging, and entertainment was enjoyed under the direction of this genial host from Scotland. His Tavern soon became the favorite rendezvous of local citizens and personalities of national importance for both pleasure and business.

The Tavern became more than a mere house of entertainment. It served regularly as the official meeting place for the Potomack Canal Company, The Georgetown Bridge Company, the Commissioners of Georgetown, and other business and municipal organizations.

George Washington, in the years prior to and during his Presidency, often made the inn of John Suter his "official headquarters" when stopping in Georgetown. Thomas Jefferson, likewise, was a regular patron of Suter's. While Minister to France, he declared, "no man on the Atlantic coast can bring out a better bottle of Madeira or Sherry than old Suter."

Of far greater significance, Suter's Tavern may well be called the birthplace of the Nation's Capital, for it was there that the agreement between President George Washington and the original proprietors of the lands selected for the National Capital was signed. There Major Pierre Charles L'Enfant pains-

takingly toiled over and completed his original plan of the Federal City. There also, the three Federal Commissioners, appointed by President Washington in 1791, established their office, from whence they directed the public building program and the general development of the new Capital. In the days when the tavern of John Suter boasted a distinguished list of regular patrons, including such personages as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Pierre L'Enfant, and Benjamin Stoddert, it was often the scene of events of profound national significance.

Washington's Most Unusual Mystery

After the death of John Suter in 1794, his widow Sarah continued to operate the illustrious "Fountain Inn" for one year. Beginning in 1796, however, the historic structure passed into the hands of others, thereby initiating a period of successive operation by several different individuals. With the passage of the original tavern building from the possession of the Suter family, there was laid the germ for a seemingly insoluble mystery - one which has intrigued and baffled local historians to this very time. "Where was Suter's Tavern located?" This was the mystery, which in spite of the repeated efforts directed towards its solution, somehow defied and exasperated those who laboriously sought the answer.

How, it may be asked, could the location of such a famous structure become lost in the passage of time? The answer is relatively simple. In Georgetown during the days when John Suter

operated his tavern, it was the custom to never mention specific street addresses. In the myriad of references to Suter's Tavern amid the original correspondence of George Washington, the official records of the Federal Commissioners, the Potomack Canal Company, Georgetown Board of Aldermen, and newspapers the simple phrase "Suter's Tavern" appeared again and again. This was all that was needed, for everyone knew where Suter's was. In fact, it was so well-known that an address would have been superfluous. However, as time passed, the uniform absence of this small item added to the disappearance of many original records of Georgetown provided the great challenge to local historians. The fact that Suter rented his tavern property rather than owned it made the task even more difficult.

The location of Suter's Tavern gradually became the most controversial subject of local history. A veritable army of persons delved into the records in varying degrees, determined to settle the mystery for once and all. Eminent historians were included among those who became intrigued by this challenge. Some spent many hours going over the voluminous records of the Federal Commissioners and other records for clues to this most unusual mystery. In the process, of course, numerous locations resulted and each of these soon found its supporters. However, none of the suggested locations could be supported by original documentary evidence from the period in which Suter operated his

his tavern. The mystery continued.

More recently, one author introduced the thesis that Suter's Tavern and the Old Stone House at 3051 M Street were one and the same structure. Such a statement beared careful investigation. It was soon discovered that the whole tradition of the Old Stone House as "Washington's Headquarters" and "L'Enfant's Surveying Office" depended upon proving that the Old Stone House was also the original Suter's Tavern building.

A strenuous effort was made to determine the actual location of Suter's Tavern. On such a disputed point there could be no allowance for error. It was fully realized that the original location had to be supported by original documentary evidence in order to be accepted. Up until this time none of the previous locations offered had been accompanied by such evidence. In undertaking such a search, a historian is often required to use every possible approach.

Title records of numerous original Georgetown lots were thoroughly searched. The complete records of real estate transactions of certain Georgetown citizens were studied from the original Montgomery County Land Records. Various depositories of Georgetown records in Washington, Annapolis, Md., and as far distant as Boston were searched for material bearing on the Old Stone House and Suter's Tavern.

During this time, considerable information on the history of Suter's Tavern was compiled. Circumstantial evidence strongly indicated that the Old Stone House could never have been Suter's Tavern. A partial inventory of John Suter's Tavern equipment alone contained many more items than could have been adequately accommodated in the Old Stone House.¹ However, the search went on for that written evidence from original records of the period in which Suter operated his tavern, which would prove the correct location.

Relatively early in the search, the biography of John Suter, written by his descendent Mary D. Suter, was located in the Washingtoniana section of the D. C. Public Library. Concerning the location of her ancestor's tavern, Mary Suter stated:

It was this long, low building (Suter's Tavern) at what is now the Northwest corner of Water and Congress St. (31st) Street, that Washington purchased the site for the Capital. In later years it became an oyster house and a restaurant, but in early days it was the last proud word in "Tavern keeping." This was "Suter's Tavern," the famous hostelry of George Washington, Jefferson, and all the other statesmen who journeyed over the miserable road that led from their homes to Philadelphia, then the temporary Capital ...²

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1. Montgomery County Will Records. Liber C folio 182, the Inventory of John Suter, dated December 23, 1794.
 2. Mary D. Suter, "Biography of John Suter," Washingtoniana Section, District of Columbia Public Library.

The location for Suter's Tavern as given by Mary D. Suter corresponds identically to the present-day northwest corner of K and 31st Streets in Georgetown and was once a part of original lot 68 of Peter's Square in old Georgetown.³ Although Mary Suter's statement was not accompanied by documentary evidence, it will be shown how this author ultimately unearthed the original documentary evidence to prove that the original Suter's Tavern was located at this same northwest corner of present-day K and 31st Streets in Georgetown.

For some time after the above site for Suter's Tavern was noted, sufficient documentary evidence which would prove

3. Case No. 8873, Records of the District Title Company, Washington, D. C.; the original plat of Georgetown; Baiste Real Estate Surveys of Washington, D. C. A careful study of early Georgetown maps indicates that the present northwest corner of K and 31st Streets was once part of original lot 68, and that the street names had been changed several times. The Minutes of the Georgetown Commissioners show that lot 68 was first purchased by John Cooke on March 24, 1752. It was acquired by Robert Peter in 1760 and apparently improved a short time later with a substantial dwelling. In the original plat of Georgetown, this huge lot was bounded on the northwest corner by Wapping Street on the south and Fishing Lane on the east. By 1799 Causeway Street had been cut through just south of the above corner and Fishing Lane had been changed to Congress Street. Still later, the Bussard Map of 1830 shows Causeway Street had been changed to Water Street, which ran all along the Georgetown waterfront to Rock Creek. Water Street later became K Street in modern Georgetown, and Congress Street became 31st Street. The Water Street mentioned herein ran in an east-west direction and is entirely different from that part of Wisconsin Avenue which ran south from M Street to K Street and which was known also as Water Street in the early days of Georgetown - prior to 1830. The map study of this location is fully substantiated by the legal title to lot 72 which was that part of original lot 68 bounded by K and 31st Streets in Georgetown or Water and Congress streets as the location was remembered by Mary Suter.

the location failed to appear. However, just as another historian was about to join the army of searchers who had given up hope of finding the location, new information was uncovered.

