

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE



**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD**  
**APPLICATION FOR HISTORIC LANDMARK OR HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION**

New Designation

Amendment of a previous designation X

Please summarize any amendment(s): The application defines a historic district to encompass a that surrounds an existing NHL property, extends the period of significance, and includes additional buildings, landscape features and archaeological sites.

Property name Old Naval Observatory

*If any part of the interior is being nominated, it must be specifically identified and described in the narrative statements.*

Address 2300 E Street, NW

Square and lot number(s) Reservation 4

Affected Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A

Date of construction 1842, 1903-08 Date of major alteration(s) 1847-48, 1869

Architect(s) Ernest Flagg Architectural style(s) Greek Revival

Original use Military/Scientific Present use Administrative & Residential

Property owner U.S. Department of the Navy

Legal address of property owner 1322 Patterson Avenue, SE, Suite 1000, WDC 20374-5065

NAME OF APPLICANT(S) D.C. Preservation League

*If the applicant is an organization, it must submit evidence that among its purposes is the promotion of historic preservation in the District of Columbia. A copy of its charter, articles of incorporation, or by-laws, setting forth such purpose, will satisfy this requirement.*

Address/Telephone of applicant(s) 401 F Street, NW, Room 324, Washington, DC 20001

Name and title of authorized representative Rebecca Miller, Executive Director

Signature of representative  Date 6/24/2011

Name and telephone of author of application Rebecca Miller (202-783-5144)

Date received \_\_\_\_\_  
H.P.O. staff \_\_\_\_\_

**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 Old Naval Observatory  
other names (see continuation sheet)

**2. Location**

street & number 2300 E Street, NW  not for publication  
city or town Washington  vicinity  
state DC code DC county District of Columbia code 001 zip code 20372

**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).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
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).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby, certify that this property is:

<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain): _____	_____	_____

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**5. Classification**

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

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

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

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal
- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
9	11	buildings
3		sites
1		structures
3		objects
16		Total

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

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

N/A

1

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DEFENSE/naval facility

HEALTH CARE/Hospital

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

DEFENSE/naval facility

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Georgian Revival

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

foundation    Brick

walls        Brick, Stucco

\_\_\_\_\_

roof         Slate, imitation slate

other

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Other Names of Property:**

Reservation 4; Depot of Charts and Instruments; U.S. Naval Observatory and Hydrographics Office; National Observatory; U.S. Naval Observatory; U.S. Naval Museum of Hygiene; U.S. Naval Medical School and Naval Hospital; Bureau of Medicine and Surgery; Potomac Annex.

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## Narrative Description

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

### Description Summary:

The Old Naval Observatory encompasses 10 buildings, three archaeological sites, and several landscape elements and features in the District of Columbia situated on about 15 acres of land roughly bounded by E Street NW on the north, 23rd Street on the east, Department of State property on the west, and the United States Institute of Peace property on the south, following the current boundary lines for the Navy's Potomac Annex property.

### General Description:

The site occupies a prominent hill that overlooks the Potomac River. The site's elevated topography is one of its defining features, and it was a critical factor in the decision the selection of the site for an observatory. When designing the City of Washington, Pierre L'Enfant recognized the importance of the site's commanding height, and he set it aside as a public reservation. The hill that would become Reservation 4 rises to an elevation of 96 feet above mean sea level, higher even than the reservations set aside for the President's House and the Congress. The topography of Reservation 4 made it an ideal site for a military fortification, especially as a defensive position against an attack from the British navy, a major threat in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. While formal fortifications were never built on Reservation 4, the site has had a continuous military use since 1842.

The historic district documents significant broad patterns of history and architecture related to the Navy's 165-year occupation of the site, beginning with the first Naval Observatory in 1842, the Naval Museum of Hygiene between 1893 and 1904, the Washington Naval Hospital from 1904 through 1942, and the administrative offices of the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery from 1942 to the present.

Resources contributing to the historic district include the Old Naval Observatory (Building 2) and nine buildings constructed during the tenancy of the Naval Hospital (Female Nurses' Quarters [Building 1], the Washington Naval Hospital and Medical Center [Buildings 3 and 4], the Sick Officers' Quarters [Building 5], the Contagious Ward [Building 6], the Male Nurses' or Corpsmen's Quarters [Building 7], and three quarters for naval hospital officers [Quarters A, B, and C]). Archaeological remains associated with the 1844 Magnetic Observatory and tunnel, brick foundations located adjacent to Building 3, and a historic trash deposit next to Building 4 also contribute to the historic district as sites. The proposed historic district also includes a

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statue of Benjamin Rush, a covered walkway linking the Female Nurses' Quarters (Building 1) and the Washington Naval Hospital (Building 3), two historic oak trees, a 1912 Yoshino Cherry tree, and other vegetation, remnant grillwork, a gaslight, and general circulation patterns as contributing elements.

Non-contributing elements to the historic district include the Transformer Substation (Building 25), the garage for Quarters A (Building 332), the garage for Quarters B (Building 333), the garage for Quarters C (Building 334), the northeast gatehouse, the southeast gatehouse, the southeast guardhouse, the utility building, two garages on the southwestern corner of the property, and a bus kiosk. Buildings 25, 332, 333, and 334 are non-contributing resources owing to a loss of integrity and weak historic associations with Potomac Annex's significant trends. The remaining non-contributing elements are modern intrusions less than 50 years old with no historical associations with the facility's significance.

## CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS

*The Old Naval Observatory (Building 2)* is the central structure of the historic district, in much the same way it played a preeminent role in the development of naval navigation and the fields of oceanography and astronomy during the nineteenth century. The current building forms a large T-shaped structure and reflects seven major periods of construction and remodeling. The original Observatory Building, a two-story brick structure crowned by the circular observatory dome and built between 1842 and 1844, reflects the symmetrical Greek Revival architectural elements popular for early nineteenth-century government buildings and structures. The centrally located door is ornamented by an elaborate surround with sidelights and a six-light transom topped by a projecting head supported by acanthus leaf brackets. Similar brackets and projecting heads adorn the Observatory's windows. Brick pilasters divide the building into three bays and support a classically inspired molded wood cornice. In its original configuration, one-story wings extended from the Observatory to its east, south, and west and featured cornice and window treatments similar to those of the main two-story structure. The current building's two-story east wing, erected in 1847 as a free-standing Superintendent's Quarters, echoes the original Observatory's symmetrical design and architectural detailing, although in a more subdued manner. Construction of a one-story hyphen in 1848 connected the Observatory's original east wing with the Superintendent's Quarters. In 1869 a two-story addition was appended to the Observatory's west wing; a short one-story hyphen connected the two-story addition to the original one-story west wing. In preparation for the installation of the Great Equatorial Telescope in 1873, the South Observatory structure was erected and appended to the original south wing by a one-story hyphen.

