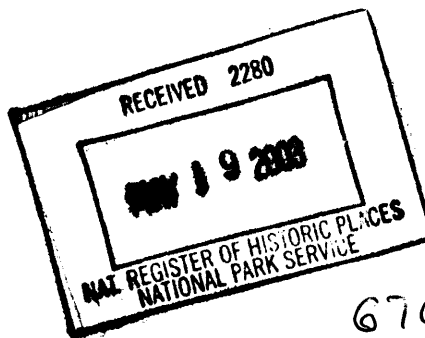


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Georgetown Historic District (amended)

other names \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ not for publication

city or town Washington, D.C. ☐ vicinity

state \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☒ nationally ☐ statewide ☐ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments).

Lisa M. Buchanan / NPS 5/13/03  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

DC Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments).

Lisa M. Buchanan / NPS 5/13/03  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

DC Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby, certify that this property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ Determined not eligible for the National Register.

☐ removed from the National Register.

☐ other (explain): accept additional documentation

for Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Patrick Andrus

7/3/2003

Georgetown Historic District (amended)  
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## 5. Classification

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- ☐ building(s)  
☒ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
340 Approx		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
340 Approx		Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

**number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

Approximately 3,000 (includes approximately 80 individual landmarks)

## 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

## 7. Description

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation \_\_\_\_\_  
walls \_\_\_\_\_  
roof \_\_\_\_\_  
other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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## Description Summary:

+

## General Description:

+

**8. Statement of Significance****Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☒ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

**Area of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT

INDUSTRY

TRANSPORTATION

ARCHEOLOGY/Prehistoric and Historic

**Period of Significance**

1751-1950

**Significant Dates**

1751; 1789; 1791; 1871; 1924; 1930s; 1950

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

**Cultural Affiliation****Architect/Builder****9. Major Bibliographical References****Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

**Previous documentation on files (NPS):**

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☒ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☒ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey  
# \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record  
# \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

Georgetown Historic District  
Name of Property

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## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property \_\_\_\_\_

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	Zone	Easting	Northing
2	Zone	Easting	Northing

3	Zone	Easting	Northing
4	Zone	Easting	Northing

☐ See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

N/A

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

N/A

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kimberly Prothro Williams

Organization DC Historic Preservation Office

date January 24, 2003

street & number 801 North Capitol Street, N.E.

telephone 202-442-8800

city or town Washington, D.C.

state \_\_\_\_\_

zip code 20002

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

X A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

X Representative black and white photographs of the property.

#### Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

## Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_

telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_

state \_\_\_\_\_

zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**Paperwork Reduction Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et. seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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### AMENDMENT:

The Georgetown Historic District was listed in the National Register on May 28, 1967, an automatic designation triggered by its designation as a National Historic Landmark. In February 1980, as part of the National Historic Landmark Boundary Review project, a National Register Nomination form was prepared on the Georgetown Historic District. The 1980 National Register nomination provides historical and architectural documentation of the historic district, but does not include a discussion of the Period of Significance for the Georgetown Historic District. This amended form presents a Period of Significance and a justification for the period of significance.

#### Georgetown Historic District Period of Significance:

The period of significance for the Georgetown Historic Districts extends from 1751, when the original 60-acre port town was established by an Act of the Maryland Assembly to 1950 (inclusive) when Congress passed Public Law 808. Known as the Old Georgetown Act, this law set the boundaries of the Georgetown Historic District and provided for the review of all plans for the construction, alteration, reconstruction and/or razing of any building within its limits.

This amendment establishes a period of significance that includes several significant dates in the history of Georgetown and represents a comprehensive picture of the area's rich history from: 1) its 18<sup>th</sup>-century roots as an independent port town, to 2) the revocation of its independent government charter in 1871 and its inclusion into Washington, D.C., to 3) its subsequent expansion as a residential neighborhood of the District predominantly in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, to 4) the closure of the C&O Canal in 1924, and subsequent end to all port activity, to 5) the increased industrial growth and a related decline in the socio-economic status of the district in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to 6) the re-discovery and renovation of Georgetown by the influx of workers brought to Washington during the New Deal, and finally, to 7) the official recognition of the unique historic, cultural and architectural history of Georgetown by Congressional passage of the Old Georgetown Act in 1950.

Any prehistoric or historic archaeological resources falling within or outside the period of significance (beginning date) would be considered contributing to the historic district.

