
**National Park Service
Cultural Landscape Inventory
2006**



**The Mall
National Mall & Memorial Parks**

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Park Information

Inventory Number: 600213
Park Name: National Mall
Park Alpha Code: NAMA
Park Organization Code: 3408
Inventory Status: Complete

Completion Status Explanatory Narrative:

The Mall Cultural Landscape Inventory was written by Kay Fanning, Ph.D., Landscape Historian with the Cultural Landscapes Program of the National Capital Region. Research material was gathered from the following repositories: Annual Reports of the Chief Engineer, Office of Public Buildings and Grounds (OPBG), Interior Library, Department of the Interior; Cultural Resource Files, National Mall & Memorial Parks (NAMA), National Capital Region (NCR); Beautification Files, Cultural Landscapes Program (CLP) files, NCR; NCP (National Capital Parks) files on the Mall, 1930s-1960s, from the Federal Records Center (FRC); maps and plans from the Technical Information Center (TIC) and Land Resources Program Center (LRPC), NCR; Mall photos, NCR Museum Resource Center (MRCE); Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) minutes from National Archives & Records Center (NARA); and National Capital Park & Planning Commission (NCPPC) Minutes from the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC). Interviews were conducted with John Parsons, Associate Regional Director for Lands, Resources and Planning, NCR; Gary Scott, Regional Historian, NCR; James Sherald, Chief of Natural Resources and Science, NCR; and historians James Goode and Peter Penczer of the B.F. Saul Co. Many other professionals within the NPS (National Capital Region and Denver Service Center) reviewed the document and provided information and corrections.

Date Data Collected: 02/01/2006
Date Data Entered: 04/12/2006
Data Recorder: Kay Fanning
Park Superintendent Concurrence: yes
Park Superintendent's Date of Concurrence: 09/22/2006

National Register Concurrence: Eligible – SHPO Consensus Determination

National Register Concurrence Date: 09/05/2006

Explanatory Narrative: The State Historic Preservation Officer for the District of Columbia concurred with the findings of the Mall CLI on September 5, 2006, in accordance with Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act. It should be noted that the “National Register Concurrence Date” refers to this Section 110 Concurrence and not the actual date of listing on the National Register.

The Mall is listed in a separate nomination of May 19, 1981 and is included in the multiple-property nomination, “The L’Enfant Plan of the City of Washington,” April 24, 1997. Neither provides sufficient information on the development, integrity, or current condition of the landscape. Only the latter nomination includes significance level and criteria considerations. While The Mall is not currently a National Historic Landmark, as the major component of the L’Enfant and McMillan Plans it is clearly of national significance. A draft National Historic Landmark nomination has been prepared for “The Plan of the City of Washington,” and the DC SHPO is currently reviewing this document.

Landscape Description

The central area of the Mall, within this inventory's study boundaries, is a rigorously simple but monumental landscape that encompasses 135 acres between 3rd and 14th Streets, and Madison and Jefferson Drives, N.W., in the center of Washington, D.C. The National Park Service oversaw the implementation of the plan, mostly in the 1930s, with strong design support and legislative assistance from the National Capital Planning Commission; the 1930s plan followed the 1902 McMillan Plan, which sought to revive the conception of the 1791 L'Enfant Plan for a broad promenade lined by fine buildings and gardens that would form the center of the capital city's cultural and social life. The Periods of Significance extend from 1791-1792, the date of the L'Enfant Plan and its revision by Andrew Ellicott, and 1902-1975, extending from the date of the McMillan Plan to the year when the last tree panel on the Mall was planted, following the removal of the last temporary military buildings in 1971. The Mall retains a high level of historic integrity, and is in fair condition overall. The major problems affecting the Mall are soil compaction and chronic wear and tear on the turf caused by recurrent visitor use (both passive, individual use and far more intrusive organized activities); and the unevenness of the elm canopy, caused by later in-fill plantings, construction activities, over fifty years of Dutch elm disease losses, and the incompatible form of some replacement elms.

The creation of this linear landscape opened the view between the United States Capitol and the Washington Monument. The landscape, view, and spatial organization of the Mall are all interdependent and reinforce each other. Central grass panels are flanked north and south by panels planted with four rows each of American elm trees, almost six hundred in all. A few dozen elms remain from an early planting in the 1920s, and some portion of the rest date from the major planting in 1935. Others are replacements planted since the 1930s, many of them cultivars of a disease-resistant elm from the 1930s planting; there are a few other cultivars or varieties as well, and several trees of other species.

Behind the lines of elms, imposing museum buildings designed in Victorian, Beaux-Arts classical, and modern styles line the Mall on the north and south. Two sculpture gardens are located at the north and south along the 8th Street cross axis, designated as an important element on the L'Enfant Plan.

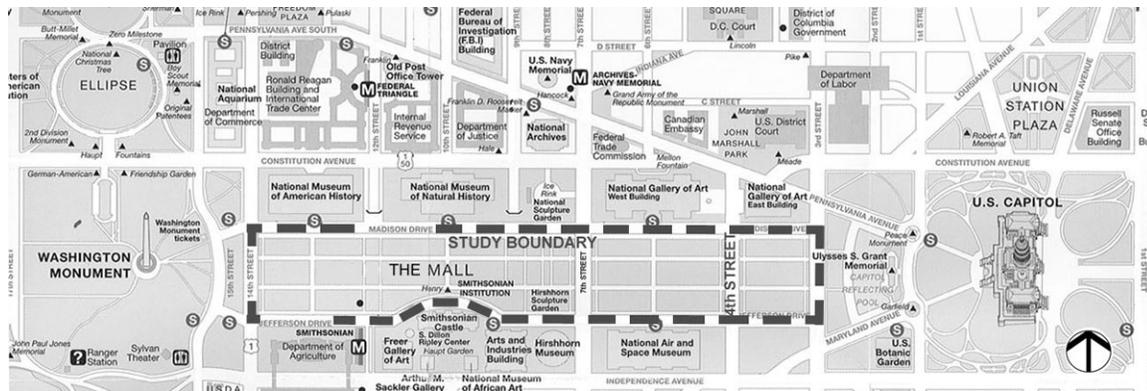
The landscape is overlaid with a grid of walks and cross walks. The two former inner Mall drives, parallel to Madison and Jefferson Drives, have been converted into gravel walks. Single or paired gravel and concrete walks follow the routes of most cross-axial streets, except 11th Street. Fourth and 7th Streets are surface roads that cross the Mall, and 9th and 12th Streets are tunneled beneath it. All street curbs are granite.

Benches designed in a historic, standard National Capital Region style are placed along the outer edges of the east-west walks and the inner edges of the walks along Madison and Jefferson Drives. All benches face the center of the Mall. Light standards in a style designed specifically for the Mall in the 1930s and trash receptacles designed in the 1960s are located between the benches along the inner Mall Walks. Other features include four small food service buildings and short sections of post-and-chain barriers.

A few constructed areas interrupt the continuity of the lines of elms, but do not detract from the monumental landscape. The Smithsonian Castle extends to within 300 feet of the Mall's center line. The sunken sculpture garden of the Hirshhorn Museum also extends into a Mall tree

panel, and has its own varied planting palette. An entrance to an underground Metro station is located in a tree panel between the Freer Gallery of Art and the Department of Agriculture building, and a small permitted carousel is situated in the tree panel in front of the Arts and Industries building.

Location Map



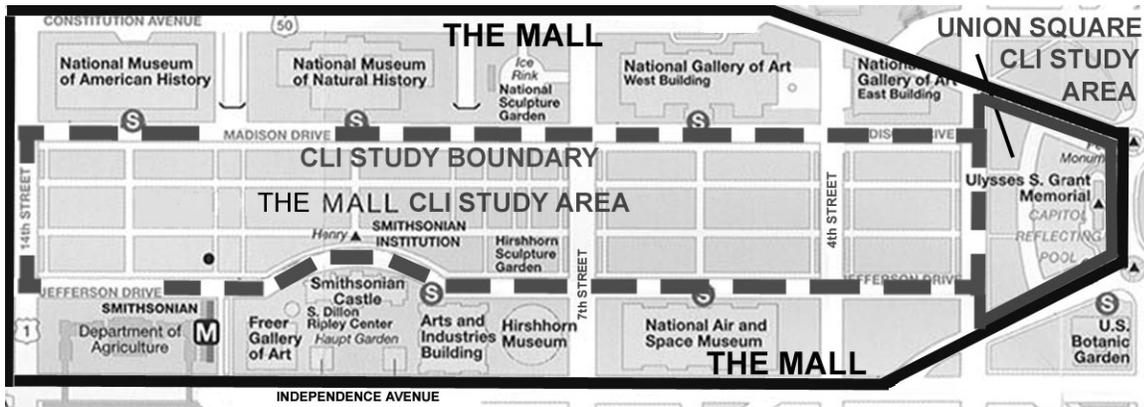
The Mall in relation to the Washington Monument, the Capitol, and Pennsylvania Avenue. (from USDOJ NPS map “Washington: The Nation’s Capital,” GPO: 2000; CLP file “Mall new location map copy”)

Boundary Description

The Mall extends from Constitution Avenue, N.W., and Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., on the north to Independence Avenue, S.W., and Maryland Avenue, S.W., on the south, and from 1st to 14th Streets, N.W. and S.W. The Mall includes an area known as Union Square, bounded by Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Maryland Avenue, S.W., 1st Street, N.W. and S.W., and 3rd Street, N.W. and S.W. Though part of the Mall, Union Square was developed as a separate (though closely related) landscape design; therefore, it has been analyzed in a separate CLI.

This inventory of the Mall landscape examines only the central portion of the Mall, between Madison and Jefferson Drives and 3rd and 14th Streets, because this area was designed and developed as a single landscape. These are the study boundaries for this CLI, and they extend to the outer curbs of these streets. The physical history of the Mall discusses development of the entire Mall to provide context.