In a search for early photographs of Georgetown structures at the Prints and Photographic Section of the Library of Congress, a certain unusual photograph was discovered among an old miscellaneous collection. It was a photograph of a very old building bearing the signs "Oysters" on both the south and east sides of the structure. Immediately, a responsive chord was struck, as it was remembered that original records showed that Suter's Tavern had become an Oyster House in later years. On July 8, 1803, the Washington Federalist announced the reopening of the building "late the Fountain Inn" by George Pitt, formerly proprietor of the Eagle Tavern, who now hangs out the sign of the "Anchor Tavern and Oyster House."⁴ Five years later, Pitt announced that he was still occupying the same Anchor Tavern where Oyster suppers could be had for 62½ cents each.⁵ George Pitt operated his Oyster House in the original Suter's Tavern building until his death in 1816.⁶ When Mary Suter spoke of the Tavern in her reminiscences she also spoke of its later use as an oyster house and restaurant.

4. Washington Federalist, July 8, 1803. The "Fountain Inn" mentioned in this announcement was the original Suter's Tavern building.

5. Alexandria Gazette, October 12, 1808, p. 3.

6. Oliver Wendell Holmes "The Fountain Inn after the Suter's left." Mr. Holmes, well-known authority on Georgetown history, has made a careful study of the individuals who operated the "Fountain Inn" after the Suters had left and confirms that George Pitt's Oyster House was located in the original Suter's Tavern building from 1803-1816.



Original Suter's Tavern building at 31st & K Streets, in Georgetown.
(Date of photograph 1896-1907)

With the above thoughts in mind the photograph of the structure was carefully examined. It now more and more began to look like the kind of a building you would expect "Suter's Tavern" to be. It was a rather low 2-story building, and it was evident there were an ample number of rooms. It appeared to be approximately twice the size of the Old Stone House. When the photograph was turned over, there on the back, in old but bold penmanship were the words "Suter's Tavern." Could this photograph, uncovered by chance, be the real Suter's Tavern? Was it the long-lost clue to the location?

It was evident that the structure in the photograph was standing on a north-west corner. Did not Mary Suter state that her illustrious ancestor's tavern had been on the north-west corner of Congress and Water Streets. An examination of this site, now the corner of K and 31st Streets in Georgetown, was made. With photograph in hand, this author walked south across K Street and then looked back to the north-west corner, which was vacant and enclosed by the fencing around the grounds of the District of Columbia Georgetown Incinerator Plant, which was constructed there in 1932. There appeared the immediate and unmistakable physical resemblance between this present-day corner and the photograph. Upon a closer examination, the absolute identification became apparent, for in the photograph the roof of a large structure could be seen to the rear of the tavern building. Standing on



Site of original Suter's Tavern at 31st and K Streets, in Georgetown, 1955.
(Note rear roof of the Grace Episcopal Church at upper right of photograph)

the approximate position from which the photograph had been taken one could see the rear upper roof of this same structure - Grace Episcopal Church just as it appeared to the rear of the tavern building in the photograph.

Here was unmistakable proof that the structure depicted in the photograph as Suter's Tavern had at an earlier date actually stood on the exact site given for the tavern by John Suter's descendent Mary D. Suter. This location was the north-west corner of 31st and K Streets in Georgetown.

Further examination of the photograph revealed that the "for sale" sign on the building bore the name George W. Linkins. In searching the title of this property (Case No. 8873 - Records of the District Title Company), it was learned that George R. Linkins, son of the above, acquired the property in 1904 and sold it in 1907. George W. Linkins' real estate office was located at 800 19th Street, N. W., from 1886-1911. This same address appears on the "for sale" sign in the photograph, indicating that the picture was taken some time between 1886 and 1911. If the building in the photograph proved to be Suter's Tavern, this would mean that this historic structure may yet have been standing in 1911, unknown to the growing army of searchers who were then trying to "find" Suter's Tavern.

There was now the statement of Mary D. Suter and a photograph of a structure called Suter's Tavern. Both focused

upon the same location. The fact that the structure was called an Oyster House further fitted into the story that was beginning to unfold. It was quickly remembered that in 1808 George Pitt, who was then using the original Suter's Tavern building as an Oyster House under the name of the Anchor Tavern, advertised that from his Tavern . . . an extensive view of that beautiful island belonging to General John Mason could be had.⁷ This statement corresponded to the site on the north-west corner of K and 31st Streets, as it is almost directly across from that same island which is today known as the Theodore Roosevelt Island. The above facts seemed to logically point to this site as the original location. However, could this be also supported by evidence from original records?

During an exhaustive search through land records of Frederick and Montgomery Counties and the tax assessment records, of Georgetown, that precious piece of original evidence, in the form of a direct written reference to Suter's Tavern in the year 1793 was finally discovered. The earliest Tax Book of Georgetown now extant at the Montgomery County Office building revealed an assessment against Peter Cassanave, important Georgetown citizen and one-time Mayor. In describing the location of a house for which he was being assessed, there was written "opposite Suter's Tavern."⁸

7. Alexandria Gazette, October 12, 1808, p. 3.

8. Account of Lots and Houses in Georgetown Assessment Book 1793-1797, Montgomery County Office Building, Rockville, Md.

The remaining task was to determine precisely which lots in Georgetown were owned by Peter Cassanave during the time in which John Suter operated his tavern. This involved a thorough search of Cassanave's real estate transactions as found in the Land Records of Montgomery County and the early records of the District of Columbia, including complete title searches on numerous properties. The completion of this detailed study revealed that in 1793 Peter Cassanave owned original lots 13, 41, 11, and lots 8 and 1 on the south side of Causeway Street.⁹ A careful inspection of the first four lots with respect to chain of ownership and history of the structures located thereon, and a similar study of the properties located opposite to them revealed no information concerning John Suter or Suter's Tavern.

Lot 1 on the southwest corner of Causeway and Fishing Lane (Later K and 31st Streets) proved, however, to be a far different story. Cassanave's ownership of lot 1 continued for some time, and his heirs were still assessed for it in 1807 and 1815 as proven by the recently discovered Georgetown assessment books for those years.¹⁰ This lot and house was located directly across from the exact location on which Mary D. Suter had stated that her ancestor's tavern stood and

9. Montgomery County Land Records; Liber D, folio 241; Liber D, folio 243; Liber D, folio 354; Georgetown Assessment Books, 1793 - 1797, Rockville, Md.; Georgetown Assessment Books, 1800 - 1807 and 1815, District of Columbia Records.

10. Georgetown Assessment Books, 1800 - 1807; 1815; District of Columbia Records. The volumes were among the small numbers of recently discovered Georgetown records located for many years among the early District of Columbia Records in the basement of the District Building. These records were inspected in 1955 by Mr. Daniel Noll of the District Government, Mr. Oliver Wendell Holmes of the National Archives, and this author representing the National Park Service.

on which the structure noted as Suter's Tavern in the recently discovered photograph was located.¹¹ This was the northwest corner of K and 31st Streets or Causeway and Congress Streets as it was known in 1793. At last, original documentary evidence describing Cassanave's property as being "opposite to Suter's" coincided with the facts as given by Mary D. Suter and the physical and historical evidence surrounding the captioned photograph of "Suter's Tavern" to prove beyond any doubt that the original Suter's Tavern was located on the northwest corner of the present-day intersection of K and 31st Streets, in Georgetown.