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After the Naval Observatory moved to a new location on Massachusetts Avenue, the Naval Museum of Hygiene occupied the Old Naval Observatory between 1894 and 1904, and greatly modified the building to provide additional exhibit and laboratory space. By 1897 the first stories of the Observatory and the former Superintendent's Quarters had been remodeled to house exhibits, while the Observatory's second floor became a scientific laboratory. The South Observatory, renamed the South Rotunda, was also completely rebuilt above the foundation to house a new library during that period. Remodeling of the building's western wing and addition in 1895 provided expanded library and exhibition space. Two years later the western addition was completely remodeled into a lecture hall.

Although the establishment of the Naval Hospital at the Old Naval Observatory in 1904 brought the construction of the hospital-related structures and the creation of the current hospital campus, further remodelings of the former observatory building were undertaken to incorporate the Observatory into the hospital's operation. In 1909 the installation of a second story in the interior of the South Rotunda provided additional space for the institution's medical library. Ten years later two-story stuccoed additions were attached to the southern elevations of the former Superintendent's Quarters and the western addition. The building's exterior has not undergone substantial modification since the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery acquired the facility in 1942.

*The Female Nurses' Quarters (Building 1)* is located on the western edge of the property, and stands two and one-half stories tall with a hipped roof, a modillion cornice, and yellow Flemish bond brick walls incorporating characteristics of the Georgian Revival style. Construction of the structure occurred in two phases, with the northern eight bays built first in 1907-1908 followed by the southern eight-bay-wide section constructed in 1925-1926. The earlier portion features a formal entrance portico with Tuscan columns ornamenting a central, four-bay-wide pavilion crowned by a large hipped-roof dormer. Two symmetrically spaced windows occupy the building's walls on both sides of the pavilion. The building's formal entrance has been remodeled since 2000 and now possesses a modern six-panel wood door with elongated sidelights and a wide elliptical-arched transom. The fenestration of the southern structure's eastern elevation is slightly unsymmetrical but displays similar ornament and finishes as the northern structure. The portico on the southern addition is smaller and less imposing than the northern building's entrance. A two-story enclosed porch occupies the building's southern elevation.

The Female Nurses' Quarters' interior spaces have experienced numerous alterations, which have removed nearly all historic fabric and finishes since its conversion to office space for the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery. In addition, the integrity of its exterior materials has been impacted by the installation of modern doors and windows in most of the building's fenestral openings.

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*The Washington Naval Hospital (Building 3) and Naval Medical School (Building 4),* although given separate building designations in order to differentiate their function, were actually designed to operate as one integral hospital structure. Ernest Flagg’s design of the hospital in 1903 utilized the pavilion plans for medical institutions developed in Europe during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The plans for the hospital consisted of two main core buildings for administration (the Washington Naval Hospital) and medical operations (the Naval Medical School) with adjacent patient ward pavilions interconnected to the main core buildings by solaria. Because of financial constraints, Flagg did not complete the design for a full complement of pavilions and solaria for the two main core hospital buildings. Architects at the Washington-based firm of Wood, Donn and Deming completed Flagg’s pavilion design, although some modifications to the original scheme were incorporated into the buildings.

The Washington Naval Hospital, erected between 1903 and 1906, consists of a central two-and-one-half story, eight-bay-wide, hipped-roof building surmounted by an octagonal cupola with tall, one-story wings on its east and west connected to the main structure via shorter, one-story solaria. An additional solarium extends southward, connecting the Washington Naval Hospital to the surgical and medical operation facilities in the Naval Medical School and its adjacent solaria and patient pavilions. The Washington Naval Hospital (and the Naval Medical School) utilizes the symmetrical Georgian Revival style characteristics found on the other medical buildings in the historic district but utilize a different idiom in their expression. The walls are buff-colored brick laid in English bond with white-glazed brick quoins ornamenting building corners. Evenly spaced hipped roof dormers occupy the main roof above a dentiled cornice. The central bay of the building’s northern elevation possesses a one-story portico that formerly functioned as a porte-cochère. Supported by Tuscan columns and topped by a low balustrade, the portico protects modern double-leaf four-panel wood doors crowned by a wide fixed transom and flanked by modern four-over-four sash on either side. Six-over-six wood sash occupy most other window openings on the main block, and banks of multi-paned windows form the solaria’s side elevations. Four large nine-over-nine sash with fixed six-light transoms are symmetrically spaced along the gable-roofed pavilion wings’ side elevations. Window openings on the main block possess stone sills and jack-arch keystone lintels, and the wings feature large flat stone lintels.

The Naval Medical School incorporates many of the same features utilized on the Washington Naval Hospital in a more subdued manner, although subtle variations are discernible. Similar to hospital building, the medical school building features buff-colored brick walls laid in English bond with white-glazed brick quoins; however, the tripartite configuration of Building 4 features solaria that possess hallways with 90-degree turns. The medical school building’s central block, only two stories high including a full basement level, also possesses a flat roof in contrast to

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naval hospital's hipped roof. The hospital's pavilion wings feature gable roofs. One-story flat-roofed wings extend from the southern elevations of the central block and also from the eastern pavilion wing. Window sizes and configurations vary throughout the building, although most upper-story windows mirror the windows used on the hospital. Flat stone lintels and sills predominate on the medical school building.

Reflecting the need for office space during the recent Bureau of Medicine and Surgery tenancy period, the interiors of both buildings have been greatly remodeled from their original configurations. The Washington Naval Hospital retains its central lobby, stair hall, and first-floor corridor spatial arrangements and finishes. Most other areas of the two building's interiors have been modified by the installation of drop ceilings and new partition walls, and the removal of interior finishes and furnishings.

The *Sick Officers' Quarters (Building 5)* stands along the eastern edge of the property east of Building 3. The Sick Officers' Quarters consists of a two-and-one-half story, hipped-roof, T-plan structure incorporating the Georgian Revival institutional architecture idiom present on most of the facility's other principal buildings. The building features yellow Flemish bond brick walling, symmetrical fenestration, imitation slate roof shingles, corbelled quoins, a modillion cornice, and a three-bay-wide two-story entrance portico centrally placed on its northern elevation. The portico, supported by large Tuscan columns, extends well beyond the flight of stairs leading to the main entrance and creates a slender porte-cochère. The portico protects double-leaf wood-framed glass doors with an elliptical-arched fixed transom. Balustrades on the portico's roof provide an upper-story porch accessed through the two hipped-roof dormers. Paired interior chimney piles occupy the eastern and western gable ends. The rear wing's southern elevation features a two-story enclosed porch and an exterior wood-frame flight of stairs to the porch's roof. Most windows possess six-over-six replacement sash with keystone jack-arch lintels and stone sills.

Now converted into office space, the interior of the former Sick Officers' Quarters has undergone extensive remodeling. Completed in 1911, the advent of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery's tenancy at the site resulted in the renovation of the former hospital bedrooms into open offices by the removal of partition walls and restroom facilities. The building served as a residential structure for ill officers during most of the early twentieth century.