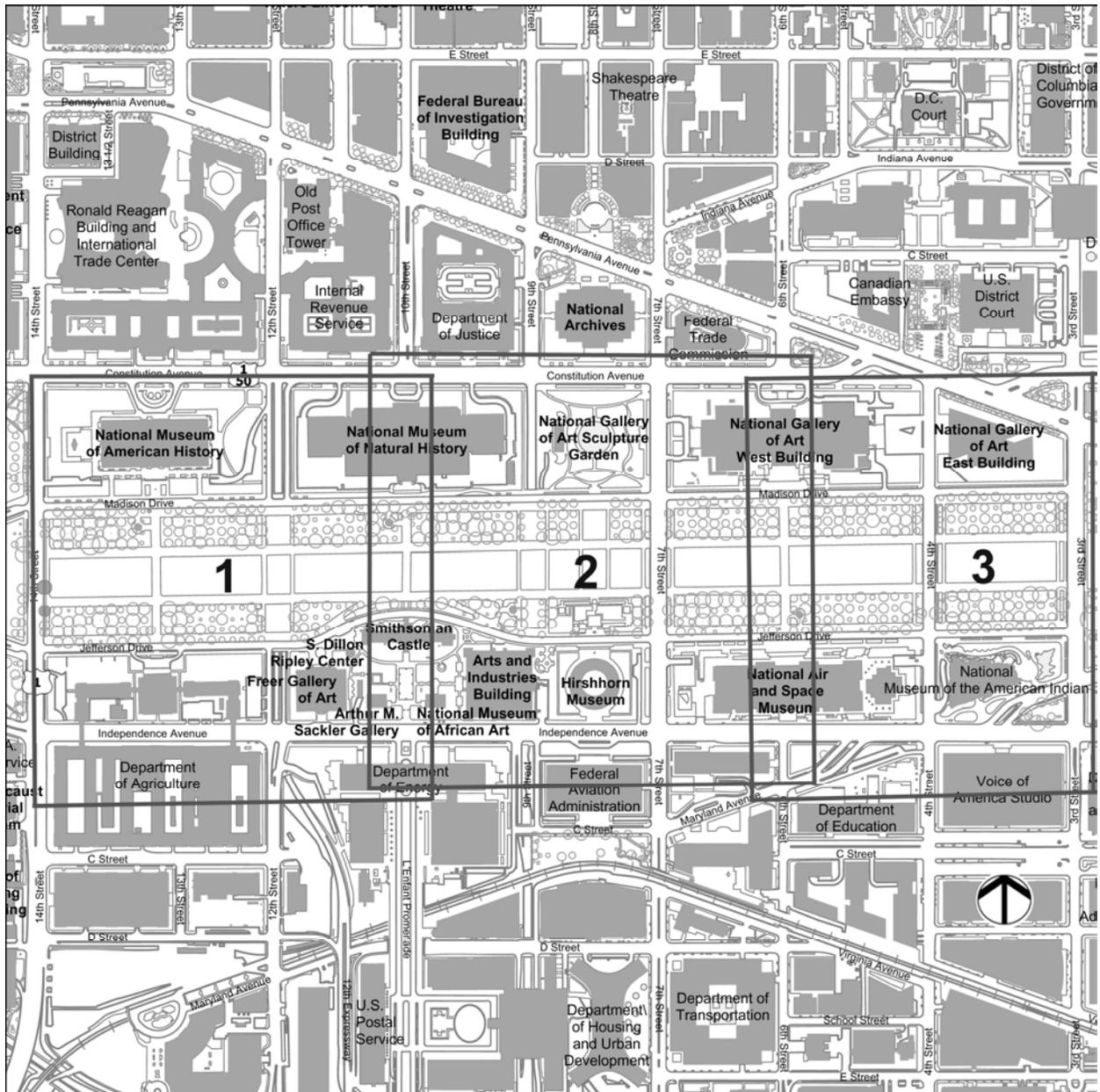
Hierarchy Graphic



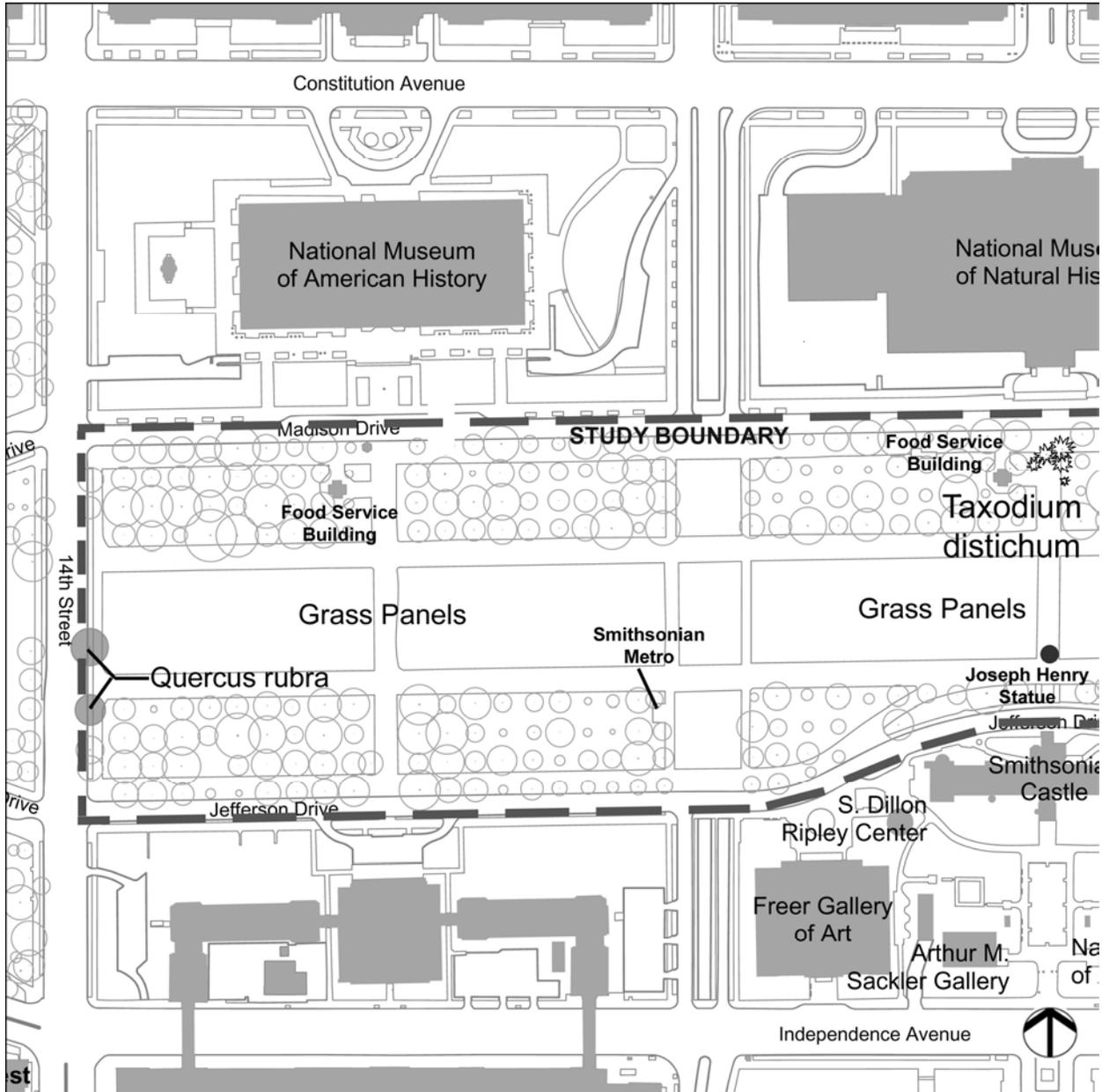
Hierarchy Description

This graphic depicts the overall boundaries of the Mall, and the study boundaries used for both the Mall and Union Square Cultural Landscape Inventories. (CLP file "Mall hierarchy map 1 flat")

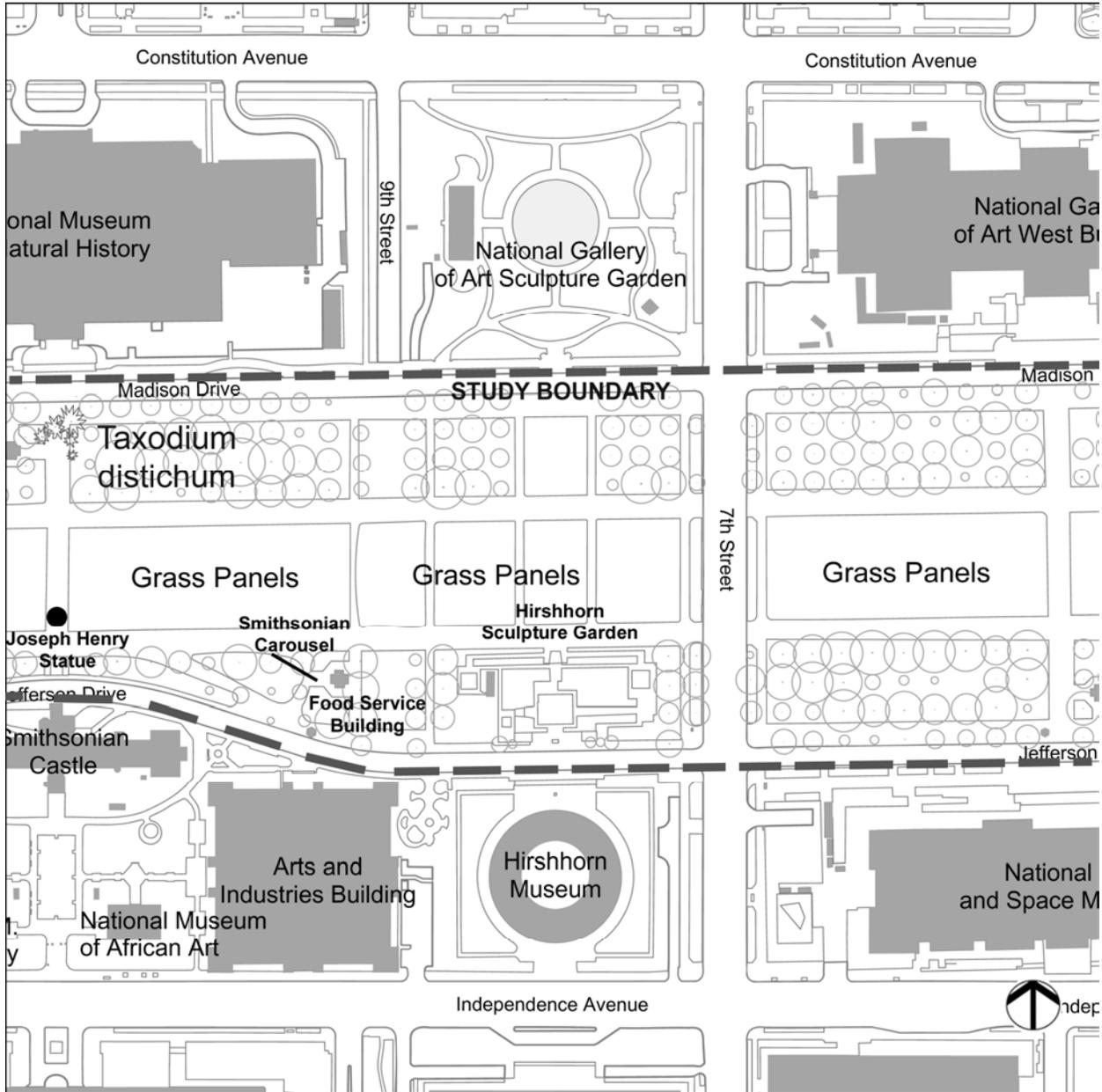
Site Plan



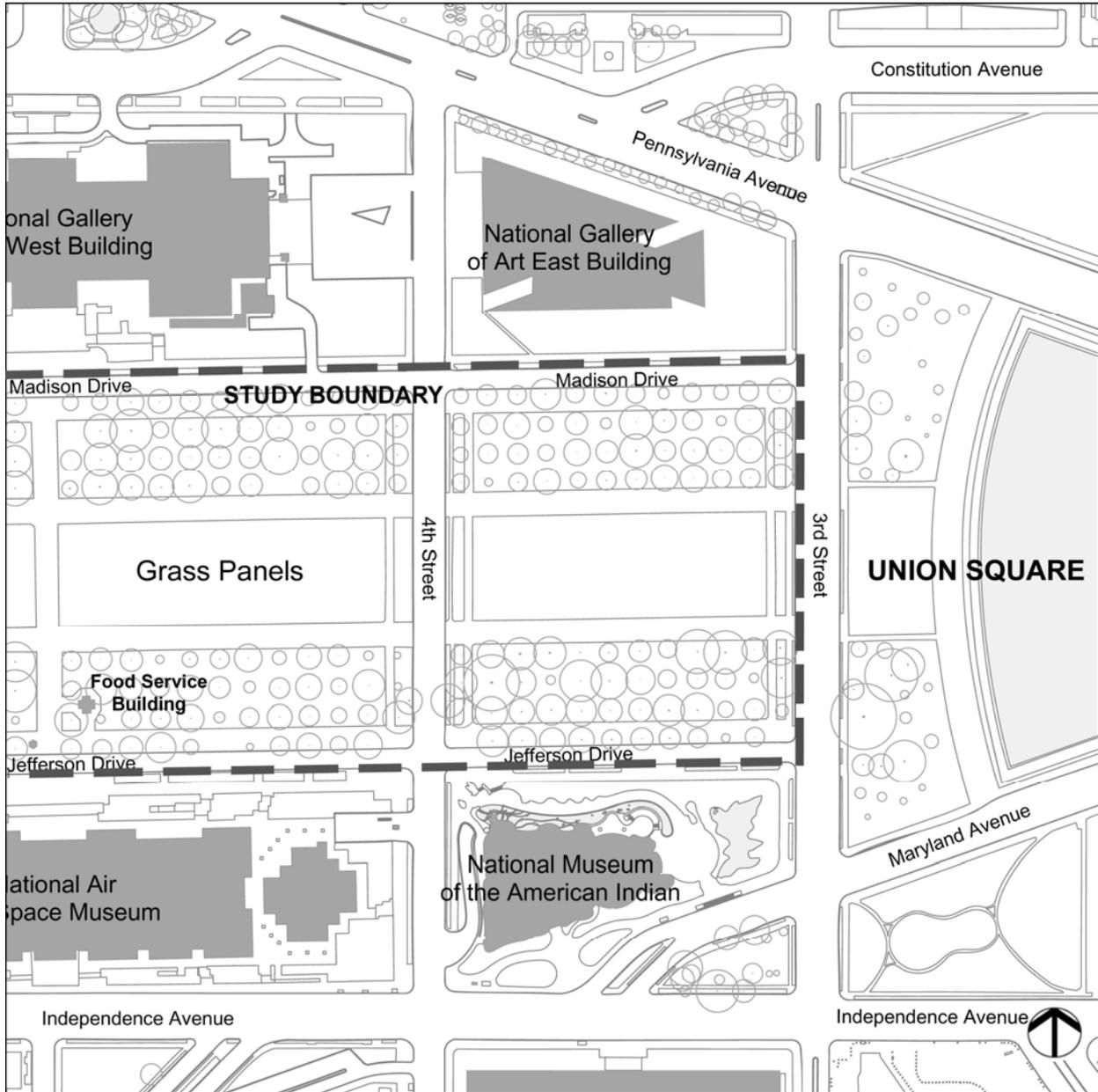
General site plan of the Mall and its setting with key to three detailed plans. Boundaries of the study area are shown on the detailed plans. Unless otherwise indicated, trees shown are elms. (Courtesy NAMA GIS; CLP file "MallPlan1a copy")



Site plan of the Mall, 1 of 3. (Base map courtesy NAMA GIS; CLP file "MallPlan2a 1 copy 3")



Site plan of the Mall, 2 of 3 (Base map courtesy NAMA GIS; "MallPlan22 flat")



Site plan of the Mall, 3 of 3. (Base map courtesy NAMA GIS; CLP file "MallPlan23 flat")

CHRONOLOGY

| Year | Event | Description |
|-------------|---------------|---|
| 1790 | Land Transfer | The three city commissioners appointed by President George Washington were given jurisdiction over city reservations. |
| 1791-1792 | Planned | Maj. Charles Pierre (Peter) L'Enfant created the grand plan for the City of Washington. The Mall was called the Grand Avenue. After Washington fired L'Enfant in March 1792, the plan was modified by his successor, surveyor Andrew Ellicott. Planner: Charles Pierre L'Enfant Planner: Andrew Ellicott |
| 1802 | Land Transfer | Responsibility for the reservations was transferred from the three commissioners to a Superintendent of Public Buildings, also appointed by the president. |
| 1815 | Engineered | The Washington City Canal was begun along the route of Tiber Creek, on the north side of the Mall. Engineer: Benjamin Henry Latrobe |
| 1816-1849 | Land Transfer | The Superintendent of Public Buildings was replaced by a Commissioner of Public Buildings, also under the authority of the president. |
| 1822 | Land Transfer | A Congressional Act of May 7, 1822, allowed the District to lay out and sell lots on four new squares between 3 rd and 6 th Streets. The lots were bounded by the new Maine and Missouri Avenues, built to separate the private land from the federal Mall. |
| 1849-1850 | Built | The Smithsonian Building (now the Castle), designed in the Norman Revival style, was built on the south side of Reservation 3, on axis with 10 th Street. Adolf Cluss rebuilt the structure after a fire in 1865. Architect: James Renwick |
| 1849 | Land Transfer | The office of the Commissioner of Public Buildings was transferred from the authority of the president to the new Department of the Interior. |
| 1851 | Designed | Landscape gardener Andrew Jackson Downing was appointed in 1850 by President Millard Fillmore to create a landscape plan for the Mall (also Lafayette Park and the Ellipse). His picturesque, romantic vision of curving walks and clustered trees was carried out piecemeal over the next 30 years. Landscape Architect: Andrew Jackson Downing |
| 1855 | Built | The Washington (Columbian) Armory was built at 6 th St. and Independence Ave., SW. It held the munitions of volunteer militia companies. During the Civil War, the Armory became the core structure of a large hospital complex. Architect: Maj. William Haywood Bell |