Such a location, of course, fitted perfectly into the story of Suter's Tavern, for it was but a short distance from the ferry across the Potomack over which the many travelers passed to and from Virginia. It also placed John Suter's "Fountain Inn" on the earliest east-west business artery of Georgetown leading to the bridge over Rock Creek located at the east end of Causeway (K) Street.¹² This so conveniently coincided with the descriptions of the early travelers who passed Suter's Tavern after coming over the Causeway Street bridge. It is quite evident now that these travelers would not ordinarily have passed the Old Stone House on Bridge Street since extant records of the Georgetown Commissioners show that

11. Georgetown Assessment Book, District of Columbia Records.
 12. Minutes of the Georgetown Commissioners, 1751-1801, MSS.
 Div., Library of Congress.

as late as 1800 no bridge over Rock Creek had been constructed at the east end of Bridge Street.¹³ The repeated newspaper announcements of George Pitt, later proprietor of the tavern, which described the tavern building in which he had his oyster house as being across from Mason's Island also similarly pointed to the location of Suter's Tavern which has already been proven beyond doubt by original documentary evidence.

The oft-repeated question "Where was Suter's Tavern located?" need no longer be asked. At last, original extant documentary evidence has been found — evidence which, after critical analysis, proves that the historic Suter's Tavern was located at the present northwest corner of K and 31st Streets, in Georgetown.¹⁴

13. Ibid.

14. The evidence by which the solution to the mystery of the location of Suter's Tavern was determined was based primarily on the critical historical evaluation of the following original documentary sources, personal reminiscences, photographic and physical evidence of the site, and original historical records concerning the site and later proprietors of the "Fountain Inn." These important sources are listed below in this order.
- (a) Account of Lots and Houses in Georgetown, Assessment Book, 1793-1797, the Tax Assessor's Office, County Office Building, Rockville, Md.; Georgetown Assessment Book, 1815, Early records of the District of Columbia.
 - (b) Mary D. Suter, "Biography of John Suter," Washingtoniana Section of the District of Columbia Library, Washington, D. C.
 - (c) Original photograph of the structure named "Suter's Tavern" uncovered by this author. This photograph corresponds to the exact site which is given by and supported by the above documentary sources and personal reminiscences. In addition, the photograph corresponds to the evidence pertaining to the later use of the Suter's Tavern building by George Pitt and the location as noted by Pitt in the Washington Federalist of July 8, 1803. Lastly, examination of the photograph and the present site of the north west corner of 31st and K Streets in Georgetown prove both to be identical.

The correct location of Suter's Tavern now completely proves the falsity of the thesis which maintained that the Old Stone House on M Street was Suter's Tavern. However, the actual solution and finding of the original location possesses far more significance than merely proving the negativity of the claim of the Old Stone House and other spurious locations to the fame of Suter's Tavern. This historical investigation has solved the mystery which has challenged local historians and scholars in allied fields for almost a century. By means of critical historical analysis and evaluation of evidence, the answer to that mystery has been successfully determined.

It is with a deep personal satisfaction that this historian offers the answer to that most controversial subject of Washington local history - the location of Suter's Tavern. All that we know about the fame and national significance of Suter's Tavern can now be told with a more fervent and intimate meaning. For we now know exactly where this historic structure once stood in old Georgetown.

CHAPTER 7

OLD GEORGETOWN

At a time which may never be known, Indians established the village of Tohoga near the site of present-day Georgetown. Increasing evidence seems to indicate that the first Europeans to explore the Potomac river as far as this site were the Spanish. For many years prior to English exploration of the area, Spaniards had sailed up the Potomac on the Espiritu Santo as they called it, reaching at least as far as the present site of the District of Columbia.¹

However, the first known white man to ascend the river past the village of Tohoga to Little Falls was Captain Henry Fleet.² Captain Fleet was a member of a party which sailed from Jamestown in the fall of 1621 in search of corn for the sufferers of the Jamestown famine. When the anxious group under the command of Spilman reached the vicinity of Tohoga in their pinnace, the Tiger, a landing party was sent ashore. The group was suddenly surrounded and savagely attacked by the Anacostan Indians and all were killed except Fleet.³ His life spared, Fleet was held captive by the Anacostans for many years. He learned their language and customs, almost forgetting his own. He was eventually ransomed

1. Hugh Taggart, "Old Georgetown", Records of Columbia Historical Society, Vol. XI, pp. 122-23.

2. Ibid., pp. 34-35.

3. Ibid.

and returned to his native England, where his wonderful tales of life among the American red men enthralled the English people. In 1632, he returned to Toboga and set up trade with the Indians. Two years later in 1634, the first Lord Baltimore discovered him living comfortably among the Indians in the village of Piscattaway.⁴

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the British Crown made land grants to certain individuals and a small number of these settled near the future site of Georgetown. As early as 1703, there was a trading post on the west side of Rock Creek at its junction with the Potomac river, which was called "Saw Pit Landing."⁵ In that same year, Ninian Beall obtained his patent of the "Rock of Dumbarton," a tract of some 705 acres. A short time later, George Gordon took up his land grant. In 1847, Gordon built a tobacco inspection house upon his land on the west bank of Rock Creek. This inspection house or "Rolling House" as it was called became the seed from which the future town was to grow.⁶ From far in the back country the great casks of tobacco lumbered over the Rolling Roads to Gordon's inspection house. The casks served as both containers and wheels since they had an axle through the center and shafts for men, horses, or oxen.

There was also a ferry which crossed the Potomac river at Georgetown. There are references to this institution as early

4. John L. Bozman, The History of Maryland during First Three Years after Its Settlement, Balt.: 1811, pp. 270-271.

5. Taggart, op. cit., p. 155.

6. Ibid., p. 154.

as the 1730's.⁷ According to Mr. Oliver W. Holmes, the existence of a ferry and a tobacco inspection house in the Chesapeake Tidewater civilization of that time was sufficient incentive for a Third Institution, a house for public entertainment.⁸ In November of 1747, the Court for Prince George's County records a license issued for the operation of a tavern at the mouth of Rock Creek.⁹ The requisites were fulfilled and an increasing settlement developed near the broad mouth of Rock Creek.

New disturbances in Scotland in 1745 brought many new immigrants to the Maryland colony, and some of them found their way to the growing little settlement around George Gordon's "Rolling House." This predominantly Scottish community was growing into a busy little village. On May 15, 1751, the Maryland Provincial Assembly looked with favor upon the petition of the local residents and authorized the establishment of George Town on the Potomack river above Rock Creek.¹⁰ The newly appointed Commissioners of George Town were empowered by the act of the Maryland Assembly to purchase sixty acres of land belonging to George Gordon and George Beall. The Commissioners chose Alexander Beall to survey and lay out the new town into eighty lots.¹¹ Both Gordon and Beall at first refused to sell their

7. Oliver W. Holmes "The Colonial Taverns of Georgetown" Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Vol. 51-52 Washington, D. C. 1955, p. 2.

8. Ibid., p. 3.

9. Ibid.

10. Minutes of the Georgetown Commissioners, District of Columbia Records, MSS. Div., Library of Congress, p. 1.

11. Ibid.

land; however, they were forced to comply with the act of the Maryland Assembly. It is not definitely known whether the town's name was chosen in honor of King George or to pacify the ruffled feelings of the two men upon whose land the town was founded.