The *Contagious Ward (Building 6)*, is located directly south of the former Naval Hospital and Medical School, Buildings 3 and 4, near the southern boundary of the property. As with most of the other principal buildings constituting the former Naval Hospital complex, the Contagious Ward interprets the Georgian Revival architectural vocabulary in its institutional features. The Contagious Ward consists of a large two-story yellow brick structure featuring Flemish brick

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bond, corbelled quoins, a modillion cornice, symmetrical fenestration, imitation slate shingles on its hipped roofs, nine-over-nine replacement sliding sash crowned by six-light windows (possibly pivoting), and a wide two-story portico topped by a balustrade and carried by four large Tuscan columns on its northern elevation. The portico protects building entrances on both stories composed of metal-framed glass panels with doors of similar materials. A large metal fire stair leads to the second-story entrance, interrupting the building's formal visual presentation. A large one-story awning that once protected patients, staff, and visitors to the Contagious Ward has been removed since 2000. Most window openings possess jack-arch keystone lintels and stone sills. The rear southern elevation displays a full three stories owing to the sharp grade downward from north to south. The central portion of the southern elevation's upper stories is recessed, and its ground-story level displays a small two-bay-wide addition that encloses a former porte-cochère. Paired nine-over-nine sash with six-light transoms occupy most of the southern elevation's window openings.

Built between 1903 and 1908, the Contagious Ward underwent a drastic renovation in the early 1940s that subdivided its former open ward floor plans into individual office spaces. During the same period a porte-cochère appended to the southern elevation was enclosed. In the 1990s many of the building's interior spaces were extensively remodeled, leaving little of the original historic fabric and features inside the building. At some unknown date the metal-case window panels and doors were installed on the northern elevation. Nearly all of the buildings' windows have also been replaced.

The *Male Nurses' or Corpsmen's Quarters (Building 7)*, stands on the southern side of the south access road in the southeastern corner of the property. The two-and-one-half story T-shaped building is set perpendicular to the south access road, with its formal entrance occupying the central bay of its symmetrical, seven-bay-wide western elevation. Similar to most of the other buildings constituting the facility's hospital complex, the Corpsmen's Quarters features characteristics of the Georgian Revival style executed in an institutional setting. The building displays yellow brick walls laid in Flemish bond, corbelled quoins, a hipped roof with hipped roof dormers, a modillion cornice, and window openings ornamented with stone sills and jack-arch keystone lintels. The entrance is framed by a two-story pavilion surmounted by a balustrade above the cornice. A one-story portico, supported by paired Tuscan columns and crowned by a balustrade similar to that of the pavilion, shades the entrance. Double-leaf wood-panel doors with upper lights occupy the entrance, flanked by sidelights and topped by an elliptical-arched fixed transom. Double-leaf doors with a keystone round arch lintel provide access to the second-story porch created by the main entrance's portico. Most window openings contain six-over-six sash in single or paired configurations. The central roof dormer features a triple window; the remaining dormers possess single windows. A two-story porch, now enclosed, occupies nearly the entire width of the southern elevation.

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Since conversion of the building to office space for the Bureau of Medicine, the interior spaces of the Male Nurses' or Corpsmen's Quarters have undergone numerous alterations that have removed nearly all historic fabric and finishes. In addition, the integrity of its exterior materials has been impacted by the installation of modern doors and windows in most of the building's fenestral openings.

The *Commanding Officer's Quarters (Quarters A)* stands northeast of the Old Naval Observatory in the northeastern corner of the site. The building, erected in circa 1908, is a large, two-and-one-half-story, yellow, Flemish-bond brick structure with corbelled quoins, symmetrical fenestration, a side-gable slate roof with partial returns and paired interior chimneys, and a modillion cornice. A nearly full-width porch shades the building's western elevation and protects a broad entrance framed by sidelights and engaged columns and spanned by an elliptical-arched fixed transom. Paired Ionic columns support the porch's entablature. An ornate balustrade with finely turned balusters crowns the porch. A large, richly ornamented Palladian-type round arched doorway occupies the second story's central bay. Three gable-roofed pedimented dormers are evenly spaced across the roof slope. The central dormer contains paired windows, and single windows occupy the flanking dormers. Most window openings contain six-over-two replacement sash, imitating the historic window configurations. An enclosed porch occupies nearly the entire width of the north gable end's first story. A smaller, one-story enclosed porch is appended to the south gable end and possesses a one-story brick wing on its east. Quarters A is an excellent example of Georgian Revival domestic architecture executed in the early twentieth century within an institutional context and possesses very good integrity of location, association, workmanship, setting, design, materials, and feeling.

Located southeast of the Old Naval Observatory, and directly south of Quarters A, the *East Junior Officers' Quarters (Quarters B)*, built in circa 1908, incorporates the Georgian Revival architectural vocabulary, imitating Quarters A. The two-and-one-half-story side-gabled building, with paired interior gable end chimneys, partial returns, a modillion cornice, and pedimented gable-roofed dormers, features a nearly full-width one-story porch with Doric columns. The porch, topped by a balustrade with finely turned balusters, protects a wide door opening framed by slender engaged columns and sidelights and crowned by an elliptical-arched fixed transom. The yellow brick Flemish bond building also exhibits corbelled quoins, six-over-two replacement sash in most window openings, and jack-arch keystone lintels and stone sills.

The building is a noteworthy example of Georgian Revival domestic architecture during the early twentieth century executed within an institutional context. Save for the replacement sash which imitate the historic window configurations as shown on 1909 drawings of the building, the

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East Junior Officers' Quarters displays very good integrity of location, association, workmanship, setting, design, materials, and feeling.

*East Junior Officers' Quarters (Quarters C)*, stands near the northwestern corner of the property. Similar to the other Officers' Quarters at Potomac Annex, the building consists of a two-and-one-half story Georgian Revival dwelling with a slate-shingled roof, yellow Flemish bond brick walling, corbelled quoins, pedimented gable-roof dormers evenly spaced across its side gable roof with partial returns, a modillion cornice, and paired gable-end chimneys. The symmetrical main, eastern elevation displays six-over-two replacement sash with stone sills and keystone jack arch lintels and a central entry protected by a small portico with Tuscan columns. The portico shades a wide door opening ornamented with an elliptical-arched fixed transom, thin sidelights, and attenuated pilasters. A full-width one-story enclosed porch occupies the southern gable.

Built in circa 1908, the East Junior Officers' Quarters stands as a good example of Georgian Revival domestic architecture of the early twentieth century in an institutional context. Save for the installation of replacement sash, the building appears to possess good integrity of location, materials, workmanship, setting, association, design, and feeling.

## NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS

The historic district contains 11 buildings that are considered non-contributing to the historic district. As a whole, the structures lack significance because they are unrelated to the facility's significant missions. Most are less than 50 years old and all are lacking exceptional importance or significance under Criteria Consideration G.

The *Transformer Sub-station (Building 25)*, a rectangular brick structure exhibiting two periods of construction, stands between the west wings of Buildings 3 and 4 inside a paved courtyard. The earlier portion, built in 1942 according to Navy documents, consists of the eastern structure with yellow common bond brick walls and three bays penetrating both its southern and northern elevations. A parapetted flat roof with concrete coping tops the transformer building, and metal slab doors and large metal louvered vents occupy the side walls' openings. The western addition to the building, erected since 2001, displays a lighter shade of brick walling, a parapetted flat roof with a metal coping, and two paired metal slab doors in its western elevation.