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| 1855 | Built | Congress authorized the Alexandria & Washington Railroad to lay tracks across the Mall along 1 st St. leading north to the Baltimore & Ohio Depot at New Jersey Ave. and C St., NW. |
| 1856 | Built | A marble urn honoring the memory of Andrew Jackson Downing, who had drowned in 1852, was designed by his former partner and placed on the Mall in front of the Castle, along an elliptical walk. Sculptor: Calvert Vaux |
| 1867 | Land Transfer | The D.C. reservations were transferred from the Department of the Interior to the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, War Department, inaugurating an era of rapid park development. |
| 1868 | Built | The first Department of Agriculture building was built at Independence Ave. and 14 th St., SW. Architect: Adolf Cluss |
| 1868 | Planted | The Department of Agriculture gardens were laid out with drives, walks, trees, shrubs, flower beds, pavilions, and greenhouses. The gardens lay between 12 th and 14 th Streets and extended north from the USDA building to the City Canal. |
| 1870 | Destroyed | Because of siltation and odors, the Washington City Canal was filled in. |
| 1870 | Built | B Street North (now Constitution Ave.) was built on top of the main length of the filled-in Washington City Canal. |
| 1872-1873 | Developed | Water pipes were laid in Armory Square, 6 th to 7 th Streets. A road was built through the square and then through the adjoining reservations, from 3 rd to 4½ Streets, NW and SW. |
| 1873 | Built | The Baltimore & Potomac Station was completed on the Mall at 6 th St. NW. Its trainshed and tracks ran across the Mall. The depot obstructed views of the Capitol and the trains caused much noise and pollution. Architect: Joseph Miller Watson |
| 1873-1874 | Graded | Armory Square (6 th -7 th Sts.) was graded and sown with bluegrass seed. The reservation to its east, bounded by 3 rd and 6 th Sts. and Missouri and Maine Aves. – the future Seaton Park – was also graded. |
| 1874-1875 | Graded | Further grading was done on the reservation between 3 rd and 6 th Sts. to raise the ground level to match the adjoining streets. |
| 1874-1875 | Developed | Further improvements were made to the Smithsonian Grounds. Gravel roads and walks were built and 63 gas lights were installed. Benches were moved there from a park on Capitol Hill (probably Lincoln Park), along with a music stand from the Capitol Grounds. |
| 1874-1875 | Planted | Some deciduous trees were planted in the 3 rd -6 th Sts. reservation. |

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| 1874-1875 | Developed | Gravel roads and walks were built in Armory Square. An iron post-and-chain fence was installed along B St. South (now Independence Ave.). |
| 1874-1875 | Planted | Trees were planted in Armory Square along B and 7 th Sts. |
| 1874-1875 | Planted | Trees were planted in the Smithsonian Grounds along B St. between 7 th and 12 th Sts. |
| 1875-1876 | Developed | In the Smithsonian Grounds, iron post-and-chain fencing was installed along B St. and two more gas lights were added. In Armory Square, a gravel carriage road and several walks were built, and 27 gas lamps were erected. The reservations between 3 rd and 6 th Sts. were graded, pipes were laid, gravel walks were built, and six gas lamps were installed. An iron post-and-chain fence was placed along Missouri and Maine Aves. from 4½ to 6 th Sts. |
| 1875-1876 | Planted | 500 more deciduous and evergreen trees were planted in the Smithsonian Grounds. In Armory Square, 190 trees were planted and a row of deciduous trees was planted along the main road. Evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubs were planted in the reservation between 3 rd and 6 th Sts; two large evergreen trees were moved there; sod was laid along walks and grounds were sown with bluegrass seed. |
| 1875-1876 | Removed | Iron gates and a pair of stone pillars were removed from the entrance to the Smithsonian Grounds at 10 th and B Streets. |
| 1876-1877 | Developed | The banks along the main road in Armory Square received additional grading. Soil and sod were laid and gutters built along each side. |
| 1878-1881 | Built | The Romanesque Revival National Museum (today the Arts & Industries Building) was erected by the Smithsonian Institution on Res. 3 between 9 th and 10 th Sts. Architect: Adolf Cluss |
| 1878-1879 | Graded | In the Smithsonian Grounds, gravel was added to roads to raise the grade and improve drainage. The reservation between 4½ and 6 th Sts. and Maine and Missouri Aves. was graded. |
| 1878-1879 | Developed | A main gravel road was built from 6 th St. and Missouri Ave. to 4½ St. Some walks were built in this reservation. |
| 1878-1879 | Planted | Mature trees were moved from the site of the National Museum and transplanted within the Smithsonian Grounds. Evergreen and deciduous trees were planted in the reservations between 3 rd and 7 th Sts. |
| 1879-1880 | Planted | More trees and shrubs were planted in the reservations extending from Armory Square to the Botanic Garden. |

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| 1880 | Planted | Landscaping of the National Museum grounds was completed in the summer of 1880. |
| 1880-1881 | Developed | New gravel roads and walks were built around the National Museum. |
| 1881-1882 | Developed | A new asphalt walk was laid along the south side of the main road through the Smithsonian Grounds. This road extended from 7 th to 12 th Streets, running in front of the Castle and the National Museum. |
| 1881-1882 | Planted | Trees and shrubs were planted in the Smithsonian Grounds to replace those killed by a flood in Feb. 1881. Trees and shrubs were also planted in the reservations from Armory Square to the Botanic Garden, but these do not seem to have been replacements for storm-damaged plants. |
| 1882-1883 | Developed | In the Smithsonian Grounds, hundreds of feet of new brick and cobblestone gutters were laid along the roads. New sewer pipes were also laid. |
| 1882 | Memorialized | The Joseph Henry Statue, a bronze portrait statue honoring the first Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, was unveiled during ceremonies on April 12, 1882. Moved during construction of the Mall roads in the 1930s, it now stands in front of the Castle. Sculptor: William Wetmore Story |
| 1883 | Built | The Baltimore & Potomac Railroad built an iron bridge to carry carriages and pedestrians over the 6 th St. railroad tracks in Armory Square. Work was overseen by the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. The bridge opened on Dec. 1. |
| 1883-1884 | Developed | Additional gutters made of granite, cobblestones, and marble chips were laid along roads and walks in the Smithsonian Grounds, along with hundreds of feet of new drain pipes. |
| 1883-1884 | Removed | Dead and dying trees were removed from densely planted groups in the Smithsonian Grounds. |
| 1885-1886 | Developed | Many improvements were made to the Smithsonian Grounds, including the regravelling of main roads and the addition of gutters and drain pipes. In Armory and Seaton Parks, old walks were replaced with new walks following the routes of social trails. A road with cobblestone gutters was built through Seaton Park from the 6 th St. bridge to the Botanic Garden. |
| 1886-1887 | Developed | One-hundred new benches were placed in Smithsonian, Armory (now called Henry), and Seaton Parks. |
| 1886-1887 | Built | The Baltimore & Pacific Railroad built a stone wall along the west boundary of the area used by the depot. A watchman's lodge was built in Seaton Park, near Maine Ave. in the southwest section. |

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| 1886-1887 | Paved | The main road through the Smithsonian Grounds, extending from 7 th St. to the National Museum, was paved with asphalt. |
| 1886-1887 | Planted | Evergreen trees were planted in Henry Park. A willow tree and flowers were planted in a circle in front of the Armory Building. |
| 1886-1887 | Removed | In Seaton Park, a “dilapidated” brick house near 4½ St. and Missouri Ave. was torn down. The bricks were reused in the parks. |
| 1887 | Built | The Army Medical Museum, a three-story brick Romanesque Revival structure, was built at Independence Ave. and 7 th St., SW. Architect: Adolf Cluss |
| 1887-1896 | Built | A berm was built in Armory Square to hide the tracks of the B&P Railroad. |
| 1887-1888 | Paved | In the Smithsonian Grounds, concrete pavement was laid from the B St. sidewalk to the Medical Museum, and a new road was built from the main road to the museum’s south front. Asphalt replaced gravel on the main road from the National Museum to the Castle’s west end. |
| 1887-1888 | Planted | Twenty-one old and dying trees were removed from the Smithsonian Grounds. In Henry Park, 27 evergreens damaged by smoke from trains were transplanted to other parks in the city. |
| 1887-1888 | Removed | Old shanties built by the Smithsonian that stood east of the National Museum were destroyed. Post-and-chain fencing was removed from the south sides of Smithsonian and Henry Parks and reused around other city parks. A “substantial” iron railing was installed around Henry Park this year or soon thereafter. |
| 1888-1889 | Paved | In the Smithsonian Grounds, the main gravel road from the west side of the Castle to 12 th St. was repaved in asphalt. Belgian block pavers were placed at intersections with gravel roads. A new gravel road was laid from the west side of the National Museum at B St. South to the main drive. Other new asphalt walks were built. |
| 1889-1890 | Paved | Gravel walks and roads around the National Museum were repaved in asphalt. Asphalt was laid around the Army Medical Museum. In Henry Park, the road around the Armory Building – now housing the U.S. Fish & Fisheries Commission – was widened. |
| 1890-1891 | Paved | Gravel roads and walks from the west end of the Castle to the Smithsonian Park entrance at 10 th and B St. North were repaved in asphalt. In Henry Park, asphalt replaced gravel on the walk from the U.S. Fish & Fisheries Commission Building to 7 th St. |
| 1891-1895 | Paved | More gravel and board walks in Smithsonian Park were repaved with asphalt. By 1893, about a third of all roads and walks in the park were asphalt. |

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| 1893-1894 | Planted | More deciduous and evergreen trees were planted in Henry Park. Violent storms in August 1893 and Feb. 1894 damaged many trees and shrubs. |
| 1894 | Built | The General Noble Redwood Tree House, the trunk of a 2000-year-old giant sequoia from California, was placed east of the Dept. of Agriculture building. |
| 1894-1895 | Paving | In Henry Park, a new gravel walk was built from the main drive to 6 th St. In Seaton Park, a stone sidewalk was laid along the south side of the main drive running between 3 rd and 6 th Streets. |
| 1901-1902 | Planned | The Senate Park (McMillan) Commission developed a plan for the city. Focusing on the Mall area, the plan sought to recapture the spirit of the L'Enfant Plan through elimination of discordant elements while allowing for development of new buildings and parks designed on City Beautiful principles. |
| 1904 | Built | The new National Museum (now the National Museum of Natural History) was built on the north side of Reservation 3 between 9 th and 12 th Sts., Constitution Ave., and Madison Dr., NW. Architects: Hornblower & Marshall |
| 1904-1908 | Built | Two wings of the new Department of Agriculture building were built behind the original building. Architects: Rankin & Kellogg |
| 1907 | Removed | The Baltimore & Potomac Railroad Depot and its tracks were removed from Henry Park and 6 th Street. |
| 1913-1923 | Built | The Freer Gallery of Art was built on the south side of Reservation 3, east of 12 th St., between Independence Ave. and Jefferson Dr., SW. Architect: Charles A. Platt |
| 1918 | Built | When the U.S. entered World War I, temporary concrete structures, known as "tempo," were built on the east end of the Mall to house the offices of federal war workers. Other structures, such as a power plant, were also built. |
| 1921 | Built | The foundation was laid for the George Washington Victory Memorial Building on the north side of the block between 4 th and 7 th Streets. Architects: Tracy & Swartout |
| 1923 | Built | By this year, the Department of Agriculture had built many new greenhouses along Constitution Ave. |
| 1925 | Land Transfer | The name of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds was changed to the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks, and the office was transferred from the Army Corps of Engineers to the office of the U.S. President. |

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| 1930 | Removed | The original Department of Agriculture building was razed. |
| 1930 | Built | The central pavilion of the Department of Agriculture was constructed on the site of the original building and connected with the two wings of 1904-1908. Architects: Rankin & Kellogg |
| 1930s | Designed | Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. was the primary designer of the revised McMillan Plan scheme for the Mall. In the new design, wide lawns bordered by two rows of American elm trees extended between 3 rd and 14 th Streets, allowing a clear sightline between the Capitol and the Washington Monument. Landscape Architect: Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. |
| 1931 | Removed | The Mall began to be cleared of most gardens and structures from 1 st St. to 14 th St., including Union Square from 1 st to 3 rd Sts., and Madison to Jefferson. |
| c. 1931-late 1930s | Removed | Most of the World War I tempors were demolished. |
| 1932-1936 | Built | The majority of construction work on the Mall, from 3 rd St. to 14 th St., was carried out in these years, including grading, laying utilities, removing trees, planting American elms, laying sod, and constructing roads and sidewalks. Olmsted worked with numerous prominent planners to adapt the McMillan Plan design for modern requirements. Landscape Architect: Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. |
| 1933 | Land Transfer | Under Executive Order #6166, June 10, 1933, all public lands and buildings were transferred to the Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations, Dept. of the Interior. On March 2, 1934, the name was changed to the National Park Service. The Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks became National Capital Parks. |
| 1934 | Land Transfer | The USDA Grounds, Res. 3B, south of the North Mall Drive was transferred to the Dept. of the Interior about April 7, 1934. |
| 1935 | Planted | 333 American elms were planted on the Mall in June, July, and August. |
| 1937 | Destroyed | The foundation of the George Washington Victory Memorial Building was destroyed when the site was reserved for the construction of the National Gallery of Art (the West Building). |
| 1937-1941 | Built | The National Gallery of Art was built on Reservations 4 and 5 (formerly Henry Park and Seaton Park West) between 4 th and 7 th Sts., Constitution Ave., and Madison Dr., N.W. Architect: John Russell Pope |
| 1940 | Destroyed | The Department of Agriculture greenhouses along Constitution Ave. were demolished. |

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| c. 1941 | Built | Tempos to house federal war workers for World War II were erected on the west end of the Mall on Res. B, at the north end of the block between 12 th and 14 th Streets. |
| 1942 | Land Transfer | The north part of the USDA Grounds, Res. 3B, was transferred to the Dept. of Interior on Feb. 3. |
| 1962 | Built | The World War II tempos were removed and the National Museum of American History (originally The National Museum of History and Technology) was built on Reservation 3B, between 12 th and 14 th Sts., Constitution Ave., and Madison Dr., NW. Architects: Steinman, Cain & White |
| 1964 | Destroyed | The former Washington Armory, the home of the U.S. Commission of Fisheries from 1881 to 1932, was demolished. The site is now occupied by the Air & Space Museum. |
| 1966 | Planned | The "Washington Mall Master Plan" was developed by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill. Architects: Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM) |
| 1969 | Destroyed | The Army Medical Museum was razed to free the site for the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden. |
| 1971 | Removed | The final tempo on the Mall, tempo C, between 4 th and 6 th Streets, SW, was removed. |
| 1972-1976 | Built | The National Air & Space Museum was built on Reservations 4 and 5 between 4 th and 7 th Sts., Independence Ave., and Jefferson Dr., SW. Architect: Gyo Obata of Hellmuth Obata Kassabaum (HOK) |
| 1973 | Planned | The "Washington Mall Circulation Systems" plan by SOM was issued, adapting and enlarging on ideas presented in the 1966 "Washington Mall Master Plan." This serves as the current Mall Master Plan. Architects: Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM) |
| 1974 | Built | The Hirshhorn Museum of Art and Sculpture Garden was built on Reservation 3A between 7 th and 9 th Sts., Independence Ave., and Jefferson Dr., SW. Architect: Gordon Bunshaft of SOM |
| 1974-1975 | Paved | The asphalt Inner Mall Drives (Vista Drives) were removed and replaced with gravel walks. |
| 1975 | Planted | The final tree panel on the Mall was planted with elms; this was probably where tempo C had stood. Plantings since then have been replacement elms. |