At the time of the original platting of the town in 1751, the little village was already a thriving community on the fringe of the western settlement. While George Town was yet in its formative years, the lucrative pursuits of trade were uppermost in the minds of its citizens. One such enterprising merchant was Robert Peter, who opened his "Rock Creek Store" in 1752. Mr. Peter, who later became the first mayor of George Town, was also the agent of the famous firm of John Glassford and Company, of North Britain, which monopolized most of the Potomac river tobacco trade.¹²

In 1762, the Commissioners authorized the construction of a wharf at the end of Water Street.¹³ Trade continued to develop. Ocean going ships from distant shores made George Town a port of call. Locally owned ships left George Town heavily laden with tobacco, that precious cargo which was the "meat, drink, clothing, and money of the colonists."

12. Faggart, op. cit. pp. 167-68.

13. Minutes of the Georgetown Commissioners, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 39.

By 1765, all of the original eighty lots of George Town were purchased and arrangements were made for further additions to the town.¹⁴ Purchasers of lots in the new additions were urged to acquire their deeds before the Stamp Act became effective. The restrictive acts of the British Parliament were already the cause of much concern in George Town and through the State of Maryland. The Maryland Gazette stopped publication because of the Stamp Act and gave the following notice: "The times are dreadful, dismal, doleful, dolorous, and Dollar-Less."¹⁵

At the outbreak of the American Revolution, the population of George Town consisted of 433 persons, of which 82 were slaves.¹⁶ During the war years, the trade of George Town suffered greatly. However, regardless of personal loss, the vast majority of citizens, including its leading merchants stood for independence. The British Colonial Office at Downing Street in London received the following report from a confident:

"The temper of the leading men in Maryland still continues to be guided by a spirit of rancour and violence. They appear confident of succeeding in the favorite scheme of independence, and of establishing their own importance on the ruins of the British Constitution." 17

14. The Maryland Gazette, Oct. 10, 1765, p. 3.

15. Maryland Gazette, Oct. 31, 1765, p. 1.

16. 1775 Census for Frederick County, Georgetown hundred Box 2, Folder 8, Hall of Records, Annapolis, Md.

17. Extract of a letter from Mr. Eddis to Former Governor Eden of N. Y., July 23, 1777. Public Record Office; London Colonial Office 5 Vol. 722 MSS. Div. (10)

However, the British soldiers found the Maryland shopkeepers, tradesmen, and farmers equally as willing to fight for their freedom. Many George Town citizens fought valiantly on the field of battle. The following interesting account of George Town during the Revolutionary War was made by William Wirt in his Recollections, 1779-80:

. . . I passed a winter in George Town and remember seeing a long line of wagons cross the river on the ice. I conjecture that it was the winter 1779-80 and that these wagons were attached to the Troops which were going south. I remember also to have seen a gentleman Mr. Peter, going out gunning for canvasbacks . . . which I have seen in those days whitening the Potomac and which when they arose, as they sometimes did, for a half mile together, produced a sound like thunder.¹⁸

When independence was won the men of George Town returned home with new hopes for happiness and prosperity, unhampered by the many Royal restrictions which had helped to bring about the American Revolution. There were also new faces among the local residentsmen such as Benjamin Stoddert who was to become a great shipping merchant. For Major Stoddert and others had decided that George Town offered more opportunity than even Baltimore.

Until George Town's later inclusion within the District of Columbia, Stoddert's expectations seemed to be well founded. For after the revolution, George Town's commercial interests entered a period of great expansion. The town was incorporated in 1789 as the city of George Town. Real estate speculation was stimulated with such citizens as Robert Peter acquiring innumerable

18. John C. Proctor "Old George Town and its Early Settlers" Washington Star, Dec. 7, 1930.



Copy of Georgetown map. Date believed to be approximately 1796-1800.
(Original map, once in possession of Society of Oldest Inhabitants,
is no longer extant).



Georgetown Water Front from Mason's Island, 1864. - Brady photograph.

town lots and nearby country tracts. By 1785 all of the original George Town lots had been improved and other additions had been started. Along with prosperity came a bit of inflation. In 1779 Judah Boone purchased four George Town lots for 800 pounds. One year later on June 6, 1780, he sold the same four lots to Peter Aston for 7000 pounds, realizing 6200 pounds on the initial investment. In 1791, President George Washington called the town the greatest tobacco market of the State, if not of the Union.

In addition to the flourishing tobacco trade, flour from the George Town mills found its way to foreign ports. Important roads converged on George Town from Hladensburg, Fredericktown, and Fairfax county. Shortly after 1791, a road was constructed to Little Falls where the first Chain bridge was completed.¹⁹ Over these roads and into George Town rumbled four and six horse Conestoga wagons, heavily laden with farm produce for the local market. Both foreign and local ships crowded the harbor and their activity was often watched by a silent figure in the upstairs room of his George Town mansion. As he placed his telescope upon a table, Benjamin Stoddert felt that he had made the right decision in settling in this bustling town on the banks of the Potomack.

In 1785, the Potomack Canal Company was organized with George Washington as its first President and George Town looked to a great expansion of trade with the western sections. The

19. Laurence O'Brien, "An Old City's History," Washington Star, July 24, 1878.

heights of the town were already dotted with the homes of prosperous merchants. On December 28, 1793, the first Bank in the area was chartered with an initial capital stock of one million dollars, reflecting the growing wealth of the community.

During the days of the old Potomack Company, flat bottomed "gondolas" brought in many shipments of furs, lumber, and flour, and farm produce to the George Town wharves.²⁰ This western trade extended as far as Fort Osage on the Missouri river, to Lake Erie, and to Mobile.²¹ Reflecting the importance of the fur trade alone, the United States Government established an Indian Trade Office in Georgetown. In 1809, the Washington Federalist reported that upwards of 4000 raccoon skins would be sold in a single day.

Although George Town's commercial importance continued to expand after the turn of the nineteenth century, the town's eventual commercial decline was already assured when it was included in the original area selected for the new Federal District. As early as 1800 many of the merchants who had long operated stores in George Town were moving to new locations in Washington city, nearer to the public buildings.

Life in old George Town was not all business. For although the taverns were the centers of private and municipal business transactions, they were also the gathering places for the George Town citizens and the centers of a robust and lusty life. The most famous tavern of all was Suter's "Mountain Inn," begun in

20. Rogers W. Young The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal and the Antebellum Commerce of Old Georgetown, National Park Service Study, January 1940, p. 2.

21. Faggart op. cit., pp. 161-2.

1783 by John Suter. A favorite rendezvous of all the well-known local citizens and such national figures as Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and Pierre L'Enfant, Suter's Tavern might well be called the birthplace of the Nation's Capital. A closer look into the history of this colorful tavern has been covered previously.

Before the Revolutionary War, the fashionable residential section of Georgetown had centered about the street known as Cherry Alley. This section, where beauty and art reigned, was the Court end of the town. Its quaint two-story houses were built of brick imported from England. After 1790, the growing interest in the development of the Federal City shifted emphasis to Bridge Street, which became the principal avenue of approach to the National Capital from the surrounding States of the young republic.²² In addition to business establishments of all kinds, there were numerous fine residences and a church on Bridge Street by 1782. The Old Stone House, built in 1766, on original lot 3 was one of the earliest houses constructed on this street.