The *Garage for Quarters A (Building 332)*, is located east of Quarters A along the west side of the east access road. Partially built into the adjacent hill slope, the building features concrete block walls set atop a poured concrete foundation, and a shallowly sloped shed roof with roll asphalt sheathing and an aluminum coping. A single wood overhead roll vehicle door with a

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bank of four lights occupies the building’s eastern elevation. Construction of the garage occurred around 1937, according to Navy documents.

The *Garage for Quarters B (Building 333)*, stands to the southeast of Quarters B, built into the hillside along the west side of the east access road. The building consists of a flat-roofed two-car garage with poured concrete walls, a wood box cornice, and roll asphalt roof sheathing. Two fiberglass overhead roll vehicle doors penetrate the garage’s eastern elevation. Navy documents indicate that the garage was constructed in 1943. A smaller structure, possibly the northern portion of the current building, appears on a 1946 map of the property.

The *Garage for Quarters C (Building 334)*, is located approximately 40 feet north of Quarters C, in the northwest corner of the site. The one-story building features six-to-one common bond yellow brick walls, and a flat roof with an aluminized cornice and coping. A fiberglass overhead roll vehicle door occupies much of the structure’s east elevation. A 1946 map of the site depicts the garage associated with Quarters C as standing further north than the present structure, as well as being slightly canted to the northeast. Navy documents indicate construction of the garage occurred in either 1943 or 1963.<sup>1</sup>

The *Northeast Gatehouse* stands atop a poured concrete island located in the center of the north access road north of Quarters A. The building consists of a one-story structure with yellow stretcher bond brick apron walls set atop a concrete block foundation with banks of metal-framed windows supporting a hipped roof with imitation slate shingles. A vertical brick belt course encircles the building. A metal slab door with a large upper wire-glass light occupies the building’s northern elevation.

The *Southeast Gatehouse* stands along the southern side of the south access road immediately north of Building 7. The building consists of a one-story structure with yellow, stretcher bond brick apron walls set atop a concrete block foundation with banks of metal-framed windows supporting a hipped roof with imitation slate shingles. A vertical brick belt course encircles the building. A metal slab door with a large upper wire-glass light occupies the building’s northern elevation. Concrete bulkheads surround the building, built into a partially excavated hillside.

The Southeast Gatehouse is a smaller version of the Northeast Gatehouse described above.

<sup>1</sup> Construction of the E Street Expressway immediately north of the property resulted in the removal of a formal “grand staircase” that once aligned with the Benjamin Rush statue and the dome of the Old Naval Observatory on the Prime Meridian for the United States. The removal of the staircase also prompted the moving of the Rush statue closer to the Observatory, while maintaining its Prime Meridian alignment, and truncated the north access road and oval drive north of the Observatory. These actions probably resulted either the demolition of the garage shown on the 1946 map and the construction of the current garage at its present location in 1963, or the moving of the garage shown on the 1946 map to its present location in 1963.

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The *Southeast Guardhouse* stands beside the north side of the south access road a short distance west of the Southeast Gatehouse. The guardhouse stands one story tall with yellow stretcher brick walls laid atop a poured concrete foundation and a hipped roof with imitation slate shingles. The two-bay-wide by one-bay-deep structure features a metal slab door with a large wire-glass upper light and paired metal-cased sliding windows on its southern elevation and a single fixed light window on its eastern elevation. Both windows feature rowlock sills.

A one-story *Utility Building* stands between the south access road and the southern parking lots west of Building 6 in the southwestern corner of the property. Built into the steep hillside slope, the building features yellow brick walls similar to the other principal hospital buildings but laid in stretcher bond. The building's flat poured concrete roof possesses a short metal railing. Paired metal louvered doors are set off-center on the building's southern elevation. A poured concrete walkway leads southward from the doors to terraced parking lots south of the site which have recently come under development for the United States Institute of Peace.

Two *Garages* are located on the southwestern corner of the site along the northern side of the southern access road. Both garages consist of one-story gable-roof structures with concrete block walls, asphalt roof shingles, aluminized box cornices, and fiberglass overhead roll doors. The western (left) garage features vinyl German siding in its gable end peak. Plain vinyl siding sheathes the gable end of the eastern (right) garage.

A *Bus Kiosk* stands along the northern side of the northeast entrance road, west of the northeast gatehouse. The kiosk consists of metal posts attached to a concrete pad with clear panels on three of its side elevations. The southern side facing the entrance road is open to the weather. The roof consists of a curved sheet of opaque white plexiglass that permits light into the kiosk while providing shelter from the elements.

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## LANDSCAPE FEATURES

The historic district occupies a variety of features (Table 1) that give character to the cultural landscape: natural topography; spatial organization; views; vegetation; and small-scale features. Collectively, these features represent all major periods of site development. A landscape survey for the site was completed in 2005 (Berger 2005a).

**TABLE 1: INVENTORY OF LANDSCAPE FEATURES**

SITE FEATURE	HISTORIC PERIODS OF DEVELOPMENT		
	1844-1893	1894-1924	1925-2004
Rush Statue (1904)	.	x	x
Gas Lamp (1860s)	x	x	x
Iron Grillwork (1890s)	x	x	x
Oval Drive (1844, then modified)	x	x	x
Campus-like Atmosphere (1911)	.	x	x
Vegetation			
Burr Oak (1890s)	x	x	x
White Oak and Red Oaks (1890s)	x	x	x
Yoshino Cherry (1912)	.	x	x
Gingko Tree (post 1917)	.	x	x
Osage Orange (1950s)	.	.	x

The site's natural topography is one of its defining features, and it was a critical factor in the decision the selection of the site for an observatory. In his design for the City of Washington, Pierre L'Enfant recognized the importance of the site's commanding height, and he set it aside as a public reservation. The One Naval Observatory occupies a hill that overlooks the Potomac River and the former mouth of Tiber Creek. The highest point on the site stands at 96 feet above mean sea level, higher even than the reservations set aside for the President's House and the Congress. The topography of Reservation 4 was viewed as ideal for military fortification, particularly as a defensive position against an attack from the British navy, a major threat in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Today, the site affords three important views of the Potomac River and environs. To the southwest, there is an expansive view of the Potomac River, below what was then Mason's Island, now Theodore Roosevelt Island; this view also includes Memorial Bridge, Arlington Cemetery, and Arlington House. To the north, the site overlooks Theodore Roosevelt Island and the Georgetown waterfront, including Key Bridge. Directly south, the site now overlooks West

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Potomac Park and the Lincoln Memorial. Prior to filling of the Potomac River flats and the creation of West Potomac Park, this view would have extended across the open waters of the Potomac River to Alexandria, Virginia.

Formal landscape planning for the site began in 1844 when William Strickland was commissioned to design a plan for the grading and enclosure of the Observatory grounds. Strickland was one of the foremost architects of the time; his Second Bank of the United States in Philadelphia is one of the most outstanding examples of Greek Revival style that exists. Strickland’s plan featured a site enclosed by two concentric rings, forming two terraces. The north entrance to the site, from E Street, opened to a circular drive leading directly to the Observatory. On 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, the east gate led to the “yard” of one of the two proposed “pavilions” to the northeast and northwest of the Observatory. By 1845 the grounds had been enclosed by a brick perimeter wall and grading had been completed for the concentric terraces. Some plantings and sidewalk layout had been established and in early 1846 the character of the site was described as being park-like or “a delightful place for recreation, being on an eminence and affording a splendid view of this city...” (Sessford 1845).