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| 1978 | Built | The East Building of the National Gallery of Art was constructed on Reservation 6 in the trapezoidal block formed by Pennsylvania Ave., 3 rd and 4 th Sts., and Madison Dr., NW. Architect: I.M. Pei |
| 1987 | Built | Two underground museums, The Museum of African Art and The Arthur M. Sackler Gallery of Asian Art, were built beneath the southeast quadrant of the Smithsonian Quadrangle behind the Castle in Reservation 3, just north of Independence Ave., SW. Architect: Jean Paul Carlhian |
| 1987-1989 | Built | The National Sculpture Garden concession building was completed on Reservation 3A between 7 th and 9 th Sts., Constitution Ave., and Madison Dr., NW. Architect: Charles Bassett of SOM |
| 1994 | Built | Four new food service buildings were built on the Mall. Architect: Oehrlein & Associates |
| 1999 | Built | The National Sculpture Garden was built on Reservation 3A. Landscape Architect: Olin Partnership |
| 2004 | Built | The National Museum of the American Indian was erected near the east end of the Mall between 3 rd and 4 th Sts., Jefferson Dr., and Independence Ave., SW. Architects: Douglas Cardinal, John Paul Jones & GBQC Architects |

Statement of Significance

The national significance of the Mall cannot be overstated. The central landscape itself, as defined for this inventory, constitutes the fundamental feature of the Mall, clarifying the vista and thus the symbolic relation between the Capitol and the Washington Monument, representing the legislative and executive branches of government (since the Washington Monument stands on axis with the White House) – the primary design intent of both the L’Enfant and the McMillan Plans. The Mall is therefore a symbol of American democracy. Conceived in 1791, modified in 1902, and constructed, for the most part, in 1932-36, the Mall lies at the very center of the plan of the federal city. The Period of Significance for the Mall includes two separate periods: 1791-1792, encompassing the year the L’Enfant Plan was created, and the subsequent year, when changes were made to the plan by L’Enfant’s successor, Andrew Ellicott; and 1902-1975, extending from the publication of the McMillan Plan, encompassing the years 1932-1936 when the plan was revised and largely implemented, to the year when the final tree panel was planted with elm trees following the removal of the last temporary war building a few years earlier.

The Mall gains its significance not only from being part of the L’Enfant Plan, but also from its inclusion in the central area of the McMillan Plan, and the adaptation of this plan by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., and other planners in the 1930s. Olmsted, one of the leading twentieth-century American landscape architects, for many decades played a major role in the design of Washington and helped oversee the Mall’s construction in 1932-36. This construction was authorized by an Act of Congress passed in March 1929, and funded by the Public Works Administration in the early years of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s administration. Today the Mall provides the setting for hundreds of public events each year, from political demonstrations to cultural celebrations, all of them expressions of American citizens’ First Amendment rights of free speech and assembly.

The Mall was listed individually by name only on the National Register on October 15, 1966. The supporting nomination was prepared fourteen years later and listed on May 19, 1981, with the boundaries of the Mall – at that time called the “National Mall” – defined as “Constitution and Pennsylvania Avenues on the north, 1st Street, N.W., on the east, Independence and Maryland Avenues on the south, and 14th Street, N.W., on the west” (Sec. 7, p. 1, Donald C. Pfanz, “National Mall,” National Register Nomination, May 19, 1981). These boundaries encompass a larger area than this Cultural Landscapes Inventory, and include Union Square, which has been treated as a separate landscape in the National Park Service’s Cultural Landscapes database. Also, this nomination was prepared before Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Periods of Significance were part of the nomination process. Instead, there was a category called “Specific Dates,” which for the Mall were given as 1791-1976, with no explanation provided. The nomination includes very little landscape description.

The Mall is also listed on the National Register under the nomination, “The L’Enfant Plan of the City of Washington” (listed April 24, 1997). As defined in this nomination, the L’Enfant Plan as a whole and its constituent parts, including the Mall, are significant under Criteria A, B, and C:

The plan meets National Register Criterion A for its relationship with the creation of the new United States of America and the creation of a capital city; it meets Criterion B because of its design by Pierre L’Enfant, and subsequent development and enhancement by numerous significant persons and groups responsible for the city’s landscape architecture and regional planning; and it

meets Criterion C as a well-preserved, comprehensive, Baroque plan with Beaux Arts modifications. (Leach and Barthold, "The L'Enfant Plan in the City of Washington, D.C.," NR nomination, Section 8, page 2)

However, the description of the Mall in this nomination is limited to the following: "a flat open greensward lined with evenly spaced elms to frame the reciprocal vistas between the Capitol and the Washington Monument." (L'Enfant Plan NR nomination, Sec. 8, p. 34)

The L'Enfant Plan National Register nomination was used as the basis for a draft National Historic Landmark nomination, "The Plan of the City of Washington," completed in 2000. Since the NHL is still a draft, assessment of the Mall's significance must follow the listed National Register nomination, but nonetheless the NHL draft nomination offers additional analysis clarifying Criterion C:

The historic plan of the City of Washington is the foremost example in the United States of two combined nationally significant planning styles – the Baroque and the City Beautiful. . . . the design and evolution of the two combined plans is even more outstanding as a unified entity that has no parallel in American city planning. ("The Plan of the City of Washington," National Historic Landmark Nomination, draft, July 14, 2000)

There have been no major changes to the concept of the Mall outlined in the McMillan Plan and constructed in 1932-36. The Mall retains much of its historic circulation system and many of its historic trees and small-scale features. The Mall possesses a high level of historic integrity and historic significance.

Physical History

1791-1799: The L'Enfant and Ellicott Plans

The Constitution had provided for the creation of a federal city, and the new capital city of Washington, D.C., was located on the Potomac River as a compromise between Northern and Southern interests to settle Southern war debts. On July 16, 1790, President George Washington signed the Residence Act, creating the District of Columbia; in the fall of that year, Washington examined many sites along the Potomac River, finally choosing a location at the confluence of the Potomac with the smaller Eastern Branch (now known as the Anacostia River), several miles north of his estate at Mount Vernon, Virginia. In January 1791, Washington appointed three commissioners to administer the district. Ten years later, on December 1, 1800, the federal government moved from Philadelphia to the District.

The District included the City of Washington, set within the bowl-shaped area bounded by the shorelines of the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers and Rock Creek, and the northern escarpment soon marked by Boundary Road (now Florida Avenue). The remainder of the District was occupied by Alexandria County, on the west shore of the Potomac, and Washington County, on the east shore.

The site of the new city lay on the Potomac River's fall line, marking the furthest navigable extent of tidal waters from Chesapeake Bay and the ocean. The Potomac offered a transportation route into the country's western lands beyond the Appalachian Mountains, and connection with the extensive trade route of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers.

Flat land lay along the eastern shore of the Potomac and extended for some distance north. to a steep escarpment that ran in a curving line from east to west. Numerous stream valleys cut through the river terraces. (Gutheim 1977:19) Much of the land in the District was wooded, with occasional clearings carved out for farms or roads. Historian Frederick Gutheim recounts the impressions of several visitors to Washington in the 1790s:

Isaac Weld, Jr., reported in 1796 that "excepting the streets and avenues and a small part of the ground adjoining the public buildings, the whole place is covered with trees." A few locations, wrote Thomas Twining in the same year, "assumed more the appearance of a regular avenue, the trees having been cut down in a straight line." Francis Baily thought that perhaps half of the area projected for the city had been cleared of trees by the fall of 1796, and perceived the site as "broad avenues in a park bounded on each side by thick woods." (Gutheim 1977:21)

The area of the District had been settled in the second half of the seventeenth century, with land cleared for tobacco plantations. By the 1790s, these properties were occupied by second- and third-generation settlers, who farmed lands becoming exhausted by tobacco cultivation: "Many were poor and nearly all were eager to liquidate their real estate holdings." (Gutheim 1977:15) The future Mall lay in the watershed of Tiber Creek, also known as Goose Creek, whose waters rose in the lands of a plantation called Rome. (Gutheim 1977:20) Along the north shore of the Tiber, from the river to the foot of Capitol Hill, was the farm of David Burnes. In the marshes that bordered the creek grew "wild oats, reeds, and thickets of berry bushes and other shrubs." (Joseph & Wheelock 1999:13)

Within the boundaries of the District were situated the village of Georgetown, established in 1751, and two small settlements, Carrollsburg and Hamburg, which had been laid out but had few houses. (Reps 1991:3) Alexandria (founded 1749) lay at the southern corner, on the Virginia side of the river. In March 1791, Washington succeeded in convincing the proprietors, or owners, of Carrollsburg and Hamburg to let their land be used for the new city:

. . . the proprietors offered to cede their land in trust to the president, gave him full powers to decide on and adopt a city plan, authorized the federal government to take title to all of the land in streets and to half of the city lots, and required payment only for sites reserved for the public buildings at a modest 25 pounds per acre. The remaining city lots would be distributed to the proprietors in proportion to their original holdings. (Reps 1991:4)

Sources vary as to the original proprietors of the land that would make up the Mall. The 1874 Toner Map shows the land lying within the holdings of David Burnes. A “recent reassessment” states that the Mall land lay within two large tracts: Beall’s Levels, owned by James Williams and Uriah Forrest, and Cerne Abbey Manor, owned by Daniel Carroll. (see HABS DC-678, “National Mall and Monument Grounds,” 1990-93:1)

The city’s reservations were managed under several different jurisdictions from the establishment of Washington, D.C., in 1790 up through 1933 and their transfer to the National Park Service. From July 1790, the three district commissioners had this authority. Twelve years later, these positions were eliminated and the duties transferred to a Superintendent of Public Buildings, also appointed by the president. In 1816, the Superintendent of Public Buildings was replaced by a Commissioner of Public Buildings, at first acting under the authority of the president and then, after its creation in 1849, the Department of the Interior.

In late 1790 or early 1791, Washington hired the French engineer and architect Pierre (Peter) Charles L’Enfant to lay out the new city. In only a few months, L’Enfant created a unique city plan that forcefully symbolized the expectations of the American democracy using European, specifically French, Baroque models. (see Scott 1991:43) In the L’Enfant plan,

[f]undamental tenets of the Constitution – the balance of powers inherent in executive versus legislative prerogatives and federal versus states rights – were built into the matrix The spatial complexity of the design, always viewed either as geometric ideal or as a response to the topography of the site, was also the means of expressing this fundamental iconographic program. (Scott 1991:37)

L’Enfant’s plan combined a rectangular street grid with diagonal ceremonial boulevards connecting important sites and structures. Fifteen squares were dispersed throughout the city for development by the individual states. The focus of the plan was the visual relationship between the Capitol and the “President’s House,” joined by an avenue named for Pennsylvania, and also by a “grand avenue,” an extension of the axes of the two buildings west and south, respectively. It is not known whether L’Enfant was influenced by a schematic plan sketched by Thomas Jefferson in March 1791 that showed a small modular city laid out between Rock Creek and Tiber Creek, with public walks joining the Capitol and President’s House somewhat in the manner of L’Enfant’s grand avenue. (Scott 1991:39)

At least four drawings of the plan were prepared by L'Enfant. The only one to have survived is a version he gave to Washington in August 1791, which has greatly faded; a facsimile of it was prepared in 1887. (Reps 1991:20) Three primary sources give details on L'Enfant's intentions for the Mall: a letter from L'Enfant to Washington dated June 22, 1791; an official description appearing in the *Gazette of the United States* (Philadelphia), on January 4, 1791; and the anonymous *Essai sur la ville de Washington*, published in New York in 1795. (see Scott 1991:40ff)

L'Enfant first described the Mall in the June 22, 1791 letter:

. . . I placed the three grand departments of States contiguous to the presidial [sic] palace and on the way leading to the congressional house the gardens of the one together with the park and other improvement on the dependency are connected with the publique walk and avenue to the congress House in a manner as must [most] forme a whole as grand as it will be agreeable and convenient to the whole city . . . (Scott 1991:40)

The “public walk and avenue” would be a “place of general resort” with theaters, assembly rooms, academies, “and all such sort of places as may be attractive to the [l]earned and afford diver[s]ion to the idle.” (L'Enfant's “Report accompanying his 1st City Plan to the U.S. President,” L'Enfant Papers, LOC. The paragraph is quoted in full in note 20 of Scott's 1991 essay, p. 40.) In another letter to Washington, dated August 19, 1791, L'Enfant “reiterated the importance of the ‘publick walk’ in giving to the city ‘a superiority of agreements over most of the city of the world.’” (Scott 1991:40, note 21)

The official description of January 4, 1792 provided more details. The Mall, designated by H, is described as

A grand avenue 400 feet in breadth, and about a mile in length, bordered with gardens ending in a slope from the houses on each side: this avenue lead to the monument A. and connects the Congress garden with the (I) President's park and the (K) Well improved field [today the Ellipse] . . . Every lot deep coloured red, with green plots, designates some of the situations which command the most agreeable prospects, and which are best calculated for spacious houses and gardens, such as may accommodate foreign ministers. & c.

L'Enfant used the site's existing topography for dramatic and architectural effect. He placed the Capitol on an elevation, Jenkin's Hill, about a mile removed from the river. He set the President's House on another rise, and connected these two governmental centers with a broad tree-lined boulevard named for the state where the constitutional conventions had been held and where the federal government was now sitting. The reciprocity of views between important structures was a major theme of the plan, visually and symbolically tying the city together. (Gutheim 1977:25)

L'Enfant ran axes composed of broad lawns, or *tapis vert*, due west from the Capitol and due south from the President's House. At their junction he placed a memorial equestrian statue honoring George Washington as commander of the Continental Army, which had been authorized by Congress in 1785. The axis running west from the Capitol was the “Grand Avenue.” A promenade, 400 feet wide and about a mile long, ran down its center. Fine

residences for ambassadors and other notables were situated along the promenade to the north and south, and it was lined by their sloping gardens.