#### Early Georgetown buildings (1751-1829):

Established in 1751 and named in honor of King George II, "George Towne" on the Potomac River encompassed George Gordon's tobacco house and inspection station, a sprinkling of houses, shops, a tavern and ferry landing. During the next half century, Georgetown flourished as a tobacco port town and shipping center,

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with a profitable European and Caribbean trade.<sup>1</sup> The first buildings to be constructed in Georgetown were related to the tobacco trade, including the wood and log tobacco warehouses and merchant stores, and the houses, inns and taverns of people working the tobacco trade. Other than the street plan oriented toward the harbor and portions of buildings incorporated into later construction, little remains of colonial Georgetown. The earliest known extant building in Georgetown is the "Old Stone House" at 3049 M Street, built ca. 1765 as a residence and cabinetmaker's shop. Other pre-Revolutionary construction may exist encased in or behind later buildings, such as in the frame "back buildings" of the Federal-era "Mackall Square" at 1633 29<sup>th</sup> Street (built 1820). Recent archaeological studies have identified other 18<sup>th</sup>-century resources, including the remains of several warehouses at 34<sup>th</sup> and M Streets, associated with John Mason.

Despite a decline in trade during the Revolutionary War declined (the colonial harbor trade had been financed by British trading firms), the town's economy rebounded and its population grew in the years immediately following the War. While Georgetown continued its tobacco trade with Europe, it also had business in the import market—in goods such as sugar and molasses from the West Indies. In 1789, the same year that Georgetown lobbied Congress to locate the federal city here, the Maryland Assembly incorporated Georgetown as an independent town. The Corporation, consisting of an elected government composed of a Mayor, Recorder, Aldermen, and Common Councilman, had broad legislative, executive and judicial powers. The Corporation built a frame Market House ca. 1796 on the present market site at 3276 M Street, and established the Georgetown Custom House in 1799. During this period, Georgetown invested heavily in internal improvements essential to its commercial growth. In 1785, George Washington's Pawtomack Company was incorporated to open the Potomac to navigation beyond the tidewater, and in 1791, the George-town Bridge Company was incorporated to build the first bridge across the river.

In 1791, Georgetown became part of the ten-square-mile federal city. Over the course of the next decade, Georgetown prospered. Local fortunes were made in shipping and real estate, and development of the town began to spread beyond the banks of the river. While hotels, taverns, banks and other commercial buildings were clustered along M Street and the waterfront area, large mansions and smaller, speculative housing began to be constructed above the harbor.

According to *The Georgetown Historic District Project: A Cultural Resources Survey* (1993) prepared for the D.C. Historic Preservation Division, 135 buildings within the historic district date to this early period (1751-1829). The survey also categorized the early residential buildings into three general types<sup>2</sup>:

- 1) Large, detached brick "estates" built as single-family dwellings and associated resources in spacious settings.

<sup>1</sup> Tea, clothing, liquor, books and other commodities were imported from London, Glasgow, Amsterdam, Bordeaux, while tobacco was the primary export. Georgetown also began to participate in the flour trade with Europe and the Caribbean; a flour inspector was appointed in 1789.

<sup>2</sup> These categories are based on typical trends; exceptions may exist.

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- 2) Narrow brick residential/commercial buildings and associated resources built as urban dwellings that were either attached to surrounding houses or built as freestanding buildings and referred to as “townhouses.”
- 3) Wood-clad houses and associated resources, in single form or as “double houses.”

On the heights above the town, several large and magnificent estates, built by prominent members of the local community survive as essential and outstanding components of the Georgetown Historic District. Built on vast, undivided squares that historically included orchards, formal gardens and associated buildings, these estates include Bellevue (later named Dumbarton House) at 2715 Q Street, N.W. (ca. 1800), Evermay at 1623 28<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W. (ca. 1801), Dumbarton Oaks at 3101 R Street (ca. 1801), and Tudor Place at 1644 31<sup>st</sup> Street (1805-1816).

Numerous examples of the “townhouse” type of residence can be found throughout the historic district. James Maccubbin Ligan’s house, known as Prospect House, at 3508 Prospect Street, provides a particularly “high style” example. More representative of the type are the townhouses at 3019 P Street and 1069 Thomas Jefferson Street. The third house type is less common, though several examples do survive, such as the two-story Edgar Patterson House at 1241 30<sup>th</sup> Street. Speculative housing also made its debut in Georgetown during this period. In circa 1812, the row of dwellings at 3255-3267 N Street was constructed, while the notable Federal row at 3327-3339 N Street followed suit, ca. 1815.