The Strickland site plan was never fully implemented, although several site plan elements were built and still survive today: the perimeter wall enclosure, circular carriage drives, and connecting paths. The most notable design element that survives from the Strickland concepts is the circular drive in front of the Observatory. While it has become more oval over time, it still survives and frames the front elevation of the Observatory.

As the site developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, new features and buildings were added, although the Observatory building remained as the focal point of the landscape, occupying the highest ground. The Baumann map, dated about 1873, provides the most detailed view of the property in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It shows the major Observatory structures as well as gardens, sheds, chicken and cow houses, horse stables, walkways, and drives. Together, the gardens, sheds, and stables, and the abundant open space, give the site an agricultural character.

Although the E Street entrance to the site and the circular drive in front of the Observatory remained, there were changes to the circulation system. A new entrance to the grounds was located at 23<sup>rd</sup> and E Streets, instead of at D Street, as Strickland recommended. Today this is the primary access point onto the grounds. Across the circular drive, an allée connected the E Street entrance to the main entrance to the Observatory. As early as 1850 the allée was presented in an engraving of the site, and it is documented in a photograph dated 1888. By 1935 most of the trees that originally lined the walkway had declined, but the walkway remains. Along the allée, post with rope cording separated the walkway from the adjacent grass area. Period photographs indicate that the grassy area was used as pasture for horses.

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The Grand Staircase was built in 1911, adding a new formal entrance to the grounds from E Street and re-establishing the site's axial north-south orientation. Historically, the Grand Staircase, the allée, the Benjamin Rush statue, and the Observatory Dome were aligned on the Prime Meridian for the United States. In the early 1950s, construction of the E Street ramp to Interstate 66 cut off the north entrance into the site, removing the grand staircase and replacing it with large retaining walls along the ramps to the expressway.

In 1901 the site was reduced from the original 17 acres to 5 acres through a land transfer on the west side to the Department of State. The establishment of the Naval Hospital (1903) and Medical School (1902) at 23rd and E Streets significantly changed the landscape. The most visible changes resulted from the remodeling of the Old Naval Observatory building for the Medical School and the construction of the Naval hospital complex with four pavilion-style wards, sited behind (i.e., south of) the Old Naval Observatory. Construction for all the Naval Hospital and the Medical School buildings had been completed by 1911. In all, 11 new buildings constituted the hospital complex, which also included quarters for sick officers and nurses, a contagious disease building, and administrative structures, giving the site its present campus-like atmosphere.

While the overall site has been reduced and altered through time, a number of important small-scale elements and site furnishings survive today. Wire fences and railings with ornate wrought iron grillwork and gates appeared in the late 1800s at the entrance of the Observatory; remnants of the grillwork remain there today. Gas lamps, introduced in the 1860s, have been removed except for one non-operating lamp located at the north entrance to the Observatory.

In front of the Old Naval Observatory Building stood a statue of Benjamin Rush (1745–1813), physician and Surgeon General of the Middle Department of the Continental Army, humanitarian (advocated for the humane treatment of the mentally ill), founder of Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, co-founder of the first American antislavery society, and signer of the Declaration of Independence. The statue was unveiled on June 11, 1904, in the presence of President Theodore Roosevelt, who accepted the monument as a gift to the American people from the medical profession. Albert L. Gihon, Medical Director of the United States Navy at that time, initiated the campaign to build the memorial to Benjamin Rush with funds donated from the American Medical Association membership. Roland Hinton Perry from New York was the statue's sculptor, and architect Louis R. Metcalf designed the limestone pedestal.

In the 1960s the Rush statue was moved from its original location so that the statue now stands closer to and faces the Old Naval Observatory. The flagpole and statue switched places, locating the statue 30 to 40 feet south of its original location (Herman 1996:75). The flagpole was

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located near the north edge of the site adjacent to the E Street Expressway. In the location where the flagpole formerly stood is a plaque that explains the origins of the Prime Meridian, the zero-degree U.S. meridian, which passed through the center of the Observatory's dome in direct alignment with the plaque, the Rush statue, and the original Observatory dome. This plaque is found in a circular area paved in concrete with four rings set into it. The flagpole is a plain iron pole with a plain base planted with shrubs and trees and crossbars for flying flags.

No vegetation has survived from the period of the Observatory's tenancy between 1842 and 1893. Several oak trees, including seven Burr Oaks (*Quercus macrocarpa*), a Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*), and a White Oak (*Quercus alba*) between 75 and 100 years old, are the oldest plants on the Potomac Annex site. Other significant species planted at the Potomac Annex site include a Yoshino Cherry (*Prunus x yeodensis* "Yoshino") from the Mayor of Tokyo's donation for the Tidal Basin planted in 1912, a Ginkgo planted during the post World War I period, and an Osage orange planted during the 1950s. Cuttings from the one surviving Yoshino Cherry tree have produced three progeny, all surviving vigorously today on the north side of the site adjacent to the relocated flagpole.

Before the massive construction campaign of 1906-1911, a hurricane in September 1896 uprooted many trees, altering the character of the grounds; many trees shown on the 1873 site plan never recovered. It was recorded in the Annual Report of the Surgeon General of 1920 (cited in Herman 1996) that the Observatory grounds were well taken care of and that 3,000 plants were propagated and grown for planting on the site. At that time the grounds were considered an integral part of the complex and were treated with care and appreciation.

The 50-year old Osage orange stands near Building 7 southeast access road entrance; it is uncertain whether it is a deliberate planting or a "volunteer." This species is not native to the region, nor was it widely used in formal landscape treatments. But as it is not native, it is believed that someone must have deliberately planted it.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Archaeological investigations of the property have been limited to a few episodes of construction monitoring, completed in 2002, and a preliminary assessment of the site that was completed in 2005 (Berger 2005b). While these studies have been limited, they have been sufficient to identify a number of archaeological resources and to identify areas where as yet undiscovered sites may be preserved.

The major finding from the monitoring of construction was a brick underground tunnel that led to the 1844 magnetic observatory in the parking lot to the southwest of Building 2. Based on the

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well-preserved condition of the tunnel, it is assumed that the features associated with the magnetic observatory itself may also be preserved in archaeological context. Utility work to the rear (south) of Building 4 documented a refuse deposit associated with the early period of the Naval Hospital. In front of Building 3, a complex of brick foundations was documented in another utility trench.

The 2005 archaeological assessment included limited subsurface testing and identified an appreciable level of landscape integrity in the upland area surrounding the Old Observatory, although much of this area is developed or covered with pavement. The northern and western margins of the property have been severely graded. The southern portion of the property, now taken over by the United States Institute of Peace, apparently had been graded by twentieth-century development. The upland area surrounding the historic core of the Old Observatory is considered archaeologically sensitive.