All buildings on the Mall would have featured views of the river to the west, symbolizing the source of the country's future wealth. The view of the river "would 'acquire a new Swe[e]tness being had over the green of a field well level and made bri[li]ant by shade of [a] few tree[s] Artfully planted.'" (Scott 1991:42 and note 30; L'Enfant to Washington, June 22, 1791)

As described in the 1795 *Essai*, the Mall would be the "center of the economic and social life of the city", featuring "luxurious shops and residences"; the "facades on the north side facing the canal were integrated by an arcade, porticoes, and triumphal arches", and a "winter garden" and an "elegant shopping precinct [were] modeled on the Palais-Royal". A central garden featured a "piece d'eau [artificial pond] . . . bordered by allees and dense groves of trees." As Scott says: "The Mall was to become the meeting place for people of all states of the union and of all countries." (Scott 1991:40)

At the Mall's east end, an immense cascade was to flow down the western face of Capitol Hill. L'Enfant described this to Washington as follows:

*I propose . . . letting the Tiber . . . [issue] from under the base of the Congress building . . . [to] form a cascade of forty feet high, or more than one hundred wide, which would produce the most happy effect in rolling down to fill up the canal and discharge itself in the Potomac, of which it would then appear the main spring when seen through that grand and majestic avenue intersecting with the prospect from the palace [president's house], at a point . . . designated . . . for . . . a grand equestrian statue. (L'Enfant to Washington, June 27, 1791, in Reps 1991:20, citing Elizabeth Sarah Kite, *L'Enfant and Washington, 1791-1792*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1929)*

At the foot of Capitol Hill, L'Enfant proposed locating a sculpture of his own design. Titled "Liberty Hailing Nature out of Its Slumber," it was to be a complex allegorical work expressing his iconographic theme for the city as a whole. (see Scott 1991:42 for details)

L'Enfant's unique and immensely complex plan had a myriad of probable sources. Foremost among these were the Baroque estates and city plans of France, including the avenues, public spaces, and gardens of Versailles, Paris, and Marly. French and English picturesque landscape theory also likely provided an influence:

L'Enfant almost certainly intended that a large part of the greater public park focusing on the Mall would be planted in the natural, picturesque style of landscape gardening, attested to by his few trees "Artfully planted" on the monument grounds. . . . It is the fusion of the formal and picturesque elements that gives the L'Enfant plan its character. (Scott 1991:43; see also Gutheim 1977:27)

L'Enfant either resigned or was dismissed after he razed the foundations of Daniel Carroll of Duddington's new home on Capitol Hill late one night because they extended into the route of one of his planned boulevards, New Jersey Avenue. Andrew Ellicott, the city surveyor, was appointed to replace L'Enfant, and it was Ellicott's somewhat altered and simplified version of

the L'Enfant plan that was engraved and used for land distribution. (Likely most or all of Ellicott's changes were made with the approval of Thomas Jefferson, and perhaps at his direction; Reps 1991:27; see also Kenneth R. Bowling, *Peter Charles L'Enfant*)

Ellicott's version of the plan was printed in November 1792 by engravers Thackara and Vallance of Philadelphia, the "version that came to be regarded as the authoritative record of the government's intentions for the capital city." (Reps 1991:27; see also 4ff) As Gutheim writes,

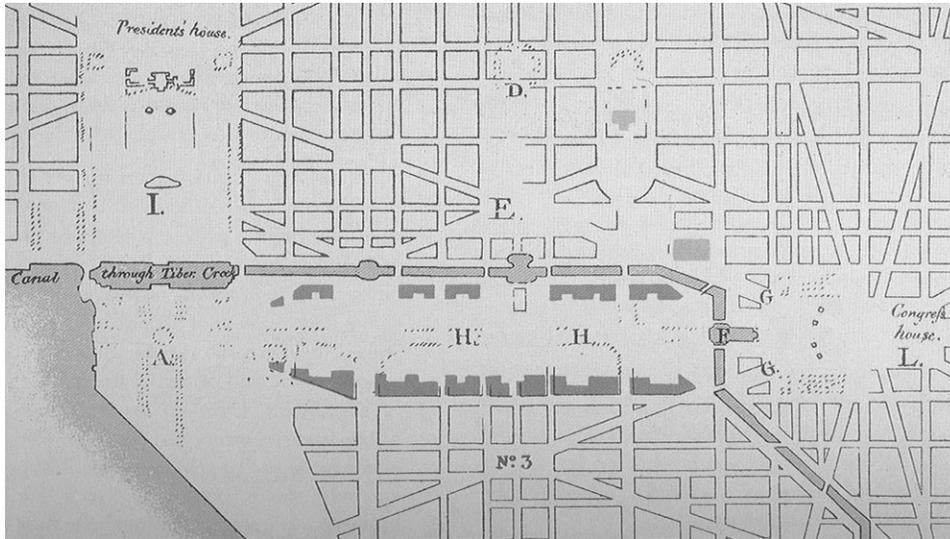
What is commonly referred to as the "L'Enfant Plan" embraces not only the initial design by L'Enfant, but its transposition by Andrew Ellicott into the first official map of the city; the 1803 plats by the city surveyor, Nicholas King; various building regulations, by George Washington and others, to implement the plan; and several documents, particularly the manuscript map, that were drawn by L'Enfant and illustrate his intentions, permitting more detailed interpretation of his basic design. (Gutheim 1977:1, and reference to his Bibliographic Essay, pp. 373-403)

The function of two architectural features on the canal along the Mall is not known. They appear on the second map prepared by engravers Thackara and Vallance in the fall of 1792. The first feature, located between 7th and 9th Streets, was referred to in the January 1792 description as a fountain, "but its scale and architectural complexity suggest a more important function". (Scott 1991:41) The second, between 10th and 11th Streets, was a structure that was "probably for public entertainment and education – possibly a theater or a museum." (Scott 1991:41)

Little more happened to speed the development of the Mall for many decades. In October 1796, the commissioners advised Washington to construct an "elegant building" on the Mall to spur its use. (Scott 1991:46) In a letter of March 2, 1797, George Washington requested that streets, squares, lots, and parcels shown in the city plan be transferred to the three city commissioners for the use of the federal government. He noted that the Mall was to provide "for the health and ornament of the city". (Scott 1991:46) He defined the boundaries of the Mall, an area of 277 acres, as follows:

the east side of First Street, West, [where] it intersects the north side of Maryland avenue, until it intersects the north side of South B Street [now Independence Avenue], thence west with the north side of South B Street, until it intersects the east side of Fifteenth Street, West, until it intersects the south side of Canal Street, drawn at the distance of eight feet on the south side of said canal, thence east with the south side of said Canal Street, until it intersects the south side of Pennsylvania Avenue, until it intersects the east side of First Street, West. (Olszewski Mall:5; Olszewski cites John B. Blake, Commissioner of Public Buildings, to the Hon. Jefferson Davis, Sec. of War, May 15, 1856, cited in Senate Executive Document No. 88, 34th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 14.)

Though its boundaries were thus delineated, it was many more decades before the Mall took shape.



At the center of his plan, L'Enfant placed two visual axes representing the relationship between the executive and legislative branches. Detail from 1887 facsimile of the L'Enfant Plan. (from Reps 1997:21; CLP file "Lenfant 1791 facs 1887 Mall BW 5")



Andrew Ellicott's 1792 version of the city plan clarified details of the L'Enfant Mall plan while retaining its fundamental elements. (from Reps 1997:39; CLP file "Thack & Val Mall detail BW")

1800-1866: Early Structures, the Downing Plan, and the Civil War

Almost nothing of L'Enfant's vision for the Mall was realized in the nineteenth century. No federal funds were allotted for development, and there was little impetus for construction. Buildings began to rise around the Capitol, the White House, and other existing structures that served as nodes of development, as well as on Pennsylvania Avenue. The view along Pennsylvania Avenue between the Capitol and the White House – one of the two critical views in the L'Enfant Plan – was soon hidden by the construction of the south wing of the Treasury Building in 1855-60.

The first use of the name "Mall" to refer to the axis extending west from the Capitol appeared in 1802 on a map, *Washington City*, in S.S. Moore and T.W. Jones, *The Travellers' Directory . . . of the Main Road from Philadelphia to Washington* (Philadelphia: Mathew [sic] Carey, 1802; in Reps 1991:60-61). The map shows a formal Mall lined by nonexistent trees. The name "Mall" came from the French game *Paille Maille*, meaning "ball-mallet", a game that resembled a cross between golf and croquet and was played on a long, narrow lawn lined with walls or trees. Imported into England in the seventeenth century and renamed "Pall Mall," it became a favorite pastime of Charles II, who played it in St. James' Park. A nearby road was renamed Pall Mall, and hence the word "mall" took on the connotation of a pleasure drive. (From McClure, "Brief Statement on the History and Use of the 17 Original Reservations," from memo to Director (NPS) from Director, National Capital Parks, re: Studies on National Capital Parks by Stanley W. McClure, recent updates, June 30, 1971, NARA files, also website toycrossing.com/croquet/history.shtml)

Washington Canal

The Tiber Creek ran along the north edge of the Mall. As an aid to commerce, the creek was transformed into the Washington Canal by the private Washington Canal Company, chartered on May 1, 1802. The company hired architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe to design the structure, and his drawings were completed in February 1804. (As city surveyor, Latrobe prepared a plan for a national university to be located on the Mall between 13th and 15th Streets; this was never realized.) The City Canal was built by 1815. (NPS historian George Olszewski says between 1826 and 1842; Olszewski Mall:7). To the west, the canal extended to 15th Street; to the east, it ran along the Mall to 5th Street, where it then followed Pennsylvania Avenue before turning south down 3rd Street and crossing the Mall. South of the Mall it branched, joined with the James Creek Canal, and then emptied into the Anacostia River at Buzzard Point. (on canal, see also Gutheim 1977:44, 48; Reps 1991:54, 190; and Scott 1991:47)

The city government bought the canal in 1831, and the following year it was widened from 80 to 150 feet (Act of Congress, May 31, 1832), further cutting into the Mall. (Scott 1991:47, note 58) An eight-foot-wide street was laid out along the canal's south side. These actions resulted in a strip of land seventy-feet wide being removed from the north edge of the Mall, which skewed the Mall's center line off the axis of the Capitol. (Scott 1991:47; Olszewski Mall:7)

A bridge crossed the canal at 12th Street. In May 1822, the city was authorized to build one or more additional bridges between 2nd and 6th Streets. (Statutes at Large, 3:391-392) Lack of money forced Latrobe to omit many of the ornamental water features L'Enfant had planned for the canal: a "turning basin at 8th Street," a "cascade down Capitol Hill," and a "settling basin at the foot of Capitol Hill." (Gutheim 1977:44)

The canal and its locks were lined with wood. Its shallow waters frequently became filled with silt, making navigation difficult. Sewage drained into it, and the canal ultimately proved to be a public nuisance. It failed to become important for commerce, “an indication in part of the federal government’s unwillingness or inability to commit sufficient funds for the building structures to endure.” (Gutheim 1977:47)

The Chesapeake & Ohio Canal, originating in Georgetown, was built beginning in 1828 and was joined with the City Canal at 17th and North B Streets by the mid-1830s: “The canal network and bustling ports oriented the city toward the river. The river basin flatlands were occupied by urban functions; the highlands remained devoted to farms and country or summer residences.” (Gutheim 1977:49)

Other Uses of Mall Lands and Surrounding Areas

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Congress ceded federal rights over parcels of land on the Mall to private entities. An Act of May 7, 1822, allowed the city to lay out and sell building lots in an area at the east end of the Mall bounded by 3rd and 6th Streets and Pennsylvania and Maryland Avenues. Two new roads were created to separate the new lots from the Mall – Missouri Avenue, parallel to Pennsylvania Avenue, and Maine Avenue, parallel to Maryland Avenue (not to be confused with the contemporary streets named Maine and Missouri Avenues). (Olszewski Mall:9-10; HABS DC-678:2) An Act of May 31, 1832, authorized the extension of three streets – 7th, 12th, and 14th – across the Mall. (Olszewski Mall:11)

Other land on the Mall was used for private purposes. People raised produce in small gardens, grazed livestock, and stored lumber, firewood, and trash. (Scott 1991:46, note 48) In 1804 and 1805, agricultural fairs were held near the Market House on 7th Street. (Scott 1991:46, note 47) Just north of the Mall, in the triangular area bounded by Pennsylvania Avenue, 15th Street, and B Street North, a dense collection of wooden buildings grew up which became notorious as Murder Bay and, during the war, as Hooker’s Division, home to many saloons and brothels. Just south of the Mall was a large slave market.

Baltimore & Ohio Railroad

Railways soon overtook canals as the main form of commercial transportation in the U.S. (Gutheim 1977:49) In February 1835, Congress granted permission to the Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) Railroad to run its line into the city. The railroad’s first depot stood by the canal, at Pennsylvania Avenue and 2nd Street, N.W. (Olszewski Mall:7) A later depot was built somewhat further north, at New Jersey Avenue and C Street. In 1855, Congress allowed the Alexandria & Washington Railroad to lay tracks along First Street, at the western foot of Capitol Hill, heading to the B&O depot.

Washington Monument

In 1785, Congress had proposed the erection of an bronze equestrian statue to Washington in the District of Columbia, depicting him as the commander of the Continental Army and the hero of the Revolutionary War. L’Enfant created a site for the statue at the intersection of the Mall and White House axes, but it was not until 1833 that the Washington Monument Society was founded and began soliciting designs for an architectural monument. In 1836 they selected the

project of architect Robert Mills, featuring a gigantic 600-foot-high obelisk rising from a circular Doric colonnade that would house portrait statues and Washington's tomb.

In 1848, Congress granted the society a thirty-seven-acre site encompassing the crossing of the two axes. The cornerstone was laid on July 4. Construction began the following year on a simpler composition comprising the obelisk minus the colonnade. Because of political agitation and lack of money, work stopped in 1855 after the shaft had risen to 156 feet. Construction resumed in 1876 and the monument was finally completed in 1884.

However, the structure was set southeast of the true junction of the Capitol and White House axes. This may have been because of fears about the stability of the ground, though recent scholarship suggests that a more likely reason was that the planned colonnade would have required extending the Mall to the west, and it may have intruded upon the entrance to the Washington Canal. Time and money also were factors. (Scott 1991:51-52)

Smithsonian Institution

The act that changed the fortunes of the Mall was the creation of the Smithsonian Institution in 1846. The unusual bequest from the English scientist James Smithson in 1835, to establish a "society for the increase and diffusion of knowledge", set off years of wrangling over the money's proper disposition. In May 1840, Secretary of War Joel R. Poinsett established the National Institution for the Promotion of Science, intended to receive the Smithson legacy. In 1841, Poinsett directed Robert Mills to design a building and a botanical garden on the Mall between 10th and 12th Streets that "could accommodate either a National Institution or a Smithsonian Institution (whichever should be sanctioned by Congress first)." (Scott 1991:48)

Mills prepared a design that encompassed all of the Mall, from the grounds of the Capitol to the grounds of the Washington Monument, maintaining "strict axiality in respect to the center line of the Capitol". He developed two alternative designs in two different styles, picturesque and medieval, both having "maze-like parterres" and "specimen plantings". The Washington Monument Grounds and the Botanic Garden were laid out in the style of an "English picturesque park with serpentine walks, dense planting of clumps of trees, and vistas opening on garden pavilions." (Scott 1991:49)

A Congressional Act of August 10, 1846, gave the Smithsonian Institution land on the Mall between 9th to 12th Streets, extending almost 760 feet north from B Street South (Independence Avenue). Various negotiations followed, but eventually the Smithsonian Board of Regents accepted the southern half of the Mall between 9th and 12th Streets, and decided on the site for their building on March 20, 1847. (Olszewski Mall:11-14) James Renwick was chosen as architect, and his red sandstone Norman Revival building, today called the Castle, was set only 300 feet from the mid-line of the Mall.