By 1814, Georgetown had evolved from a small tobacco inspection station clustered around the harbor, to a fully envisioned town, platted virtually in its entirety from the water to north of R Street. In addition to the residential, commercial and emerging industrial buildings that were vital to the town’s economy, Georgetown had grown to include other supporting buildings, such as a large variety of religious, educational, and cultural buildings. The German Lutheran Church, the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, the German Presbyterian Church, the new Church of England, and the Presbyterian Church all had buildings in Georgetown. One of the oldest congregations was originally founded as the Bridge Street Presbyterian Church in 1782, but was reorganized as St. John’s Episcopal Church in 1795. St. John’s present church building, designed by architect William Thornton at 3240 O Street, was erected in 1809. Old Trinity Church at 3515 N Street, built ca. 1794, is considered the oldest Catholic Church in D.C.; the Mt. Zion United Methodist Church, originally founded in 1816 and built in 1842 at 1334 29<sup>th</sup> Street, survives as Washington’s oldest African-American congregation. Several other African-American churches emerged to accommodate Georgetown’s sizeable African-American population, both free and enslaved, who worked in a variety of skilled and unskilled jobs, contributing to the overall economic prosperity of the district.

In addition to churches, Georgetown is renowned for its numerous and distinguished educational institutions, many of which were established during the first phases of the town’s history: George Town College (Georgetown University)—the first Catholic school of higher education in this country—opened its doors in 1791 and now dominates the western section of the historic district; a small girls’ school begun in 1799 was



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incorporated by an Act of Congress in 1828 as the Academy of the Visitation; the Billings School at 3100-08 Dumbarton Street opened in 1807 to both black and white students; and in 1810, the Lancaster School Society of Georgetown founded a school at 3126 O Street that offered free education for both boys and girls, including African Americans.

In the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as the formerly prosperous tobacco trade began to flounder, and as Georgetown's port began to silt up (exacerbated by the construction of Long Bridge in 1808), and the ports of Baltimore and Alexandria competed for Georgetown's market, the Georgetown economy faced change.

The construction of the C&O Canal, designed in 1828 to carry raw materials east and finished goods west, helped Georgetown weather this change and was the impetus that transformed it from a tobacco port to a more diversified industrial (low-level processing) and commercial center. While the shipment of coal dominated the new economy, the processing and shipping of wheat, corn, stone, lumber, and cordwood supplemented the industry. The 30-foot drop from the canal to the Potomac River also provided ample water power for the operation of mills, including flour and paper mills, and metal foundries. In addition to the canal itself, extant mercantile buildings from this period include the notable Dodge Warehouses at 1000-1008 Wisconsin Avenue and 3205 K Street, built 1813-1824 on the foundations of earlier stone warehouse buildings, dating to ca. 1760.

### Early to Mid-Victorian Georgetown (1830-1869):

During the early and mid-Victorian period, Georgetown grew extensively, leaving an indelible mark on the built environment of the former port town. According to the 1993 survey, 175 buildings within the historic district date to this period. Much of this growth occurred along the waterfront as industrial processing and commercial opportunities, spurred by the C&O Canal, continued apace. The Bomford Mill at 1000 Potomac Street (1845-47), and the Duvall Foundry at 1040-50 30<sup>th</sup> Street (1856), both incorporated into contemporary office complexes, represent the emergence and growth of the milling and iron work industry of mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century Georgetown.

In addition to the industrial/commercial buildings constructed near the canal and along the waterfront, the town was enhanced by several notable public buildings and amenities, such as the Custom House and Post Office (1857-58) at 1215 31<sup>st</sup> Street, designed by architect Ammi B. Young; the Vigilant Fire House (1844) at 1066 Wisconsin Avenue; the Georgetown Market (1863-1865) at 3276 M Street; and the Potomac Savings Bank at 3201 M Street (1850). Beginning in 1848, the steep hillside above Rock Creek at R Street was laid out into the picturesque Oak Hill Cemetery that includes an ornate entry gate and the Oak Hill Cemetery Chapel, designed by architect James Renwick.

Numerous residential buildings designed in a variety of forms and styles ranging from Greek Revival townhouses (2804 N Street and 1228 30<sup>th</sup> Street), to picturesque Gothic villas 28<sup>th</sup> and Q, and 30<sup>th</sup> and O), to

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grand and exuberant Second Empire-style dwellings, such as 3405 N Street, graced the grid of the early town and stretched from M Street on the south to above R Street on the north.