The original act of 1751 which authorized the laying out of George Town, also provided that the Commissioners of the town set aside time for two annual "fairs" to be held in the spring and in the fall.²³ These colorful "fairs" lasted for three days and

22. Robert Nelson, "Historical Sketch of M Street" March 21, 1950.

23. Taggart, op. cit., p. 163.

brought visitors into the town. Inns and boarding houses overflowed with people and the spirit of gaiety and merriment pervaded the whole town. There were special sales, games of chance, races, theatrical performances, and dancing assemblies. The coffers of George Town merchants were usually much richer following one of the annual fairs. During the "fair" all persons within the bounds of the town had the privilege of being free from arrest, except for a serious felony or breach of the peace.²⁴ For the benefit of those coming from afar, this freedom from arrest was to continue in force one day before and one day after the "fair."

In general, however, the laws of George Town were rather strict. So strict, in fact, that once the town clerk became involved in his financial obligations and was hastily thrown in the debtor's prison. This important public official languished until his successor was chosen and his friends made good his shortage and debts.

In the early years, the people of George Town derived great amusement from horse racing, cock-fighting, hunting, cards, and dancing.²⁵ There was an undeniable fondness of the people for rum and sugar, the ordinary tippie. By 1769, the George Town race track was a flourishing institution in the town.²⁶

Dancing assemblies, which were held in the local taverns, were very popular with George Town residents. Shortly after the revolution, the "George Town balls" became the notable social

24. Ibid.

25. Taggart, op. cit., p. 164.

26. Ibid.



Union Hotel, opened in 1796 by John Suter, Jr.

events attended by a more exclusive social circle. These balls acquired such popularity that rich land proprietors of Maryland and Virginia and their families came regularly to take part in the highlights of George Town hospitality.²⁷ During President Jefferson's time Sir Augustus Foster, the British Minister asserted that there was no lack of handsome ladies for the balls in George Town and that he never saw prettier girls anywhere.²⁸

With the arrival of the Federal Government in Washington in 1800, many high officials who were used to the courtly society and comfortable living of Philadelphia came to the new capital in search of housing. Washington offered little; however, they found Georgetown much to their liking. Thus Georgetown of 1800 became the court end of official as well as social life of the area.²⁹

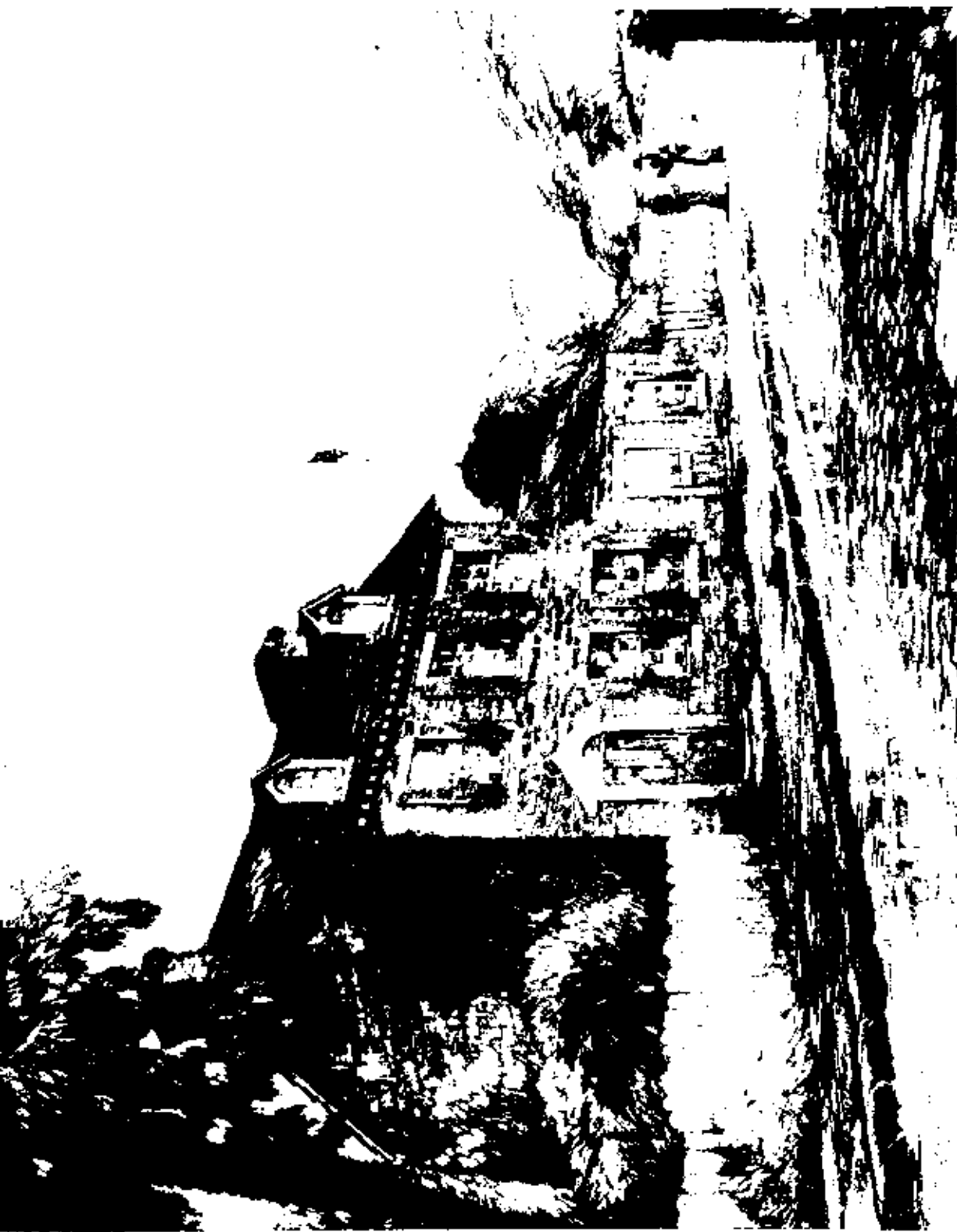
By the close of the eighteenth century, Georgetown was more than just a business and social center. It was the center of a distinctive culture based upon an intellectual and moral awakening of its citizens. Churches dotted the landscape, various courses of instruction were offered, newspapers were published, and a College had been founded. By 1795, the congregations of the First Presbyterian Church and the Holy Trinity Catholic Church were growing fast, and the Episcopal Church was under construction. The first marriage recorded at the Holy Trinity Church took place on April 6, 1795.³⁰

27. Samuel C. Bussey Pictures of the City of Washington in the Past Washington, D. C. 1898, p. 331.

28. Mackall S. Somervell Early Days of Washington, Wash. 1899, pp.46-47.

29. Bussey, op. cit., p. 330.

30. R. P. Jackson, Chronicles of George Town, p. 140.



Home of Francis Scott Key from an original etching by A. F. Mettel.

Although Georgetown College was founded in 1789, the classes were not commenced until 1791. In November of that year, William Gaston, the first student to enter the new college arrived in Georgetown only to find that the academy was still not ready.³¹ The young lad who had journeyed from Philadelphia stayed at the Tavern of Joseph Semmes "at the sign of the Green Tree in the main street of the Town" for almost three weeks.³² On November 22, 1791, he climbed the hill to the new college, where he was soon joined by other students including George and David Peter, sons of Robert Peter and Benjamin Stoddert, Jr., son of the first Secretary of the Navy.³³ By the beginning of 1792, a regular program of studies was being carried on in the college founded by Bishop John Carroll. From the earliest times, the college received the respect and admiration of local citizens. In 1795 a local paper reported "That from every ascent, and in every vale, George Town will affect the imagination in presenting new beauties. Its towering College adorning a hill only wanting such an edifice to justify all the celebration in the power of language to bestow."³⁴ As the years wore on, the venerable

31. Rev. John M. Daley, S.J. "Georgetown College" The First Fifty Years" a Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Georgetown University for degree of Doctor of Philosophy 1953, Vol. 1, p. 83.