Downing Plan for the Mall, 1851-1852

In 1850, Commissioner of Public Buildings Ignatius Mudd, Smithsonian Secretary Joseph Henry, banker William W. Corcoran, and others prevailed upon President Millard Fillmore to offer the renowned horticulturalist Andrew Jackson Downing the chance to prepare a landscape plan for the Smithsonian Grounds and "President's Park" – the Ellipse and Lafayette Square. (Gutheim 1977:54ff and O'Malley 1991)

The Downing plan for these lands was the first important public landscape design created in the United States. (Mount Auburn Cemetery in Boston, of 1831, the country's first picturesque garden cemetery, was one of its few private predecessors.) Downing laid down three objectives: "to form a National Park", "to give an example of the natural style of Landscape Gardening which may have an influence on the general taste of the country", and to create a "public museum of living trees and shrubs". (Gutheim 1977:53 and O'Malley 1991) Downing's Mall featured curving carriage drives, winding paths, and clusters of trees. Its origins lay in English picturesque landscape gardening of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; its immediate predecessor was the "gardenesque," the more homely, intimate gardens promoted by the prolific English author John Claudius Loudoun. The design, however, ignored the axis between the Capitol and the Washington Monument, and its mature plantings would have obscured the view.

(Downing brought with him to Washington an English gardener, John Saul [1819-97], to supervise the gardens' development. [Goode 2003:76] Saul resigned from this position in 1853 but stayed in Washington where he founded a nursery, and later established a farm, "Maple Grove," at 7th [now Georgia] and Emerson Streets, N.W. Saul "sold many trees and shrubs to the U.S. government for landscaping the Mall, the Ellipse, Lafayette Park, and other public grounds", and from 1873-97, he served as "one of the three commissioners to landscape the public streets of Washington." [Goode 2003:76])

Andrew Jackson Downing died in July 1852. A marble memorial urn to Downing, designed by his partner, Calvert Vaux, and donated by the American Pomological Society, was placed on the Smithsonian Grounds in 1856. (Later moved in front of the National Museum of Natural History, it now stands in the Enid A. Haupt Garden behind the Castle.) Congressional funding for implementing his Mall design was greatly reduced after Downing's death. However, the design for the Smithsonian Grounds was partially carried out, and it provided a blueprint for the work done on the reservations adjoining the grounds to the east. The result was a densely planted public garden that was antithetical to the L'Enfant vision for the Mall, and provided a major obstacle to its realization in the twentieth century.

Washington Armory Building

After the Castle, the next structure built on the Mall was the neoclassic brick Washington Armory (also called the Columbian Armory), built in 1855 at Independence Avenue and 6th Street, S.W. (now the site of the Air and Space Museum). Designed by Major William Haywood Bell of the Army's Ordnance Department, it served as the armory for the city's volunteer militia, and housed a museum of old armaments. Because of this structure, the section of the Mall between 6th and 7th Streets soon became known as Armory Square. (Goode 2003:351)

The Civil War

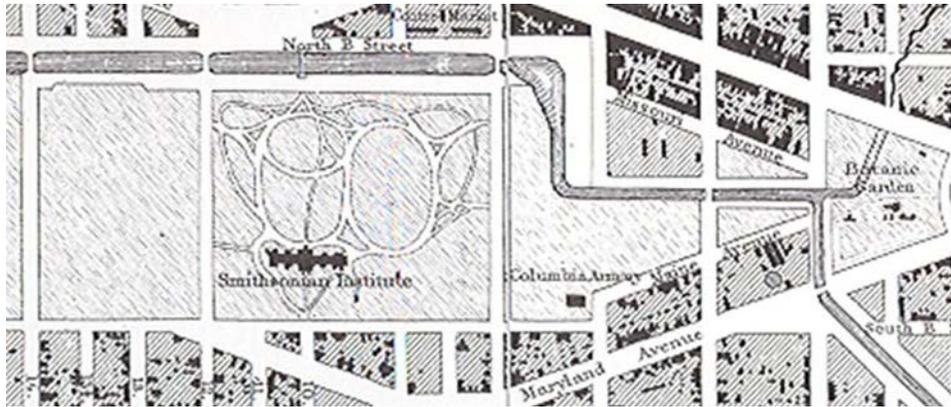
The Civil War had a tremendous impact on the capital city. It transformed Washington: "Before the war the city was as drowsy and as grass-grown as any old New England town. . . . the general aspect of things was truly rural. The war changed all that in a very few weeks." (Noah Brooks, quoted in Reys 1991:156) Thousands of Union soldiers, free blacks, escaped slaves, and others rushing to aid the war effort descended on the city. Dozens of barracks and hospitals were erected on reservations and other open land. At the Washington Monument

grounds, a “remount depot” for horses was set up, and also a cattleyard for the slaughtering of beef.

On the Mall itself, the enormous Armory Square hospital complex occupied the width of the Mall between 7th and 8th Streets. The Armory Building served as the nucleus of a group of structures containing 50 wards (barracks), a morgue, a church, and quarters for nurses, a chaplain, and escaped slaves. (Olszewski Mall:24; Goode 2003:351) As historian James Goode writes, “President Lincoln had the hospital, considered to be a model one, placed as close as possible to the Southwest steamboat landings, to receive the badly wounded from the Virginia war front.” (Goode 2003:351) Armory Square was one of the Washington hospitals where poet Walt Whitman served as a nurse.



The Robert King map of 1818 depicted the former route of Tiber Creek as well as the Washington City Canal. (from Reps 1997:67; CLP file “Robert King 1818 Mall”)



Albert Boschke's mid-century map shows the new Maine and Missouri Avenues, at right, as well as the structures that were being built adjacent to them. (from Repts 1997:139; CLP file "Boschke 1861")



The Armory Hospital complex spread north across the Mall from the Washington Armory building. (from Junior League 1992:218; CLP file "Armory Square Hospital, Junior League," p. 218)



The slope from the Mall up to the Smithsonian Castle is apparent in this 1860 image of the façade from the northeast, showing newly planted trees and a field of flowers in the foreground . (CLP file “MRCE from NARA” – image from National Archives)

1866-1900: Park Development under the Office of Public Buildings & Grounds

Note: The Annual Reports of the Chief Engineer, Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, were submitted to Congress at the end of the fiscal year, typically the end of June. It is therefore often difficult to say whether an action took place in that year or the preceding, and so it has been necessary to write, for example, “1868/69.”

The Office of Public Buildings and Grounds

The Civil War ended in April 1865. Slowly, the temporary war structures in Washington were dismantled, and buildings requisitioned by the Army were returned to private use.

In 1867, authority over public buildings and grounds in the District of Columbia was transferred once again, from the Commissioner of Public Buildings, Department of the Interior, to the Chief of Engineers of the U.S. Army, War Department. An Engineer Officer was placed in charge of the new Office of Public Buildings and Grounds (OPBG).

The first two Engineer Officers, Nathaniel Michler (served 1867-1871), and Orville Babcock (1871-1877), were responsible for a wide range of dramatic improvements to the city parks. Their work began under the auspices of the Territorial Government. In existence only from 1871 through 1874, the Territorial Government, under the leadership of Alexander “Boss” Shepherd (as vice president and later governor), was responsible for a host of radical changes to the city’s infrastructure, particularly the paving of streets, the laying of gas and power lines, and the planting of street trees throughout the central city.

As Engineer Officer, Orville Babcock – a protégé of President Ulysses S. Grant, and a member of the advisory panel to the Board of Public Works – in particular oversaw the implementation of considerable physical improvements to the reservations during a critical period in the city's history. Gutheim writes: "under Babcock's direction, the city's public parks were drained, gas pipes were laid for lamps, water pipes were laid for irrigation, drainage, and drinking purposes, the walks traversing the parks were graveled, and grounds were planted and augmented with . . . furniture." (Gutheim 1977:86) Two new sewers were laid along the City Canal: one, from 6th to 3rd Streets, emptied into the canal, and the other, from 7th to 17th Streets, drained into the Potomac.

The Mall Reservations

Improvements to the reservations by the OPBG began in 1868. Judging by the Annual Reports of the OPBG, the Mall received the most attention of any of the city's parks. The Mall at that time comprised six separate reservations: the Botanic Garden, from 1st to 3rd Streets, and Pennsylvania to Maryland Avenues; two reservations, between 3rd and 4½ Streets and between 4½ and 6th Streets, designated in reports by their bounding streets until 1885, when they were renamed Seaton Parks East and West (Seaton Park East was bounded on the north by Maine Avenue and on the south by Missouri Avenue, while Seaton Park West was bounded by B Street North and B Street South – today Constitution and Independence Avenues); Armory Square, from 6th to 7th Streets and B Street North to B Street South (named after the Washington Armory, which stood at its southeast corner); the Smithsonian Grounds, from 7th to 12th Streets and B Street North to B Street South; and the Department of Agriculture Grounds, between 12th and 14th Streets and B Streets North and South. Improvements had already begun to be made to the Botanic Garden, the Smithsonian Grounds, and the Agriculture Department grounds. (The street between 3rd and 5th Streets was called 4½ rather than 4th Street. It was renamed "4th Street" in the twentieth century.)

The Washington Canal divided the reservations between 3rd and 4½ Streets, and between 4½ and 6th Streets, both bounded on the north and south by Maine and Missouri Avenues, into two triangular areas each. The land between Missouri and Pennsylvania Avenues, and between Maine and Independence Avenues, soon became filled with residential and commercial structures. The canal bed was finally filled in in 1871, allowing improvements to be made. By 1872, the reservation from 3rd to 4½ Streets to Missouri Avenue was enclosed by a wood fence and was "used as a propagating garden" for the parks. The reservation from 4½ Street to 7th Street to Maine Avenue was also enclosed by a wood fence but was unimproved, though it may have had some trees and shrubs. (AR 1872:23) Entrances to the Smithsonian grounds were located at 7th Street South, and at 10th Street and B Street North, while the entrance to Armory Square was at 7th Street.

In his first Annual Report as Chief Engineer, Nathaniel Michler broadly discussed the entire Mall area as a unified park and the development of its circulation. (AR 1868:10, also in AR 1867) He noted the difficulty posed by the streets that cut across it from north to south, and the problems and expense of tunneling beneath level ground. Michler recommended laying out carriage roads and bridle and foot paths on the Mall "as if the different parts formed a unit." At intersections with city streets, there should be "handsomely paved" crossings and gates with lodges provided for gatekeepers and groundsmen.

Typical Course of Park Improvements

The work of improving the city's parks and reservations under the OPBG followed a consistent pattern. The ground was graded and sewer and other pipes were laid for drainage, particularly necessary in the low, marshy grounds along the canal which comprised much of the Mall. The ground was then covered with topsoil and sown with grass seed (typically bluegrass on the Mall) or covered with sod; sod was usually laid along the margins of walks and roads. Fences of wood or iron posts and chains were installed. The OPBG used a particular style of post and chain throughout the parks. The posts were short, squat columns shaped like fasces – rods bundled around an ax, a conventional classical Roman symbol of authority – with molded bases and caps. The caps bore either the initials “OPBG” or a finial.

After grading, walks and drives were excavated and paved in gravel, which was often taken from Reservation 17 on Capitol Hill (now Garfield Park). Heavier gravel was laid in the bottom of the excavation, with lighter gravel on top to bind, and the pavement was then rolled. Gravel walks presented many maintenance difficulties. They had to be regularly rolled and frequently weeded. The gravel needed constant replenishment because it would be washed off or kicked by feet or wheels into the grass. Pooling water created damp, muddy areas; temporary plank walks were placed over these in the fall and removed in the spring. Gutters along walks and drives were made of bricks or cobblestones.

Trees and shrubs were then planted. Gas lamps were installed, and sometimes drinking and decorative fountains. Benches were placed along paths and fastened to the ground. In 1871/72, one hundred benches of the type used in Druid Hill Park, Baltimore, were purchased for D.C. parks. These had iron frames and seats and backs made of ash-wood slats. Also purchased were 375 other seats “of the close pattern” – presumably this means a similar pattern. (AR 1872:10)

In 1872/73, in Lafayette Square and the Smithsonian Grounds, terra cotta markers giving common and botanic names as well as “indigenous locality” were put on trees, shrubs, and other plants. Most were stolen, and the next year “polished, painted, and lettered” iron markers were tried instead. (AR 1873:8) One hundred pairs of German and English sparrows, the offspring of sparrows in New York City, were purchased and released in the D.C. reservations. Birdhouses were placed in trees throughout the parks. (AR 1872:10) Vandalism was a continual problem. Wood fences, birdhouses, and benches were broken and stolen; grass was worn by walking; flowers and limbs were broken off trees; birds were stoned; and dogs ran freely over the lawns. (AR 1872:11-12)

The first “landscape gardener” for the city parks was George H. Brown. Brown traveled widely for his job, visiting nurseries to select deciduous and evergreen trees, bulbs, and other plants, looking for the “finest specimens . . . at lowest prices”. (AR 1872:11) In 1874, Brown went to nurseries in Maryland, New York, and Pennsylvania, made purchases in Virginia, and bought elms and maples from Illinois. (AR 1875:10) In 1887, “forty-six thousand five hundred bulbs were purchased for stock for nursery and planting in the parks.” (AR 1888:2832)

Increasingly, plants were raised in the four acres of greenhouses and nurseries on the Washington Monument grounds. In 1888 and 1889, about 390,000 “ornamental foliage and flowering plants of about forty different varieties” were raised in these gardens. In summers,

“palms, crotons and other sub-tropical plants” grown there were set out in the parks. (AR 1888:2832) The propagating gardens had large tanks for water lilies and other aquatic plants, along with goldfish, which were used to ornament park fountains during the summer months. In 1893, it was noted, “nearly 500,000 plants are annually propagated at the greenhouses for use in the summer and autumn decoration of the public parks”. (AR 1893:4320) An excerpt from the 1894 Annual Report suggests the range of plants grown in the propagating gardens:

About 400,000 bedding plants of about 300 varieties were propagated for spring planting in the public grounds, and particular attention was again given to chrysanthemums for autumn bloom; in the autumn 11,078 plants, consisting of roses, smilax, carnations, heliotrope, geraniums, poinsettias, pansies, candytuft, etc., and 22,250 bulbs, consisting of hyacinths, freesia, lilies, tulips, narcissus, and lilies of the valley, were planted for winter forcing and early spring bloom; about 69,000 bulbs were planted in the public parks for spring bloom. (AR 1893:3276)

On the Mall, flower beds were created in front of the National Museum (1878, now the Arts and Industries Building of the Smithsonian Institution) and in front of the Armory Building when it was occupied by the U.S. Fish Commission. Typically, in the summer the beds would hold “handsome foliage and flowering plants”, and in the autumn they would be planted with chrysanthemums.