The Civil War temporarily interrupted Georgetown's steady physical growth, but contributed to its cultural evolution. According to *Black Washington Remembered*, Georgetown's African-American population increased sixty percent in the decade between 1860 and 1870 as blacks migrating from the south settled in the established Herring Hill neighborhood of Georgetown.<sup>3</sup> During the War all available buildings were requisitioned for military use, such as hospitals, officers' quarters, barracks, and supply depots, just as the canal, roads, and bridges were used for military purposes of moving materials and men.

After the war, the African-American community flourished as the newly freed assimilated into the already strong and independent black population. In 1867, Georgetown residents hosted a mayoral election in which blacks voted for the first time, thanks to the Negro Suffrage Bill of December 1866.

### Late Victorian Building (1870-1899):

In 1871, the Board of Public Works, under the direction of Alexander ("Boss") Shepherd, consolidated the governments of Washington City, Washington County, and Georgetown. Georgetown's independent charter was revoked and Congress created one territorial government for the city of Washington. With the establishment of the territorial government, Shepherd and his Board of Public Works began implementation of a massive, city-wide program of public improvements that included the laying and grading of streets, the laying of sewer, water and gas lines and the development of street furniture and landscaping, including trees. The results of the 1993 architectural survey of the historic district indicate that Georgetown benefited significantly from the development of this infrastructure, as 985 of the district's 3,033 buildings date from this 29-year period.

The initial steps of re-grading and straightening the former town's streets were met with legitimate criticism as the re-grading left many houses, which formerly sat at street level, either well above street grade with foundations exposed, or, below grade with second-story windows looking out at grade. As a result of this, several buildings along M Street, which was cut down during this period, have fully exposed foundations now serving as the principal entry floor, such as at 3001-3003 M Street.

During this period of vast improvement, the large estates in the northern reaches of Georgetown retained their rural settings, while the surrounding residential streets were re-subdivided with urban-size, row house lots. Over the course of the next twenty years, these lots were filled with continuous rows of speculative

<sup>3</sup> By 1860, 200 black families had already settled in "Herring Hill," an eastern part of Georgetown named after the indigenous fish caught in Rock Creek. "Herring Hill" can generally be described as that area between 27<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> Streets on the east and west and N and P Streets on the south and north.

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development, executed in a variety of late Victorian styles. These include rows of Italianate-style dwellings, characterized by cubic massing and decorative door and window hoods; Queen-Anne houses distinguished by projecting bay windows, corbelled cornices and decorative, molded brickwork, and varied window panes; along with rows of bold Romanesque Revival-style houses, defined by wide, round-arched openings, and strong accents of rough-stone trim. While examples of all of these styles abound in the district, the Queen Anne style shows up consistently in Georgetown in both residential and commercial buildings. A particularly fine example of Queen Anne commercial building is seen at 1422 Wisconsin Avenue, characterized by its distinctive corbelled brickwork and its multi-paned "Queen Anne sash."

Behind these row houses, numerous associated domestic buildings and outbuildings, not necessarily visible from the public right-of-way, were constructed during this and earlier periods. Alley dwellings, worker housing, stables, carriage houses and domestic outbuildings, such as sheds, outhouses and other buildings contribute to the built environment of Georgetown and are all contributing resources to the historic district.

As transportation networks improved, including new streetcar lines entering Georgetown, commercial Georgetown also evolved in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many of M Street's older residential buildings took on commercial uses, as new, purpose-built two-, three-, and four-story brick commercial buildings filled in the vacant lots. Many surviving examples of these late 19<sup>th</sup>-century purpose-built commercial enterprises, such as those at 3200 and 3214 M Street, and 1400 and 1422 Wisconsin Avenue help define the mercantile character of the historic district today. In addition, a number of dance halls and fraternal organizations were built in Georgetown in this period, including the rebuilt Masonic Hall building at 1208-12 Wisconsin Avenue (built 1859; rebuilt 1964), and the altered Forrest Hall at 1262 Wisconsin Avenue (built 1877).

Churches and schools, including eight public schools, continued to be added to the neighborhood, at the same time that the existing institutions expanded. During this period, Georgetown University gained a number of buildings, including most notably the distinctive Healy Hall, built in 1877 to the designs of Smithmyer and Pelz, and the original medical school-hospital complex, a series of buildings begun in the mid-1890s and designed by architect Clement A. Didden.

The Phillips School, built in 1890 at 27<sup>th</sup> and N Streets in the Herring Hill section of Georgetown, was one of several schools constructed to serve the black community that had been established in Georgetown prior to the Civil War. During this period, the African-American community of Georgetown flourished, becoming increasingly self-reliant, as more of its members established businesses, purchased real estate and entered the professions.