The archaeological assessment indicates that the property may contain a variety of archaeological resources (Table 2), including prehistoric camps or special use sites, ephemeral military encampments and associated features, and a broad range of sites associated with the Old Observatory Period (1844 to 1894). These include the magnetic observatory and its access tunnel, privies, a cistern, various outbuildings (stables and sheds), remains of specialized structures associated with the Transit of Venus (1882) and other astronomical events, and domestic refuse deposits. Archaeological resources associated with the Naval Hygiene Department (located on-site from 1893 to 1903) include specialized refuse deposits, some of which were identified during monitoring of construction (see chart). The dominant elements of the archaeological record would date to the Old Naval Observatory (1844-1893) and Naval Hospital periods (1893-1942).

For the Old Naval Observatory period (1844 to 1893), a number of specific properties can be predicted on the basis of the period maps and photographs. The 1873 Bauman shows almost 30 buildings and landscape features, almost all to the north of Building 3. Remains of other structures may also be present, such as the temporary structures built for the observation of the Transit of Venus or other astronomical events. In addition to architectural features, refuse deposits or trash deposits could also be present, especially in the privies and cistern or in open areas. One of the most important structures, the 1844 magnetic observatory with its entrance tunnel, is not illustrated on the Bauman map, but it is known that these existed on the basis of previous construction monitoring.

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**TABLE 2: SITE CHRONOLOGY AND EXPECTED ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROPERTY TYPES**

PERIOD	DATE	KNOWN AND EXPECTED ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES
Native American	c. 10,500 BC-AD 1730	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One flake recovered during survey, suggesting ephemeral Native American use.</li> <li>Possible remains of hunting camps, resource extraction areas, or other special use areas.</li> </ul>
Colonial/Federal	1755-1844	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No known resources.</li> <li>Possible resources include deposits or features associated military encampment (Braddock's troops in 1755, American Revolution, and War of 1812), or with late 18th-century to early 19th-century picnicking or recreation.</li> </ul>
Old Naval Observatory	1844-1893	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Architectural remains of observatory buildings and support structures, such as 1844 magnetic observatory, foundations, privies, cistern, garden and landscape features, outbuildings (horse stables, tool sheds, Transit of Venus buildings, fowl house, hay barn), privies, cistern, etc.</li> <li>Domestic refuse deposits associated with quarters.</li> <li>Trash deposits</li> </ul>
Medical School and Hospital	1893-1942	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Domestic refuse deposits associated with quarters.</li> <li>Trash deposits.</li> </ul>
Bureau of Medicine	1942-present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paving, sidewalks, landscape features, utility lines, trash deposits.</li> </ul>

Archaeological resources associated with the Medical School and Hospital period (1893 to 1942) include domestic and institutional trash and refuse deposits. Domestic deposits would be associated with occupant households in the Quarters and would contain a wide variety of household refuse, including ceramics, bottles, and dietary refuse. Monitoring of construction in 2002 has demonstrated the presence of institutional refuse deposits, in the abandoned tunnel to the magnetic observatory and in the ash deposit downslope from Building 4. These institutional refuse deposits contain distinctive assemblages of pharmaceutical or medicinal bottles and other items clearly associated with the medical school or hospital and would therefore have significance with regard to the site's medical history.

## 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)

Science

Health/Medicine

Military

Science

Architecture

Landscape Architecture

### Period of Significance

1842-1942

Archeology (historic)

### Significant Dates

### Significant Person

Maury, Matthew Fontaine; Hall, Asaph; Gillis, James; David, Charles; Sands, Benjamin; Rodgers, John

### Cultural Affiliation

### Architect/Builder

Ernest Flagg

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(see continuation sheet)

### 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  
# DC-341
- 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:

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## Summary Statement of Significance:

The Old Naval Observatory is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criteria A, B, C, and D for its association with the development of the fields of oceanography, astronomy, and naval navigation, for its association with advances in the field of naval medicine, and for its embodiment of a common architectural style, Georgian Revival, that unified the hospital buildings into a coherent complex.

The Old Naval Observatory has played a prominent role in the history of the United States Navy during the past 165 years. In recognition of its significant role in the development of naval navigation and its association with the creation of the fields of oceanography and astronomy in the United States during the nineteenth century, the Old Naval Observatory was designated a National Historic Landmark, the nation's highest historical designation, in 1965 and listed in the National Register of Historic Places the following year.

The Old Naval Observatory features two periods of significance related to the two principal functions it has served during its 165-year association with the Navy. Between 1842 and 1893 the Potomac Annex site served as the home of the first Naval Observatory and contributed greatly to the fields of oceanography, navigation, and astronomy. Under the direction of Matthew Fontaine Maury, the observatory's first superintendent (between 1844 and 1861), the Observatory became a world leader in scientific research and the development of the new field of oceanography. Maury's charts of ocean currents and winds formed the basis of *The Physical Geography of the Sea*, the first modern oceanographic textbook. Subsequent superintendents James Gillis, Charles Davis, Benjamin Sands, and John Rodgers during the post-Civil War period, referred to as the Observatory's Golden Age by one historian (Herman 1996), sent Observatory staff on explorations tracking eclipses of the moon and sun and the transit of Venus, participated in the Centennial Exposition of 1876, and set the official time for the nation. In 1877 Asaph Hall discovered Deimos and Phobos, two moons of Mars, using the Observatory's Great Equatorial telescope, at that time the world's largest refractory telescope (Herman 1996).

When the Observatory moved to a new facility in 1893 further northwest in the District, the Potomac Annex site began its second period of significance, documenting broad trends in the development of modern naval medicine. At first part of the Naval Museum of Hygiene, the site became the Washington Naval Hospital in 1904 and soon evolved into the preeminent naval medical facility in the United States. The hospital became renowned for the treatment and care of Navy personnel, trained naval medical staff, and conducted research in tropical medicine, aviation medicine, chemical warfare, venereal disease, and numerous contagious diseases. During World War I the hospital treated thousands of injured sailors and marines and undertook important new research affecting the care of injured servicemen and women. The hospital also

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took a prominent role during the influenza epidemic of 1918 and began a pioneering aviation medical program in 1927. In addition, the hospital buildings and campus designed by Ernest Flagg and architects at the Navy Bureau of Yards and Docks created a coherent collection of institutional structures utilizing common characteristics of the Georgian Revival architectural style.

## Resource History and Historic Context:

### Resource History and Context

Given the property’s location along the Potomac River, its prominent topographic position, and the presence of a natural spring, Native American use of the site is likely to have occurred. One prehistoric artifact found during a 2005 survey suggests the former presence of a Native American campsite, a resource processing station, or other special use area. Remains of Native American occupation have been found at many sites in the downtown D.C. area, but seldom in well-preserved context.