Park staff provided constant maintenance. Trees required regular thinning and pruning. Limbs were staked and wired when necessary. Dead and decayed trees were removed. Lawns also needed the regular addition of new seed and sod, and mowing and fertilizing. While the canal existed, muck dredged from its channel was added to manure and lime and used as topdressing. (AR 1872:10) Later, guano came into use, along with ground oyster shells. In summer, lawns and roads were sprinkled with water to discourage dust.

Social trails, created when people trespassed across lawns or walked along the margins of paths, presented a continual problem in upkeep. Social trails were regularly raked and resown with grass seed; those along walks and roads were covered with sod. In some reservations, existing gravel walks were removed and new walks were laid along the routes of social trails.

Development of the Reservations between Third and Sixth Streets

After the war, the public grounds immediately west of the Botanic Garden were intended to be used for the propagation of trees, shrubs, and other plants to use in the city’s parks. These reservations were bounded at the north and south by Missouri and Maine Avenues, and divided by the Washington Canal. The grade of these streets was raised several feet in 1873/74, leaving the reservations themselves below street grade. Water drained off the streets and pooled on the land. (AR 1874:5) Draining, laying of pipes, grading, and planting of lawns was done over the following year or two.

In 1874/75, rows of deciduous trees were planted from B and 6th Streets to 3rd Street, and from 3rd Street and Missouri Avenue to 4½ Street. Some trees remaining from the former propagating gardens were moved to the nursery in the Washington Monument Grounds. (AR 1875:6) The next year, six gas lamps were installed, including two that combined a lamp with a drinking fountain. Two large evergreens from the former agricultural gardens were planted.

Aspens and soft maples lined Maine Avenue. Twenty benches stood along the walks. (AR 1876:9-10)

Basic improvements were also made to the reservation between 4½ and 6th Streets along Maine Avenue in 1875-76. Iron post-and-chain fencing “of the park-pattern” was placed along Missouri and Maine Avenues between 4½ and 6th Streets, and ten “settees,” or benches, were installed. (AR 1876:10) Between 3rd and 6th Streets, 859 evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubs were planted.

The north section of the reservation between 4½ and 6 Streets had formerly held the Agricultural Department’s experimental garden. In 1877, the land was partially graded, some walks were excavated, and a post-and-chain fence was erected. The area south of the main road was improved except for completion of the plantings. (AR 1877 vol. 2:12) Evergreen and deciduous trees were planted in the eastern reservations in 1878/79, and planting continued there and in Armory Square in subsequent years. Topsoil came from Judiciary Square, where the city jail had been demolished. The main road was extended from 6th Street and Missouri Avenue to 4½ Street. Walks were partially built, and post-and-chain fencing was placed along Missouri Avenue. (AR 1879:1879 [sic])

Development of Armory Square

Removal of the dozens of hospital buildings and warehouses occupying Armory Square began in 1867/68 so that it could “then be laid out according to the plans originally adopted.” (AR 1868:8) Vacant after the war, the Armory building then served a multitude of purposes, from warehouse to aquarium. Objects from the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition were stored there until the National Museum (now the Smithsonian’s Arts and Industries Building) was built nearby in 1878-1881. In 1881 the armory became the headquarters of the U.S. Fish & Fisheries Commission, which remained there until moving to the Department of Commerce building in Federal Triangle in 1932. (Goode 2003:351)

Work on Armory Square began in earnest in 1872 or 1873. The land was subdrained, and water pipes were laid. A thirty-five-foot-wide gravel road was built, leading from 7th Street “opposite the main entrance to Smithsonian grounds”. From 7th Street, it curved across the park for 1300 feet to 6th Street. (AR 1873:4)

By the mid-1870s, Armory Square had been graded and sown with bluegrass. Its gravel walks and roads “harmonize[d] with those in the Smithsonian grounds”. (AR 1875:7) Trees had been planted along B Street South to 4½ Street, and from B Street North along 7th Street to B Street South. The old wooden fences were removed and iron post-and-chain fencing was installed along B Street South. Already by 1874, OPBG Engineer Officer Orville Babcock was describing the Armory Building of 1855 as “old and unsightly” and recommending that it be sold at public auction. (AR 1874:5)

In 1875/76, deciduous trees were planted along the main road and “one hundred and ninety other trees, of various varieties, were planted throughout the grounds.” (AR 1876:9) Twenty-seven gas lamps were installed, making the grounds “thoroughly lighted.” (AR 1876:9) A marble fountain bowl moved from the west Capitol Grounds was placed at the intersection of two carriage roads, and a smaller, broken fountain near 7th Street was removed. Twenty benches were placed along the walks.

Armory Square and the adjoining reservations were often rented to circuses and menageries. Some of the proceeds from these shows would be donated to the Soldiers and Sailors' Orphan Asylum and Children's Hospital.

Development of the Smithsonian Grounds

For 25 years after the Downing plan for the Smithsonian Grounds was drawn up, many delays had hindered its implementation. The grounds' location south of the canal meant they were "remote [. . .] from principal improved sections of the city". (AR 1877 vol. 2:14) Yearly appropriations were not large enough to meet development costs. With only two watchmen patrolling the grounds at night, and none during the day (except for occasional visits by the metropolitan police), there was not enough security to ensure visitor safety. (AR 1877 vol. 2:14)

Of the Smithsonian Grounds, Michler wrote: "Only one portion has been tastily arranged in accordance with the design of Mr. Downing, and a great deal of work remains to be executed before perfecting it." (AR 1868:8) Gravel walks meandered across the lawns. The area south of the Smithsonian Building had not yet been graded or otherwise improved. The grounds to the north were surrounded by a wood paling fence. A wood fence ran along the canal, and surrounded Armory Square. These fences were whitewashed; beginning in 1871/72, wooden fences around the other reservations were coated with brownwash instead, because it hid the dirt and did not cause glare under the summer sun. (AR 1872:9)

In 1874 and 1875, the section of the Smithsonian Grounds south of the Castle was improved with walks and roads that followed the Downing plan as closely as possible. Further improvements were made to the north part also: unimproved areas were given drains, and pipes for gas and water; benches were set out, and trees and shrubs were planted. Ground reclaimed from the filling in of the Washington Canal resulted in the creation of about five new acres between 7th and 12th Streets. This land was soon improved. Some large trees, described as valuable, were transplanted within the Smithsonian grounds; other trees were planted twenty-five feet apart along B Street North. (AR 1875:8) A watchman's lodge was built on 7th Street, probably at the entrance.

To quickly achieve the abundance of planting envisioned on the Downing Plan, large, fast-growing trees had been planted to fill out groups while "trees of slow growth, now overcrowded, attained their maturity". (AR 1877 vol. 2:14) The faster-growing trees, and those not on the plan, now needed to be removed: "In the early planting of the grounds the trees were planted close together, anticipating that in time it would be necessary to thin them out. This is done with great care, and unless a tree is in very bad condition or is manifestly injurious to better and handsomer trees in the immediate vicinity it is never disturbed." (AR 1887:2585) Wood fences around the grounds began to be removed.

In spite of the two watchmen assigned to patrol the Smithsonian Grounds, vagrants caused problems, and visitors avoided the park at night. Sixty-three gas lamps were installed in 1874-75 so that "[t]here is now," Babcock wrote, "no portion of the walks and roads upon which a light does not shine . . ." (AR 1875:7) Benches from "the East Capitol park" (probably Lincoln Park) that were "not needed there in the new improvements" were moved to the Smithsonian Grounds. A music stand was moved from the East Capitol grounds, and the Marine Band began offering concerts on Wednesday afternoons. (AR 1875:7)

Graveling of the new roads was finished in 1875/76. The iron gates and stone pillars at the 10th Street and B Street North entrance were removed, “thus opening to these grounds an entrance for carriages.” (AR 1876:8) A section of iron railing on 9th Street, opposite the Center Market, was removed to provide a new entrance that was convenient for shoppers. Iron post and chain was placed along B Street – probably B Street North – comprising 265 posts and 2775 pounds [sic] of chain. (AR 1876:8)

In 1875/76, 500 new deciduous and evergreen trees were planted, most on the newly graded land along B Street North. So many trees and shrubs grew on the grounds that grass had to be cut with a scythe instead of a lawn mower (in the 1870s, lawn mowers could have been either horse-drawn or hand-operated). There were twenty-five benches.

Development of the Department of Agriculture Grounds

In 1866, Congress granted Reservation 3B (B Street North to B Street South between 12th and 14th Streets) to the Department of Agriculture (USDA). Costs of developing and maintaining the grounds were probably borne by the Department, not the OPBG. (Olszewski Mall:27-28) A structure to house the Agriculture Department was built directly on the Mall in 1868; like the Smithsonian Castle, it was located only 300 feet from the Mall’s center line. Designed by German-American architect Adolf Cluss, it was a three-story brick structure surmounted by a polychrome mansard roof. A large greenhouse stood to its west. In front were walled, terraced formal gardens with flower beds and a pair of pavilions marking the east and west ends. In all, thirty-five acres of formal and experimental gardens extended from the Agriculture building to B Street North, planted on what had been the site of an experimental garden. Drives and walks in the Agriculture Grounds were paved in concrete, gravel, sand, and ashes. Entrances to the Agriculture Department gardens were first built at 12th and 14th Streets. Another entrance, with a large gate, was later built at 13th and B Streets, south of the Washington Canal.

Since 1862, the gardens had been overseen by Superintendent William Saunders (1822-1900). According to Goode, “[Saunders’] contributions in the field of horticulture were enormous”; among them were the invention of the Washington navel orange, “the basis for the establishment of the orange industry in California”, and designs for cemeteries, including Gettysburg National Cemetery. (Goode 2003:358)

In 1874, two gatehouses and several gateposts, attributed to Charles Bulfinch, one of the first Architects of the Capitol, were moved from the Capitol Grounds to B Street North (Constitution Avenue). A panoramic photograph from c. 1877 taken from the Castle looking towards the White House suggests there were at least six of the gateposts along B Street North, with four possibly used at an entrance into the USDA grounds (photo in collections of NCR Museum Resource Center, MRCE). The two gatehouses and all existing gateposts now stand on the Washington Monument and White House grounds, except for a gatepost located at 7th Street and Constitution Avenue on land transferred from the NPS to the National Gallery of Art in August 1991. The post has a square rusticated shaft with projecting alternate courses and a capital formed of volutes. According to the National Register nomination for these structures, the “gateposts and gatehouses were designed to harmonize with the basement story of the Capitol.” (Dillon 1973:4)

North of the Mall: The Canal and the Market

When the 13th and B Street entrance to the Agriculture Grounds was planned, in 1868, Nathaniel Michler recommended building a bridge over the canal, and noted the many obstructions lying in the neighborhood to its north:

market stalls extend over the pavements, houses protrude beyond the building lines, piles of lumber block up the way, junk shops encroach upon the public grounds, rubbish is allowed to accumulate, and only within the last few weeks permits have been granted to erect stalls and shops on a prolongation of the center of one of the streets which will entirely obscure the Smithsonian grounds from view. . . . The same remarks are applicable to the north and south sides of B, or Canal street, between Sixth and Thirteenth streets west . . . The canal is a sufficient nuisance without adding to its nauseousness. (AR 1868:9)

Michler bemoaned the canal's "filthy, pestilential condition". It was "extremely disgusting to both sight and smell. It is nothing more than an open sewer, constantly generating noxious gases which are most deleterious to those not only residing immediately along its banks, but to the inhabitants of the entire city." (AR 1868:16) Make it a real canal, Michler wrote, or make it a sewer: "What a great advantage it would be to the Mall, as the approaches from a very large section of the city lead over the canal to the public grounds." (AR 1868:16)

The original market, named the Market House but reviled as the "Marsh Market" because of its soggy ground, had been designed by James Hoban (architect of the White House) with Clotworth Stevens, and stood on the southwest corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and 7th Street. Numerous additions over the years had made it an "eyesore." (Goode 2003:302) In 1871-72 it was replaced by the imposing new Center Market, a brick Romanesque Revival structure by Adolf Cluss that stretched for 300 feet along Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues and 7th and 9th Streets, N.W. (now the site of the National Archives). The location was ideal, since 7th Street was an important thoroughfare, "the principal connection between the waterfront and Bladensburg Road, a turnpike and post road leading to Baltimore and points further north." (Gutheim 1977:76) Wings were added to the market building in the 1880s. The market held over a thousand stalls for selling meat, fish, and produce, with eight electric elevators, a "spacious café," and the city's "first cold-storage vaults": it was "acclaimed as the largest and most modern food market in the United States when it opened in 1872." (Goode 2003:302-303)

Baltimore & Potomac Railroad

One of the largest incursions on the Mall was the construction of the Baltimore & Potomac Depot in 1872. Congress gave the railroad free use of a site on the Mall itself, partly on the route of the old Washington Canal, which had been filled in by the Territorial Government in 1871 and replaced with a trunk sewer. Construction of a temporary wooden depot allowed passenger service to begin on July 2, 1872, the same day the new Center Market opened across Pennsylvania Avenue. Construction of the new, permanent depot began the following July, and it was probably in use by late December. (Belanger 15) An article in the "New Washington" in *Harper's* magazine exulted: "Where the old creek yawned through the heart of the old commercial city a noble Mall, grand market, and depots were revealed. . ." (*Harper's*, Feb. 1875; quoted in Belanger 15)

The railroad was antithetical to the pastoral nature of the Downing landscape recently begun to the east, and damaging to the open views intrinsic to the L'Enfant Mall. The train shed, 130 feet by 510 feet, extended almost halfway across the Mall. Mounds of coal were piled by the tracks where empty rail cars idled or parked. The multiple tracks feeding the busy station crossed the Mall on grade, causing a noisy, smelly, dangerous presence that spelled progress and prosperity to some Washingtonians but angered many others for years, as did the federal underwriting of this private enterprise. (Belanger 5)

After the First Improvements: Changes to the Mall Parks after 1877

The greatest improvements to the city parks were made during the tenure of Orville E. Babcock. At the end of his six years' service, in 1877, Babcock reviewed his accomplishments, taking

a pardonable pride in reverting briefly to the work that has been accomplished in the way of improving and beautifying the various public reservations in the national capital. Many of these reservations were commons and public dumping-grounds when I assumed the duties of this position. (AR 1877:13)

Babcock claimed that the Mall reservations were largely complete. Armory Square was one of twenty-five reservations he listed as entirely improved, while the Smithsonian Grounds were partially improved. (AR 1877 vol. 1:13) Annual reports written by Babcock's successors amend his optimistic view slightly, as they note continuing improvements. However, much of the work was finished, and the parks were now given routine maintenance. Gravel walks and roads were rolled, and more gravel was added almost yearly; snow and ice were removed in winter. Trees and shrubs were thinned, pruned, staked, headed back, or removed, as necessary, and lawns were mown. Benches were repainted, repaired, and refastened to the ground; the decorative iron vases in some reservations were filled with ornamental plants and flowers in the spring, and with evergreens in the winter. In the fall, water was turned off in the fountains, and "the bowls were filled with leaves swept from the lawns, and the copings were thatched with evergreens to protect them from injury by frost". (AR 1877 vol. 1:9) The only fountain in the Mall reservations may have been the small one in Armory Square that was soon moved to Folger Park, replaced by a marble fountain from the grounds of the Capitol.