32. *Ibid.*

33. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

34. Impartial Observer and Washington Advertiser, July 31, 1795, p. 87.

educational institution spread the fame of George Town far and wide, long after the commercial glory of the town had languished.

The theater also played a vital part in the cultural life of George Town from the early times. Numerous traveling companies performed in the local taverns. Their offerings ran the gamut of imagination but there was strong evidence that Shakespearean drama was much appreciated by George Towners. Mr. McGrath's Company of Comedians were long-time favorites of the town. On the evening of June 6th, 1795, the new George Town theater opened, featuring a favorite comedy farce under the charge of Mr. McGrath.³⁵ Local audiences were quick to applaud the clever feats of the actors; however, it seems that they were just as vocal and active in expressing their displeasure at insulting or degrading performances. In 1790, the Manager of the Alexandria theater was warned that if his actors did not elevate their performances, "they shall find there are such things as oranges, eggs, hard apples, and other missile instruments of vengeance."³⁶

In addition to theatrical performances, musical concerts were quite popular. In 1796, nearly all of the musicals and concerts were presented at Mrs. Doyle's Long Room. Mr. Jungbuth, the celebrated bassoon and clarinet artist performed there to a large attendance on May 14, 1795.³⁷

35. Columbian Chronicle, June 2, 1795, p. 3.

36. Alexandria Gazette, August 5, 1790, p. 2.

37. Columbian Chronicle, May 12, 1795, p. 1.

A constant source of danger to the welfare of the community was the threat of fire. Since there were no fire companies in the town prior to 1803, protection depended solely upon the mutual assistance of neighbors. A raging fire broke out on High Street in Georgetown on Sunday morning, September 25, 1796.³⁸ The blaze, which completely destroyed eight houses, would have been even more disastrous had it not been for the united action of the citizens and the mild weather of that day.³⁹ The very next month a destructive fire consumed the dwelling house of Mr. J. Laird.⁴⁰ The next year on November 15, 1797, fire broke out on the second floor of Old South building of George Town College. The speed with which the local citizens rushed to the aid of the college demonstrated well their attachment to that institution. The college faculty and students publicly acknowledged their debt to the local citizens for the "kind and active assistance they received from them in the tremendous disaster which threatened their home with total destruction."⁴¹

Official fire protection came to the community in the year 1803, when a fire company was formed and a fire engine purchased by public subscription.⁴² There was a sigh of relief among the local citizens when the town possessed a fire engine all its own. As a further precaution against fire, a night watch

38. Washington Gazette, September 28, 1796, p. 3.

39. Ibid.

40. Washington Gazette, October 12, 1796, p. 3.

41. Daley, Rev. John M. "Georgetown College: The First Fifty Years" op. cit., p. 123.

42. R. P. Jackson, op. cit., p. 104.

brigade was formed in 1811.⁴³ These watchmen, with staves and lanterns, patrolled the streets at night, calling out the hour and the state of the weather. The original Vigilant Firehouse, which is yet standing at 1066 Wisconsin Avenue, was built in 1817, and housed a volunteer fire-fighting brigade.

Although official police protection was rather slow in coming to Georgetown, the town boasted the only jail in lower Montgomery county for many years. The George Town jail, or Debtor's prison as it was sometimes called, was built shortly after the laying out of the town. The first known prisoners of the Georgetown jail were Michael and Matthew Dulaney who were charged with setting fire to a Tobacco warehouse, a heinous crime in such a tobacco center as Georgetown.⁴⁴ They were placed in irons and special guards watched them for the prison was not considered to be the safest place of confinement for dangerous criminals. Although the Georgetown jail may have been a deterrent to certain potential law breakers, in 1791 such "notorious offenders as John Duffy and his gang of robbers were terrorizing citizens on the road from Georgetown to Alexandria."⁴⁵ In 1795, the Georgetown Commissioners authorized that the sum of \$2 be paid to a constable for his back pay covering 1792 and 1793. In 1799, the town boasted two constables and each received \$30 annual salary. In 1805, a bill authorizing the appointment of town constables was passed by the Georgetown Board of Aldermen.⁴⁶

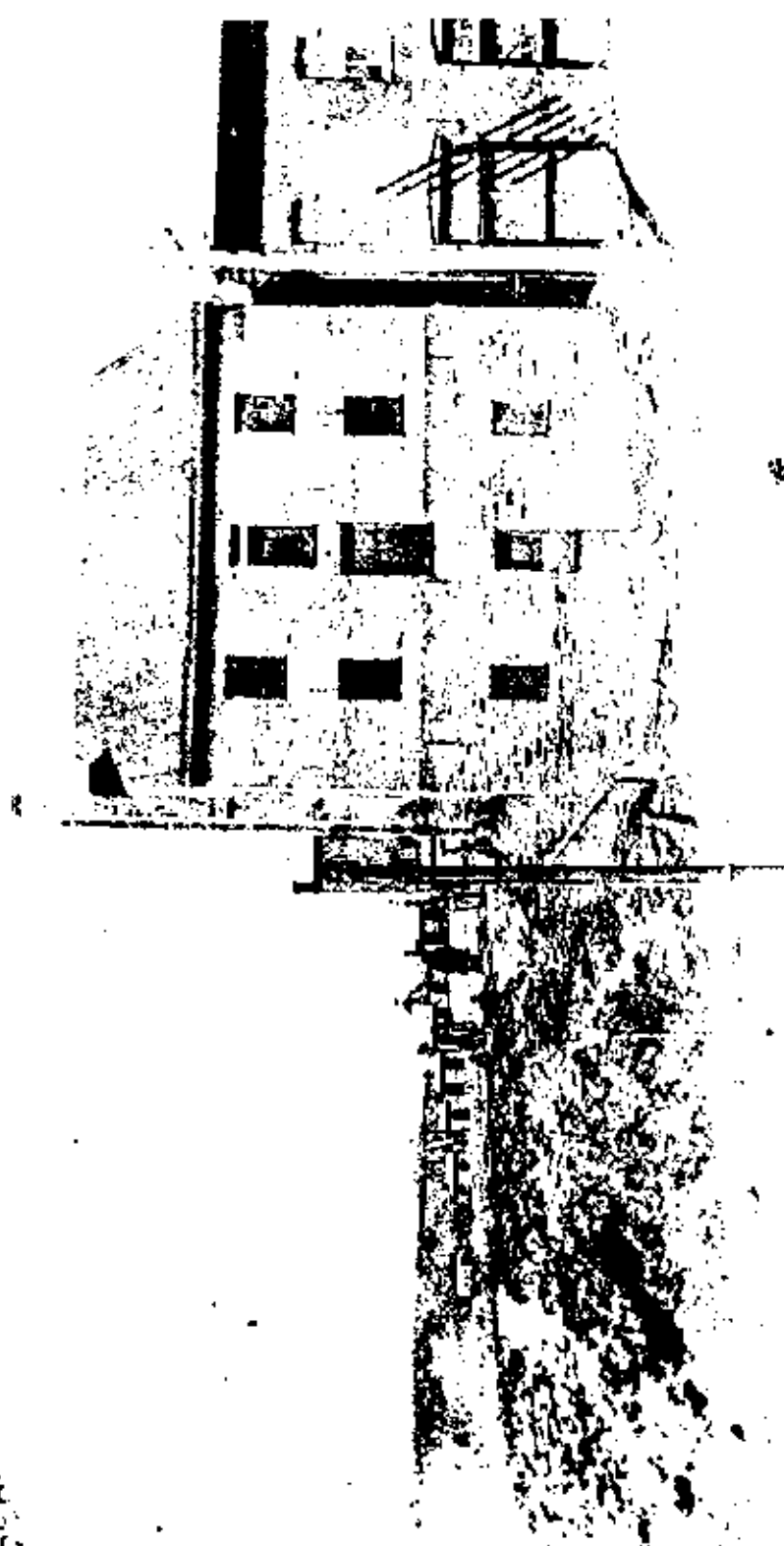
⁴³. Henry R. Evans, Old Georgetown on the Potomac, Wash: Georgetown News, 1933, p. 19.