Prior to the establishment of the City of Washington, the property was contained in colonial land grants. There is no specific information that the Potomac Annex property was occupied during that period, but its topographic position and proximity to the Potomac River would have made it attractive for the tobacco-based economy, which relied on waterborne commerce. Jacob Funk platted a town known as Hamburg in this area of the city, but it never developed. The Priggs map of 1790 shows “A Home in New Hamburg” in the general area, so it is possible that some semi-permanent settlement of the site had occurred before the city was laid out in 1791. General Braddock and his troops camped in the area in 1755 during the French and Indian War. Braddock Rock, believed to have been the landing where the General’s troops ferried across the Potomac, is south of the Old Naval Observatory property, now at the bottom of a well shaft, beneath deep fill deposits. One account indicates that the western slope of the hill may have been the burial ground for some of General Braddock’s troops in 1755 after an epidemic broke out in camp, but it is not known whether the burial ground was located within the property that is presently associated with the Old Naval Observatory or the adjacent State Department Annex property to the west.

The property has been known historically by various place names, such as Camp Hill, Peter’s Hill, Reservation Number 4, University Square, and Observatory Hill. Reservation Number 4 was also the proposed location for both a fort and a university, neither of which was built. In the L’Enfant Plan, Reservation 4 was set aside for public use, because L’Enfant viewed the site as an ideal location for fortification that would protect the city from a naval attack. The hill was the encampment for the marines until a barracks was established in 1801 near the Navy Yard.

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Efforts to establish a national astronomical observatory began in 1810 when proposals were introduced into Congress. Despite support from Thomas Jefferson and John Quincy Adams, there was little popular support for scientific research. The federal government established the Depot of Charts and Instruments in 1831, and in 1842, President Tyler authorized the Navy to build a new Depot at Reservation Number 4. Lieutenant James Gilliss supervised construction of the building with four rooms on each floor of the two-story building, crowned by a 23-foot diameter revolving dome made of wood and sheathed with copper. The United States Naval Observatory was completed the fall of 1844. The building (now known as Building 2) with several additions still stands on the crest of the hill, and several outbuildings were located nearby. In 1847, the observatory was expanded by the addition of quarters for the Superintendent of the Observatory and his family.

Many important discoveries and experiments in the development of astronomy and oceanography occurred in the Old Naval Observatory, such as the orbit of Neptune, orbits of various asteroids, and the moons of Mars. Under the leadership of Matthew Fontaine Maury, the Naval Observatory achieved wide acclaim for advances in astronomy, navigation, and oceanography. Later, leading mathematicians and astronomers such as Simon Newcomb, C. Henry Davis, George William Hill and Asaph Hall won world esteem. In 1877 for example, Asaph Hall used the historic 26-inch Alvan Clark Refractor at the Naval Observatory to discover the two moons of Mars—Phobos and Deimos. The Observatory is also associated with a number of important political figures, including Presidents John Quincy Adams and Abraham Lincoln. Adams was instrumental in establishing the Observatory, and Lincoln is reported to have visited the Observatory during the Civil War.

After the first buildings were completed, the property became known as Observatory Hill. An experimental underground magnetic observatory and access tunnel had been built to the southwest of the main building by 1845, but that structure was quickly abandoned. Archeological remains of the magnetic observatory are believed to exist beneath a parking lot near Building 1.

In 1854, the Depot of Charts and Instruments formally became the United States Naval Observatory and Hydrographical Office. The largest refracting telescope in the world was installed at the Observatory in 1873 with a 40-inch lens. A new south wing was added onto the Observatory to house the new telescope. The dome was 41-feet in diameter constructed of wood and covered with galvanized iron. It rested and revolved upon sixteen rollers that rotated on an iron rail.

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From its earliest days the site was intended to have formal landscaping, and some of the original circulation system of the site still survives. By 1857 a circular drive on the northern side of the Observatory was in place as well as a drive to garden plots on the southeastern side of the building. Although the site had a formally designed landscape centered on the Observatory, it also included a number of domestic and agricultural structures and work areas, as the site combined scientific and domestic functions. Bauman’s 1873 map of the grounds shows the major Observatory structures, along with gardens, sheds, chicken and cow houses, horse stables, walkways, drives, and a privy. Various temporary buildings appeared on the property during the 1880s, most notably a structure used to document the Transit of Venus in 1882.

During the 1880s, it became increasingly apparent that the site has significant drawbacks for celestial observation, stemming mostly from the pollution and fog of the Foggy Bottom neighborhood. As a result, the Observatory moved to its present site on Massachusetts Avenue in 1893. All of the instruments that had been housed in the Observatory were removed and the building turned over to the Naval Museum of Hygiene. The buildings of the Old Observatory remained vacant for thirteen months. After the departure of the observatory in 1893, the property was occupied by a series of Naval Medical institutions: the Museum of Hygiene, the Naval Medical School, and the Washington Naval Hospital (or Naval Medical School Hospital).

In 1894, the Secretary of the Navy had transferred the property to the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED) for the use of its Naval Museum of Hygiene. The Museum was not merely to be a repository for exhibits and a clearinghouse for medical and non-medical artifacts, but became a working institution for environmental and occupational medicine. By 1898 the laboratories were testing disinfectants, vaccine virus quality, and catgut suture quality. It was these laboratories that would become a medical school to train Navy physicians in the ways of military medicine.

With the change from a scientific to a medical function, Building 2 was renovated and repaired. The piers that had supported the telescopes were demolished and the dome on the south wing was demolished and replaced by a rotunda. A library was now located in the former home of the worlds largest refracting telescope. New landscaping included restoration of the grounds and planting of new ornamental trees.

With widespread support and interest from physicians, scientists, engineers, and architects, the museum’s library expanded to more than 3,000 volumes. The reconfigured space accommodated laboratories for chemistry, bacteriology, and photography where many scientific and medical studies were completed. The BUMED laboratories were among the best in the nation and they became the core of what would become a medical school to train Navy physicians. The laboratories conducted tests for clinical diagnosis of diphtheria, tuberculosis,

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and malarial parasites, and they were called for specialized investigations such as the purity of water from the Potomac River the suitability of granite specimens for the construction of dry docks. The BUMED became a pioneer in environmental and occupational health; called upon to test the basement of the State, War, and Navy Department building, they found that the workplace conditions were characterized by excessive heat and dangerously high levels of ammonia and carbonic acid.

The BUMED exhibits gathered material from around the world and drew interest from the public. A large collection of material related to mortuary customs (coffins, vaults, morgues, crematories, etc.) fed the public fascination with the Beautification of Death Movement that peaked in the late nineteenth century.

In May 1902, the Secretary of the Navy ordered that the Museum would now be known as the United States Naval Museum of Hygiene and Medical School, shortly thereafter, the other buildings that now occupy the site were constructed. The Museum was disestablished in 1905 and the collection transferred to the Smithsonian Institution. Congress appropriated money in 1903 for the construction of a Naval Hospital at Potomac Annex. It was to include a three-story administration building, a subsistence and operating building, four one-story wards, and various service structures. The complex was designed by Ernest Flagg, who was also the architect of the Singer Building in New York, the Corcoran Gallery in D.C., and some of the most important buildings at the U.S. Naval Academy. A contagious disease hospital, quarters for corpsmen, sick officers' quarters, nurses' quarters, and three quarters for medical officers followed. Newly designed ventilation systems were installed in the hospital and contagious disease buildings, to prevent the airborne spread of pathogens. By 1911, all of the buildings of the Naval Medical School and Naval Hospital were complete, the hill landscaped, and new sidewalks were laid. In 1922, twelve Japanese cherry trees were replanted from the Tidal Basin to Potomac Annex.