Closer to the waterfront, and because of the canal, industry grew in variety and density during the 1880s. Flourmills, cooperages, a fertilizer company, soap company, carriage manufacturer, ice, cement, lime companies, and ironworks all emerged. By 1887, the Washington Gas Light Company had constructed a round gashouse along the north side of the canal between 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> Streets. In 1889, after a Potomac River flood

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severely damaged the canal, new industry moved into the waterfront area, including the Capital Traction Company Powerhouse (1911, demolished 1968), built to generate electricity for the city's streetcars, and numerous factories, garages, construction companies, and machine shops. These new industries relied upon steam boilers, engines and furnaces for power. By 1910, the need for coal at the power plant brought a spur of the B&O railroad down K Street to 28<sup>th</sup> and K Streets. Together, these industrial complexes earned the western end of Georgetown the nickname "Factory Hill."

### Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Georgetown (1900-1949):

Despite the long-held belief that Georgetown's built environment dates predominantly from the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the 1993 survey of the historic district revealed that 88 percent of the present building stock of Georgetown was constructed after 1870. While 984 of the district's 3,033 buildings date from the 1870-1899 period as noted above, 876 range in date from 1900 to 1950 (inclusive).

Historically, Georgetown is defined by its transition away from its small, independent port town origins to an industrialized waterfront and urban neighborhood. After World War I, as Georgetown grew increasingly industrial, its desirability as a residential neighborhood declined, altering the socio-economics of the once-prosperous town. However, Georgetown was quickly rediscovered by the influx of government workers drawn to the city as part of Roosevelt's New Deal, and to Georgetown for its affordability and high-quality building, ultimately leading to the renovation of Georgetown's built environment. While this renovation effort resulted in the elimination of much of Georgetown's socio-economic and racial diversity, it also resulted in the recognition and designation of the Georgetown Historic District. The Old Georgetown Act of 1950 provided for the preservation of the district's architectural legacy and, from 1950 to the present, has directed the character of new construction within the historic district.

In the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Georgetown continued to expand its residential building stock through the construction of row houses, as well as through the introduction of flats and apartment houses. Beginning in the 1890s, several large Victorian houses, such as the Dodge House at 30<sup>th</sup> and Q Streets, were converted into flats, while the first purpose-built apartment houses were erected after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These early apartment buildings were generally small-scaled buildings designed to resemble row houses that fit neatly into the existing streetscape (i.e. the row of "flats" designed by B. Stanley Simmons and erected in 1909 at 3403-23 M Street). Dumbarton Court, a large, four-story, 35-unit Mediterranean-inspired apartment house designed and built in 1909 at 1657 31<sup>st</sup> Street by architect George S. Cooper provides a notable early exception. Beginning in the 1920s and culminating in 1941 with the expansive Carlyn (now Gateway Georgetown) at 2500 Q Street, Georgetown apartment buildings grew larger and denser, following the local, citywide trend in apartment building design that accommodated the growing government workforce and population of Washington. The expansive Kew Gardens at 2700 Q Street and built 1922 by developer Harry Kite illustrates the growing acceptance and popularity of the larger apartment building type.

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At the same time that Georgetown grew denser, it also benefited from the recognition and formal designation of open space, along with a rise of recreational buildings, both of which contribute to the physical beauty and character of the historic district today. Along the waterfront, the Potomac Boat Club and Washington Canoe Club were constructed in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while Montrose Park, in the neighborhood's northern end, was designated a community park in 1911.

Around the turn-of-the-20<sup>th</sup> century, improvements in transportation increased the accessibility of Georgetown. The 36<sup>th</sup> and M Street Terminal (the Capitol Traction Company Union Station), built by the Washington and Georgetown Railroad Company (1895-1897) was designed to serve as a terminal of four streetcar lines leading in and out of Georgetown to downtown, upper northwest, Maryland and Virginia; the Dumbarton ("Buffalo Bridge") carrying Q Street over Rock Creek opened in 1915 connecting Georgetown to Dupont Circle; and the Key Bridge over the Potomac River connecting Georgetown to Roslyn, was built between 1917-23. Several of the already existing bridges leading into and out of Georgetown were rebuilt/replaced during this period, such as the M Street Bridge (replaced in 1939); the K Street Bridge (replaced in 1939); and the P Street Bridge, (replaced in 1935). While these replacement bridges eased the movement of traffic along existing transportation routes, the new bridges opened up entirely new corridors for development. After 1915 when Dumbarton Bridge was built, for instance, the Q Street corridor became ripe for new development, clearly apparent today by the number of apartment buildings located along that stretch between the bridge and 28<sup>th</sup> Street.