⁴⁴. Original Document committing a prisoner to jail and a newspaper clipping, The Peabody Collection: Georgetown Public Library.

⁴⁵. George Town Weekly Ledger, August 6, 1791, p. 3.

⁴⁶. Georgetown Journal. Board of Aldermen, Vol. 2, 1805, p. 36 MSS Div.(LC)

GEORGETOWN
SABODY ROOM

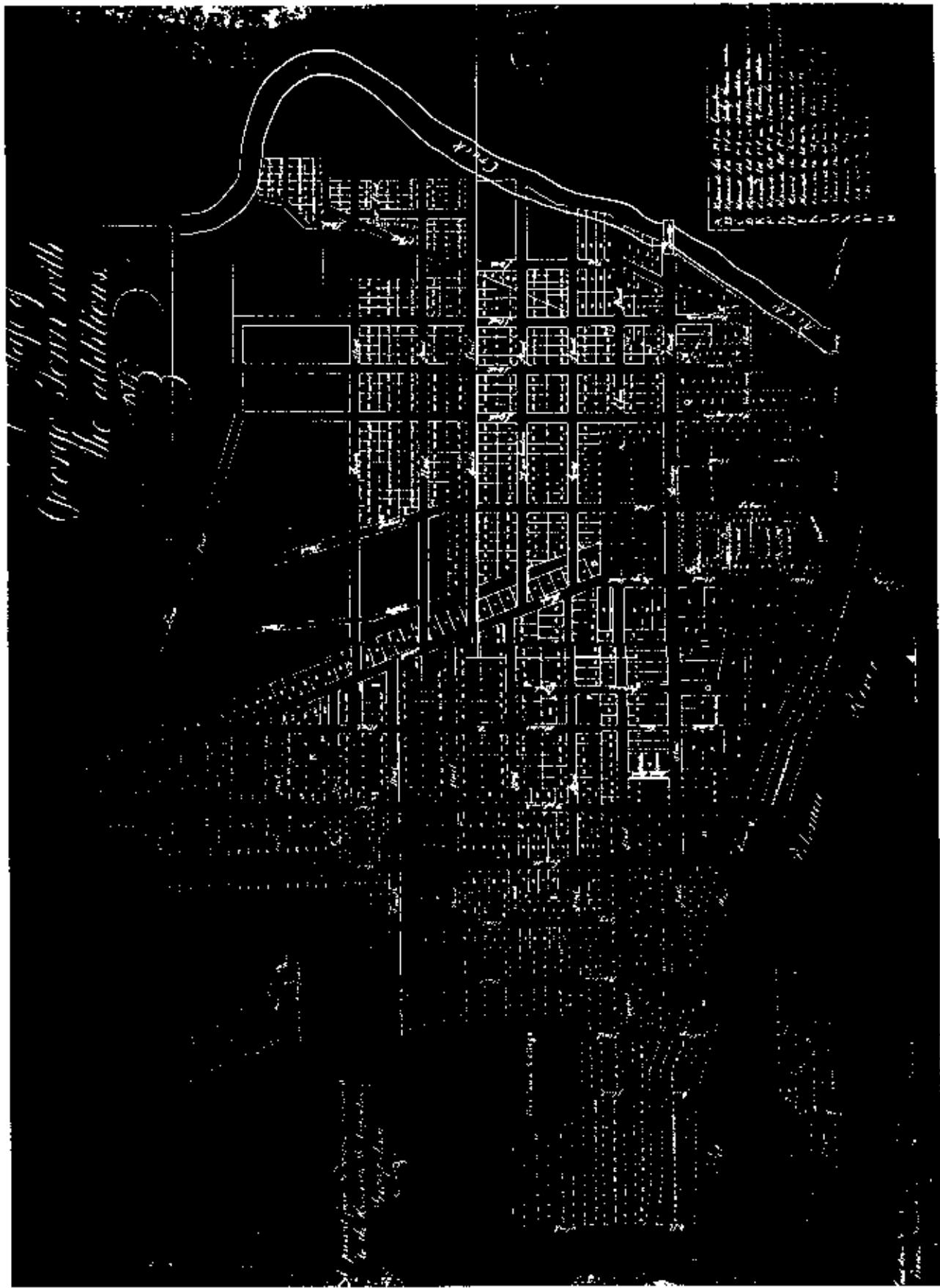


Georgetown Jail on High (Wisconsin Ave.) Street below C. & O. Canal.

In 1800, the population of George Town was 2,993; however, the population of central Washington had already reached 3,210.⁴⁷ Although it was evident to many that Georgetown would eventually be overshadowed by the newly founded city of Washington, the old town of George Town men fought a gallant battle. Well into the 1830's, numerous Government officials and Diplomats preferred to live in George Town rather than in Washington City. Such notables as Henry Clay and John Randolph oft succumbed to the jolly atmosphere of the Union Tavern on Bridge Street. Other dignitaries enjoyed the imposing mansions and quiet streets of the heights.

After its glory as an important international trade center diminished, George Town clung to its atmosphere of cordiality and social prominence, which yet remains with this particular part of the Nation's Capital. Its taverns and inns had been the scene of events which affected the planning and building of the Federal Capital on the banks of the Potomac. Its citizens were foremost in working for the greater development of the community and Nation. They included pioneers in religion and education, in trade and commerce, industry and science. Common to all of them was a devotion to country. It was most appropriate that it was a resident of George Town, Francis Scott Key who wrote our inspiring National Anthem the "Star Spangled Banner."

47. Census of 1800 for the District of Columbia. (NA)



Fenwick Map of Georgetown with Additions, 1814.

GREEN TOWN
GEORGETOWN

GREEN TOWN
GEORGETOWN
GEORGETOWN



One of the buildings of the Foxall Cannon Foundry, started by Henry Foxall in 1800,
at Green Springs in Georgetown.

As a struggling village prior to 1748, the area which was to become George Town had been part of Prince Georges County, Md. In 1748, it was included in Frederick County, and in 1776 George Town became part of Montgomery County when that county was established. A few years later this historic city was included within the area selected by George Washington for the Federal Capital. George Town had been under the successive jurisdiction of the King of Great Britain, the State of Maryland, and the United States. As a town and city, it existed under an independent charter for 120 years.⁴⁸ This charter was repealed in 1871, by an act of Congress which provided for a municipal Government with jurisdiction over the entire District of Columbia.⁴⁹ In 1895, further legislation provided that Georgetown should no longer be known in law as the City of George Town, but should rather constitute a part of the city of Washington, the Federal Capital.⁵⁰ Modern George Town is, of course, officially a part of the District of Columbia. However, many of us think more upon the past achievements of the little town which George Washington once called "the greatest Tobacco center in the State of Maryland, if not the Nation." Many of the homes and haunts of these great Americans who lived in this town remain today and provide us with physical reminders of a proud and glorious past of American history.