Work began in 1878 or 1879 on the site for the Smithsonian's new National Museum (today the Arts and Industries Building). Like the Central Market and the Department of Agriculture, this was a Romanesque Revival structure designed by Adolf Cluss. Its brick shell surrounded a light, open framework of iron trusses. Exterior walls were ornamented with terra cotta and polychrome brick. Some "valuable trees" on the National Museum's grounds that were not too large to move were transplanted, probably elsewhere in the Smithsonian grounds. (AR 1879:1878 [sic]) Landscaping, including the laying of gravel roads and walks, was completed in the summer of 1880.

For years, large annual appropriations were made for development and upkeep of the Smithsonian Grounds, "its great extent of lawns and roadways requiring large expenditures to keep them in order." (AR 1880) The initial dense planting of trees and shrubs was thinned. Extensive drainage improvements were made in the early 1880s. Thousands of feet of new and replacement gutters were laid, along with new drain traps and pipes. (AR 1884:2341)

In the early 1880s, asphalt began to replace gravel as the material used for new and repaved walks and roads in the Mall reservations, probably because they required less maintenance. The first was laid in 1881 or 1882, an “asphaltum” walk that ran from 7th to 12th Streets along the southern margin of the main road passing in front of the Smithsonian Castle and the new National Museum. (AR 1882: 2735)

On April 19, 1882, a bronze statue of Smithsonian Secretary Joseph Henry, designed by sculptor William Wetmore Story, was unveiled in front of the Smithsonian Building. The OPBG landscaped its site. By this year, two watchman’s lodges had been built in the Smithsonian Grounds. Another lodge was built in the southwest corner of Seaton Park, near Maine Avenue, in 1886/87.

In June of 1883, the Baltimore & Potomac Railroad, at the direction of Congress (17 Statutes p. 14, May 21, 1872), began building an iron bridge for vehicles and pedestrians over the railroad tracks on 6th Street. The bridge, with a road forty-feet wide and flanked by twelve-foot-wide sidewalks, was opened for travel on December 1. It connected Armory Square with reservations to the east,

thus forming a continuous and beautiful drive from the west front of the Botanical Garden through the reservations to Sixth street, through Armory Square, the Smithsonian, Agricultural, and Monument grounds to the Executive Mansion and Pennsylvania avenue, of some two miles in length, and carries out the original plan of connecting the Executive Mansion and the Capitol by drive-way through the line of Government reservations. (Babcock in AR 1873:4)

Four years later, again at the behest of Congress, the railroad built an “ornamental stone wall along the western boundary line of that portion of the reservation used for depot purposes”. (AR 1887:2573)

In 1885, the two reservations east of the B&P depot and tracks, between 6th and 3rd Streets, were named Seaton Park East and West, after W.W. Seaton, former Washington mayor and editor of the early D.C. newspaper, the *National Intelligencer*, “who was so greatly interested in the welfare and prosperity of this city”. (AR 1885:2504) The following year, Armory Square was renamed Henry Square after Joseph Henry. Both changes were made on the recommendation of the Chief Engineer of the OPBG, at that time John M. Wilson.

In 1885/86 a central road, flanked by cobblestone gutters, was built through Seaton Park, leading from the 6th Street bridge to the Botanic Garden. Older walks were removed and sodded over in Henry Park, with new walks laid “on regular lines of travel as indicated by trespass-paths.” (AR 1886:2078) Construction began in 1885 or 1886 on a mound to hide the depot from view of “drivers” in Henry Park; it was completed ten years later.

By the mid-1880s, an iron fence stood along the Smithsonian Ground’s north boundary. Pairs of stone pillars flanked the entrances, including two entrances at the north. Another pair stood at the north entrance to Henry Park. These may have been the Capitol gateposts, described above. (AR 1887:2573)

Another Romanesque Revival building on the Mall designed by Adolf Cluss was the Army Medical Museum, built in 1887 on the Smithsonian Grounds at Independence Avenue and 7th

Street, S.W. A three-story brick structure on a raised basement, it had a central gabled pavilion and wings with hipped roofs and monitor windows. It housed displays of medical equipment and specimens. (Goode 2003:366) (The building stood until 1969, when the site was cleared for the Hirshhorn Museum. At that time, the Dr. Samuel D. Gross Memorial, by sculptor A. Sterling Calder, which had stood in front of the structure since 1897, was sent on loan to the Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia.)

The 1887 Annual Report provided detailed descriptions of most parks in the city. All the Mall parks were described as “highly improved”. Smithsonian Park, with over fifty-eight acres, had not only the Castle and the National Museum, but also the Army Medical Museum. Its grounds were enclosed partly with post-and-chain and partly with a “substantial iron railing”, and had gravel roads and walks “in good condition”. Repaving with asphalt “has been commenced during the present season” (AR 1887:2594). There were two drinking fountains and one watchman’s lodge. Henry Park, at over fourteen acres, had the Armory Building, now being used for storage by the U.S. Fish & Fisheries Commission. This park was also enclosed with both post-and-chain fencing and an iron railing, and had gravel roads and walks “in good condition”. The mound along the tracks, still under construction, would be planted with evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubs. (AR 1887:2594)

Seaton Park was still described in two parts: West, with somewhat over twelve acres, between 4½ Street and Maine and Missouri Avenues, and East, with over six acres. Both were surrounded by post-and-chain fencing, were lighted with gas lamps, and had “gravel roads and walks in good condition, lawn surfaces partly planted with ornamental evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubs.” Seaton Park East had two drinking fountains, both probably the combination gas lamp-fountain (one was soon moved to McPherson Square). (AR 1887:2594-2595)

In 1887/88, the OPBG post-and-chain fence was removed from the south sides of Smithsonian and Henry Parks to reuse in smaller city parks. In Henry Park, twenty-seven “handsome evergreen trees” near the railroad that were being “injured by the smoke from the locomotives” were transplanted to other parts of the city; they were not replaced. (AR 1888:2774)

In the 1880s, reclamation of over 600 acres of land from the Potomac River began just west of the Washington Monument Grounds, under the direction of Peter C. Hains of the U.S. Corps of Engineers. This work resulted in the creation of West Potomac Park, where the Lincoln Memorial and Reflecting Pool were built in the 1920s, as well as East Potomac Park and the Tidal Basin.

By 1893, paved roads and walks covered nine of Smithsonian Park’s fifty-eight acres. The Annual Report stated: “The extensive lawns of this park are planted with a great variety of deciduous and evergreen trees, many of them being the largest and most perfect of their kind to be found in park planting in the United States.” (AR 1893:4321)

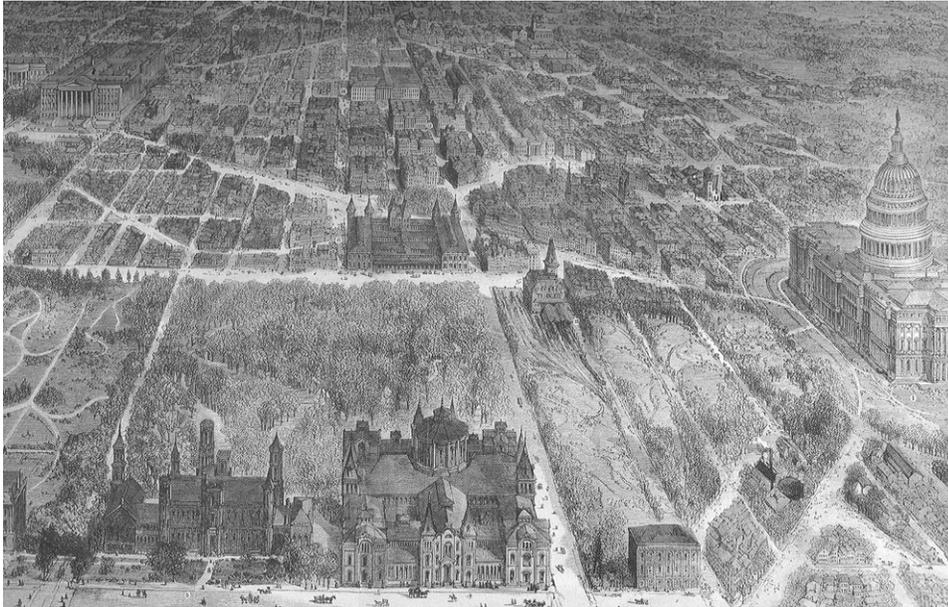
The 1893 report decried the “heavy and continuous travel” on the roads through the grounds, not only on the chief north-south thoroughfares but on roads leading to the “principal city markets, the center market, the hay, straw, and grain markets.” It continued: “On the public space just north of the park is the hucksters’ market, and the debris from this place, which is blown or thrown into the park, entails a great deal of additional labor to maintain it in sightly condition.” (AR 1893:4321)

In 1893, planting of Henry and Seaton Parks had not yet been completed. They were mostly lawns, with only about three acres of gravel roads and walks. (AR 1893:4322) The Chief Engineer recommended extending “the system of asphalt roads and walks commenced in the Smithsonian Park . . . throughout the reservations and the mound west of the depot . . . without further delay.” (AR 1893:4322) The mound hiding the depot in Henry Park was completed in 1895/96 and sown with grass seed, and twenty-six maple trees were planted on it.

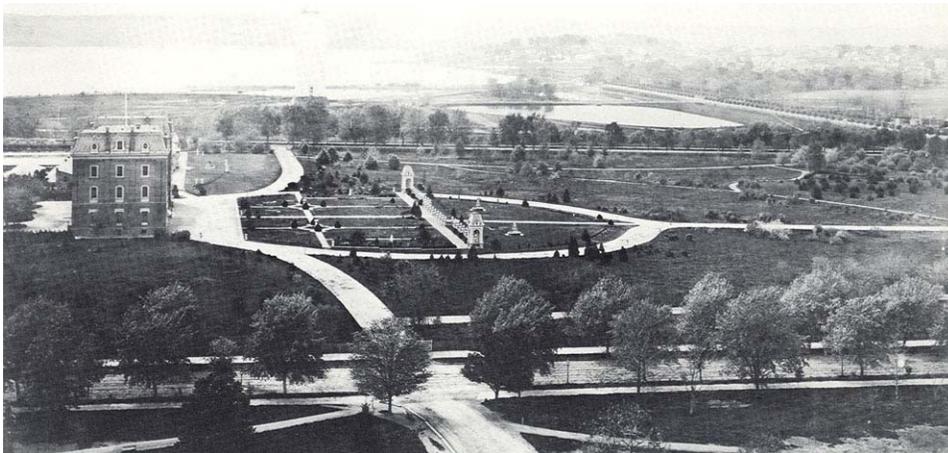
An 1884 publication described the Department of Agriculture Grounds as

beautifully laid out in spacious gardens in which are grown over 2,000 varieties of plants and flowers arranged in strict botanical order. A portion of the ground is laid out as an arboretum, and contains a choice collection of trees and hardy shrubs. The front gardens are adorned with a low terrace wall, and numerous rustic vases and statues. About ten acres of the rear gardens are devoted to the raising of seeds and the testing of small fruits. From the front of the building a charming view of the business section of Washington can be obtained. (Joseph West Moore, *Picturesque Washington* [Providence, 1884]; quoted in Olszewski Mall:27-28)

One oddity of the Agriculture gardens was the General Noble Redwood Tree House, a section of the trunk of a 2000-year-old giant sequoia, named after John W. Noble. As Secretary of the Interior from 1889-93 under Benjamin Harrison, Noble had helped preserve millions of acres of federal forests in the West. The 300-foot tree had been felled in 1892 in General Grant National Park (now part of Kings Canyon National Park), California. The trunk, fifty-feet high and twenty-six feet in diameter, had been hollowed out, cut into sections for transport, and displayed at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The next year the trunk was shipped to Washington and set up east of the Agriculture Department building; a conical roof with redwood shingles and four dormer windows was added. (Goode 2003:368) When the new administration building was erected for the Department of Agriculture, in the early 1930s, the trunk was placed in storage. It was finally destroyed in 1950. (Finnan to Fritz 1/2339 FRC9 & Kelly to Brown 4/13/52 FRC12; Goode 2003:368. For a key to the abbreviations for the FRC files, see Supplemental Information.)



The Baltimore & Potomac Railroad depot and its tracks extending south across the Mall are shown at the center of this image from the 1880s. (Davis, "Our National Capitol," *Harper's Weekly* 5/2/82; from Repts 1997:197; CLP file "Davis 1882 reduced BW")



The USDA grounds featured a circular terraced garden on axis with 13th Street with a central walk. A connecting road ran across 12th Street to the Smithsonian Grounds. (from NARA, reprinted in Kelly p. 118; CLP file "view Mall and Ag Dept 1870s")