In 1924, a destructive flood forced the final closure of the C&O Canal, and forced the Georgetown waterfront to again diversify its interests as port activity effectively ceased. The Georgetown waterfront had been designated "industrial" by the city's first zoning ordinance in 1920, and over the course of the next 20 years, heavier industry, including factories, garages, construction companies and machine shops moved in next to, or replaced, the warehouses and mills of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Despite the shift toward industry, Georgetown's strategic location on area transportation routes connecting Virginia and Maryland helped Georgetown maintain its commercial importance and viability. During this period, M Street became a regional marketplace for farmers and new suburban dwellers of Montgomery County, Maryland and Alexandria and Fairfax in Virginia. M Street also served the commercial needs of northwest Washington, which, until the second quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was isolated from downtown due to a lack of good and convenient bridges over Rock Creek.

A number of smaller-scaled, one- and two-story commercial/industrial buildings were constructed principally in the squares between M Street and the water, but are also found along the neighborhood's side streets. Generally speaking, these buildings, such as those at 1048 29<sup>th</sup> Street, 1063 Wisconsin Avenue, and several examples found along the 3200 block of M Street (north side), are utilitarian in character with unadorned brick facades, sometimes with vaguely tri-partite organization, large openings and stepped gables facing the public right-of-way. Other examples reflect stylistic trends of the period, such as the stripped classical building at 2819 M Street built in 1925 for the Simmons Motor Company as an automobile show room, the Art Deco influenced commercial building at 3255 M Street, built in 1938, and the former Woolworth's 5 & 10 store building at 3111 M Street, N.W., designed in a streamlined, Art Moderne style and built in 1940.

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As industrialization of Georgetown increased, the neighborhood's prestige and desirability decreased and many middle-class residents, both blacks and whites, left Georgetown for the suburbs. Many of the older, affluent families remained in Georgetown throughout the early and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, but the majority of the residents at that time were members of the working class. While a large community of African Americans remained in the west end, a significant concentration of Irish immigrants lived in the east end, and a growing community of German Jewish merchants and their families worked and lived along M Street.

Despite the persistence of new residential developments that continued into the 1920s, much of the older building stock in Georgetown was plagued by substandard sanitation and suffered a significant decline due to lack of maintenance and neglect—a trend only exacerbated by the Depression. During these years, Georgetown was often characterized as a slum and its waterfront as an eyesore.

As poverty and poor living conditions persisted, several African-American community services emerged to support the black population of Georgetown, as other social groups, active since the pre- and post-Civil War period, continued to contribute social service projects to the neighborhood. The Community House of Mt. Zion Church (built in 1818) teemed with activity as youth groups, including the boy scouts, vied for space in the building. In 1922, the African-American Jerusalem Baptist Church was constructed, and in 1925 Epiphany Church, a Catholic Church for African Americans, was also established. The Rose Park Playground at 26<sup>th</sup> and O Streets, remodeled by the Department of Recreation in 1935, was vital to black social life.

### Historic Preservation

The first housing restoration efforts began in Georgetown in the 1920s, but solidified in the 1930s. In 1920, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss purchased Dumbarton Oaks and began a 20-year effort at preserving the house and re-landscaping its extensive grounds, and in 1923, diplomat Ferdinand Lammot Belin saved Evermay from demolition, just prior to its development. At the same time, idealistic New Deal workers, arriving in increasing numbers, began renovation of the small-scale and affordable houses of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>-century Georgetown, while more affluent professionals renovated the larger townhouses, or built new, freestanding houses, designed in a mid-century Colonial Revival style, such as the Morgenthal House at 3426 Prospect Street. As the interest in Georgetown's historic building stock increased, so too did the property values. At first, many African Americans sold their property to take advantage of rising real estate values, allowing for even greater widespread renovation efforts. Many others were eventually unable to afford to remain, as rents and property values continued to rise or were displaced as part of the 1934 Alley Dwelling Act. The Alley Dwelling Act—a city zoning law—created the Alley Dwelling Authority whose principal goal was to eradicate alley housing. Social reformers who perceived alley housing as unfit for human habitation and contributed to the moral decay of the residents had been lobbying for such an act since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Ironically, in Georgetown many of these alley dwellings were not razed at all, but were restored and renamed “coach houses,” and sold to affluent newcomers.<sup>4</sup> Although these efforts led to the preservation of the district's alleys, such as Poplar Place

<sup>4</sup> Kathleen Lesko et al, *Black Georgetown Remembered*, p. 82.