48. Taggart, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

49. *Ibid.*

50. *Ibid.*

APPENDIX

Discovery of two original buildings in Old George Town

While pursuing research work in connection with the Old Stone House in Georgetown, it was discovered that two original Georgetown buildings of great historical significance are standing today unknown and unnoticed by the thousands of citizens who pass them each day. These structures are the original City Tavern and Bank of Columbia buildings of Old Georgetown.

This discovery was made during a title search of original lot 47 in Georgetown. This original lot, measuring 150 by 75 feet was first purchased by George Gordon on March 24, 1752. In 1783 William Bayley acquired this lot, which was located on the southwest corner of Falls and Water Streets in Georgetown (today M Street and Wisconsin Avenue, N. W.), and proceeded to subdivide the lot into several sections.¹ A later purchaser of several sections was Thomas J. Beatty of Georgetown. On February 29, 1796 the Bank of Columbia purchased a part of lot 47 from Beatty.² This part of lot 47 was the exact location on which the original structure of that venerable financial institution is located to this very day.

On April 20, 1799, Tho. J. Beatty deeded a part of lot 47 in Georgetown "whereon is the Tavern lately occupied by Clement Sewell and adjoining the Bank of Columbia," to Mr. Overton Carr.³ The tavern referred to here is the original City Tavern building

1. Plat of Lot 47 showing all subdivisions and changes in ownership from 1752-1806 prepared according to and based on the original deeds.

2. Liber B, folio 415: Records of the District Title Co.

3. Liber D, folio 390: Records of the District Title Co.

of Georgetown, wherein Clement Sewell had been keeping his tavern since the latter part of 1796.

After collecting sufficient historical information on the sites of the two above structures from the original land Records of Montgomery County, the District of Columbia, and the Records of the District Title Insurance Company, there was no doubt that the sites of both the City Tavern and the Bank of Columbia were located on original lot 47. A preliminary visit to the site revealed that both the second and third buildings west of the southwest corner of Wisconsin Avenue and M Street, N. W. looked very unusual, the third building, especially, appearing to be quite old.

Subsequently, Mr. Haussmann, Chief of the Architectural Branch, offered to accompany me to the site of the two buildings in question for an examination of their architecture. This inspection was made on October 22, 1954. With respect to the third building, Mr. Haussmann stated that it was a very old building dating approximately from 1790-1800. He observed that the exterior of the original first floor had been replaced, but that the exterior second and third floors were original. Construction was of a Flemish Bond and closures were revealed at the windows. There was also an ornamented top dating from about 1815 on. Mr. Haussmann was interested in the unusual height of the first floor, indicating that it must have been built for a special use. It seems logical now that this special use was for the main floor of the Bank of Columbia. This old and architecturally significant building is now vacant with the exception of the

first floor which is used to house Sanitation vehicles of the District of Columbia Government. An inspection of the interior was also made, revealing that the interior had been radically changed. On the third floor a large hole in the ceiling allowing the sunlight, rain and snow to enter unobstructed indicated that unless measures are taken to preserve this building, its deterioration will proceed rapidly. On the outside Mr. Hausmann paced off the distance from the corner boundary to the east corner of this building. These measurements, as I later substantiated from the original deed giving this property to the Bank of Columbia in 1796, fitted exactly those described in the deed.

The second building from the corner proved to be even more interesting. To the casual observer, the front of the building might appear to be in the late 1880's or 90's. However, Mr. Hausmann keenly observed that the building had been refaced and that actually it was a much older building. A walk around to the rear of the building substantiated this opinion, for there was revealed a completely different type of construction. The structure is a three story brick building with a common bond being used. Mr. Hausmann believed that it was not quite as old as the Bank of Columbia building adjoining it to the west. It was also noticed from this rear view that the original three floors and the original wooden dormers appeared to be in tact, although in very poor condition. The architectural

inspection of this building, which is now used by a printing firm, proved that the building was constructed about 1800 or earlier. Since then a careful study of the description of the tavern building (three story brick, etc.), and the measurements of the site according to the original deeds, has proved beyond question that the original city tavern and second structure west of the southwest corner of Wisconsin Avenue and M Street today are one and the same building.

The existence of these two original buildings is apparently unknown to residents and local historians of Georgetown. There is now ample evidence to prove that both structures have a most important historical significance not only to Georgetown locally but of National importance. In addition, if certain measures are not taken to protect and to preserve these structures, they will go the way of many important historical and architectural monuments of our past.

Brief Historical Sketch

The City Tavern

The City Tavern, a three story brick building, was built sometime in 1796. It was located on part of original lot 47 in Georgetown adjoining the Bank of Columbia. In addition to the Tavern building, there were large stables, a granary, kitchen and meat house. From its very beginning the City Tavern was one of the most important meeting places of citizens of Georgetown and important figures on the National scene for both pleasure and business. The first proprietor was Clement Sewall who operated the tavern until

the early part of 1799. He was followed at the City Tavern by Charles McLaughlin who held forth until 1801, to be succeeded by Joseph Semmes. Semmes operated the City Tavern from 1801-1805 under the sign of the "Indian King."

In these early years of its history, the City Tavern was a gathering place which reflected the life and times of the young Capital on the Potomac. Its rooms were often crowded with important citizens and merchants of Georgetown and Washington, statesmen and even Presidents. Thomas Jefferson, who once said "That no man on the Atlantic coast could bring out a better bottle of Madeira or Sherry wine than old John Suter of Georgetown," later transferred his allegiance to the City Tavern and instructed important visitors to the young Capital to find accommodations there. Numerous celebrations were held at the City Tavern, one of which was a grand banquet and reception for President John Adams, held on June 6, 1800, several months before he was to become the first President to take up residence in the White House. The City Tavern building was used for tavern purposes until 1836.

The Bank of Columbia

The Bank of Columbia was chartered by the Legislature of Maryland, December 28, 1793, under the name of "The President, Directors and Company of the Bank of Columbia." The initial stock consisted of 10,000 shares of one hundred dollars each. This financial institution had the distinction of being the first Bank in the District of Columbia. In 1796 the institution purchased part

of original lot 47, where a spacious three story brick building was soon constructed. The Bank remained on this site until 1806. In that year a new home was built for the Bank on original lot 26 on the north side of Bridge (M) Street. Most secondary accounts give this/^{letter}site as the original location of the Bank of Columbia, totally unaware that the original location was on lot 47 and also that the first Bank building dating from 1796 is still standing today at 3214 M Street, N. W. During the first quarter of the nineteenth century this Bank was a pioneer financial institution of the young Capital, helping to finance many important private and municipal projects. Its patrons were those prominent in National affairs as well as local affairs of the District of Columbia. In 1826, its failure created great excitement in the community. The United States Government had on deposit with the Bank \$469,000, which was lost in the wreckage. The Federal Government established its Indian Trade Office in the Bank of Columbia building. This interesting institution, which carried on trade relations between the Government and Indians, retained its office in this building as late as 1822.

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