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between 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> and O and P Streets and Bell's Court (renamed Pomander Walk) between 33<sup>rd</sup> and 34<sup>th</sup> and P and Volta Streets, N.W., it also contributed to the change in its socio-economic character. By 1950, the percentage of African Americans in Georgetown had significantly declined.

Between 1935 and 1945, over 500 houses were substantially remodeled in an effort to "recapture" the "ambience" of old Georgetown. Mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century, Colonial Revival-style door surrounds and other applied "Colonial" detailing were added to existing historic fabric, while new residential construction, beginning in the 1930s, followed a standard formula of two and three-story, flat-fronted, brick dwellings (built in rows or as pairs), with Colonial-Revival-style door surrounds and 6/6 windows. Variations to this standard form included the use of projecting bay windows, raised foundations to accommodate integrated garages, and stepped parapet roofs with decorative detailing such as garlands or roundels. Numerous examples of this trend can be found throughout Georgetown, such as along the 2800 block of Olive Street and the 3400 block of Q Street, both built in 1935, the 3600 block of Prospect Street constructed in 1937, and examples along Dent Place from the 1930s, to name a few.

Other dwelling forms that deviate from the above, but still closely follow a mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century Colonial Revival design philosophy are also apparent in the district, such as a row of 1-1/2-story brick residences with gambrel roofs and dormers on the 2700 block of O Street built in 1940. Here, the designer looked to more vernacular 18<sup>th</sup>-century "Virginia" house type, defined by its low, 1-1/2-story massing, hall-parlor plan, and gambrel-roofed form.

The Colonial Revival aesthetic was not limited to residential design, as new public, institutional, commercial and industrial construction followed similar aesthetic trends. This preference for the Colonial Revival in institutional buildings can be seen at the Wisconsin Avenue Vocational School, built 1911-1912 and designed by the Office of the Municipal Architect, Snowden Ashford, along with architect Thomas Fuller. Tightly built into a wedge-shaped site at 1640 Wisconsin Avenue, this public school with its three-part massing, pedimented central pavilion and corner quoining, offers an academic interpretation of the Colonial Revival style. Ellington School of the Arts at 35<sup>th</sup> and R Streets, originally built as Western High School in the mid-1890s was rebuilt in 1914 following a devastating fire. The re-built school features a grand, six-columned, pedimented portico and side wings, enlarged in the 1920s and 30s. The Georgetown University Medical School on Reservoir Road (1931) and the Georgetown Regional Library at 3260 R Street, N.W. (1935) both follow academic Georgian Revival models, while the Gordon Junior High (Hardy School) at 35<sup>th</sup> and T Streets (1927) borrowed an overall sense of scale and architectural elements in a more stripped down version of the style.

Similarly, much of the district's commercial and industrial design from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century featured elements of the Colonial Revival style, namely symmetrical massing, brick walls, 6/6 windows, garland friezes, pedimented door surrounds and other features.

Early preservation efforts in Georgetown extended beyond the built environment. In 1938, the Department of the Interior acquired the C&O Canal as an historic site, and the National Park Service began restoration of the twenty-two mile stretch between Georgetown and Seneca. In 1949, when the construction of the Whitehurst Freeway caused the destruction of large numbers of waterfront and canal-related resources, citizens protested

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and Congress responded by passing the Old Georgetown Act in 1950. This act set the boundaries for the “Old Georgetown” district and provided a review process of all plans for the construction, alteration, reconstruction or razing of any building within its limits. The Act did not establish a period of significance, but refers to the preservation and protection of the architecture used in the National Capital in the “initial years.” The Act further called for a survey of the “Old Georgetown” district. In 1967, the Georgetown Historic District was designated a National Historic Landmark and automatically listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The boundaries of the historic district followed those established for the “Old Georgetown” district defined by the Old Georgetown Act. In 1980, a National Register Nomination form was prepared on the Georgetown Historic District. In 1993, a survey of primary resources within the Georgetown Historic District provided a more thorough understanding of its mid-to late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century building stock.

Georgetown remains a unique historic district defined by its busy streets, lined with a wide variety of buildings offering a myriad of residential and commercial uses, and by its abundance of open space both surrounding and hidden within its squares. Passage of the Old Georgetown Act provided an important watershed in the history of Georgetown and serves as a historically appropriate end-date to the district’s period of significance.



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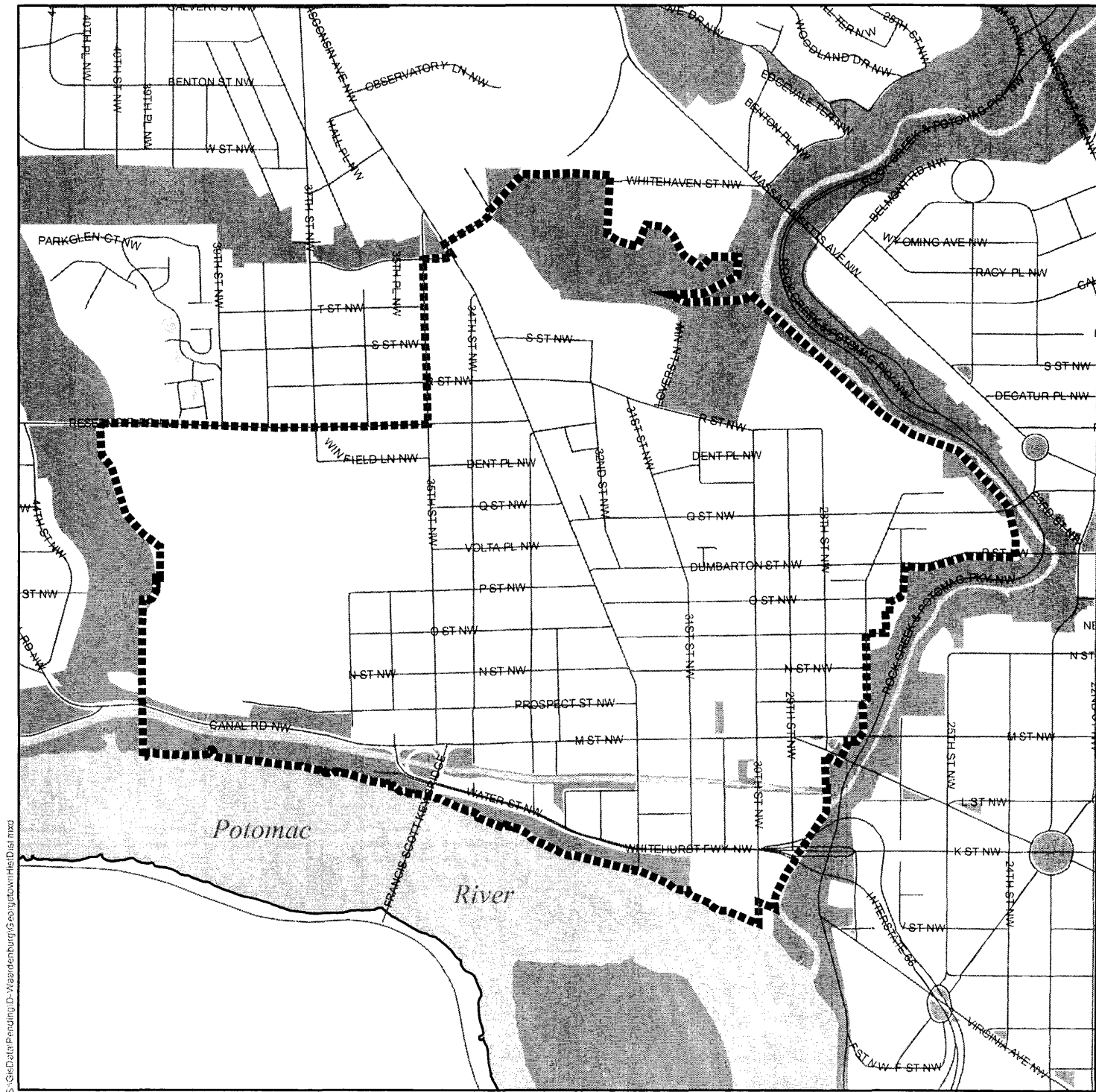
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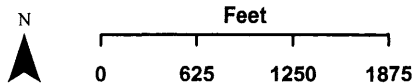
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# Georgetown Historic District



★ ★ ★ Government of the  
 District of Columbia  
 Anthony A. Williams, Mayor

Office of Planning ~ April 22, 2003

This map was created for planning  
 purposes from a variety of sources.  
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 Georgetown Historic District  
 Parks  
 Roads