The newly established Medical School contained laboratories for pathology, clinical microscopy, bacteriology, and medical zoology. As tropical diseases accounted for many of the deaths in the recent Spanish American War, the treatment of these diseases became a primary focus. The Medical School quickly became a national leader in medicine, forming cooperative partnerships with the Mayo Clinic, the Phipps Institute, the Pepper Laboratory at the University of Pennsylvania, and Harvard Medical School. World War I brought new demands, not only in terms of space, but also in clinical practice. Treatments were developed for the victims of gas warfare and for ailments peculiar to submarines.

The institution's capacity was strained by the large number of World War I veterans and the victims of the global influenza epidemic of 1918. Plans to expand of the hospital complex were develop in the 1920s, which would have required demolition of virtually all the buildings on the

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site, so that a much larger complex could take its place. Legislation to fund this massive new campaign were introduced in 1929 but soon faltered with the onset of the Great Depression due the funding constraints of President Hoover's austerity program. At the same, new development on the site had to be considered in the context of the surrounding neighborhood. What had been an industrial area with gasworks, breweries, and foundries was transformed by the MacMillan Plan, especially construction of the Lincoln Memorial at the foot of 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. Plans for a massive new construction campaign became controversial and a required the approval of the National Capital Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts. Destruction of the observatory and hospital buildings was averted when the Navy chose a site in suburban Bethesda, Maryland.

The medical center and medical school were moved to Bethesda in 1942, and the former Medical School and Medical Center classrooms, laboratories, and treatment rooms were then transformed into offices for the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery's military and civilian headquarters.

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National Park Service

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Old Naval Observatory

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Old Naval Observatory  
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## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 11

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	1   8	2   2   2   0   0   0	4   3   0   6   9   8   0	3	1   8	2   2   2   1   7   0	4   3   0   6   7   4   0
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	1   8	2   2   2   1   7   0	4   3   0   6   9   9   0	4	1   8	2   2   2   0   0   0	4   3   0   6   7   2   0

See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

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

### Boundary Justification

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

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rebecca Miller, Executive Director

Organization D.C. Preservation League date April 2008

street & number 401 F Street, NW, Room 324 telephone 202.783.5144

city or town Washington state DC zip code 20001

## 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.

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

#### Photographs

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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## Verbal Boundary Description:

The district is delineated on the accompanying USGS map and on base map of the property.

## Boundary Justification:

The historic district boundary includes the significant buildings, landscape features and archeological resources associated with the Naval Observatory, Naval Museum of Hygiene, and Washington Naval Hospital (1842 through 1942).

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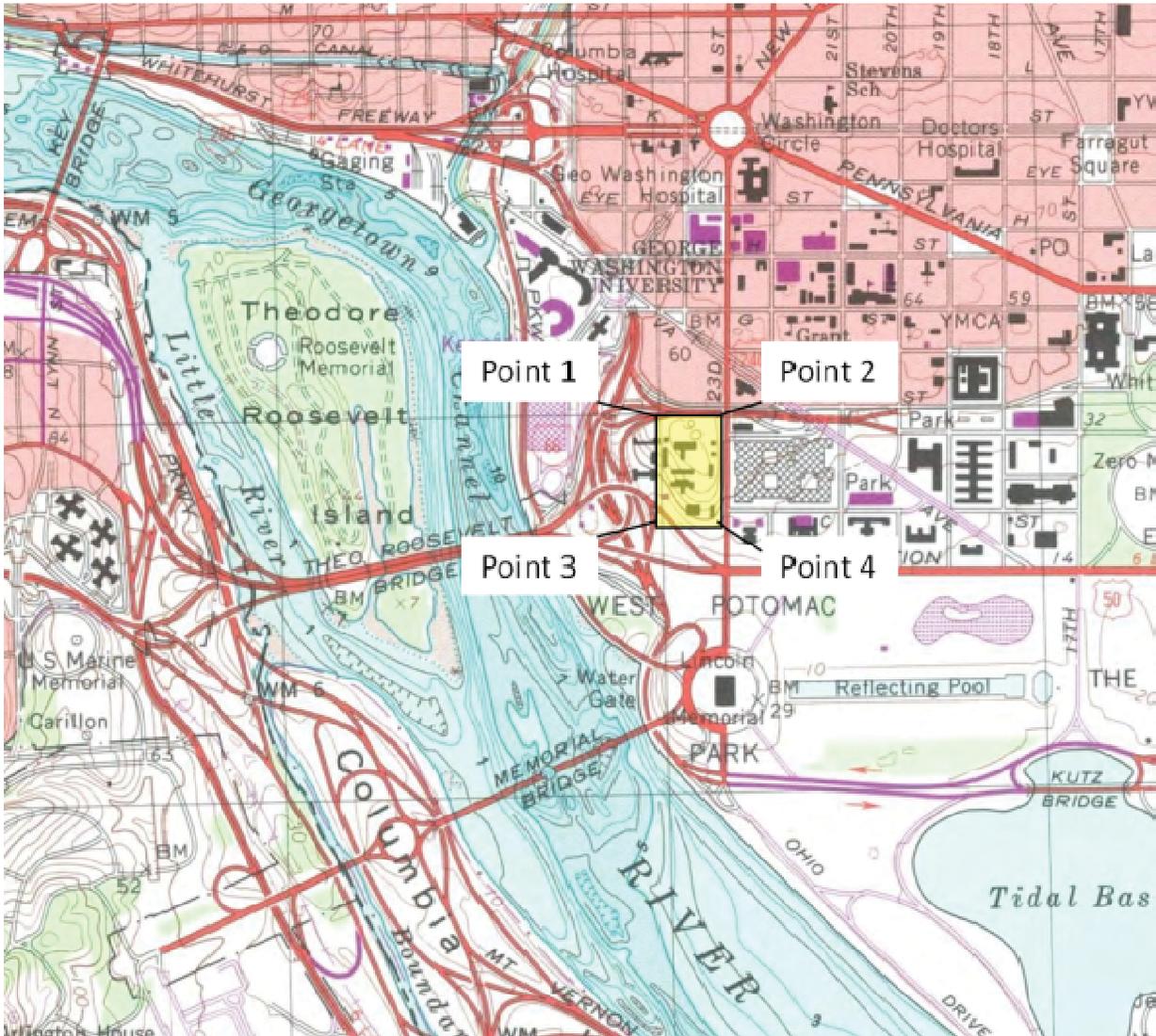
Old Naval Observatory

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USGS Washington, West, D.C.-MD.-VA quadrangle, 1965, photorevised 1983 showing property location (highlighted in yellow) and UTM reference points.

Coordinates: 1: 222,000mE/4,306,980mN

2: 222,170mE/4,306,990mN

3: 222,170mE/4,306,720mN

4: 222,000mE/4,306,720mN

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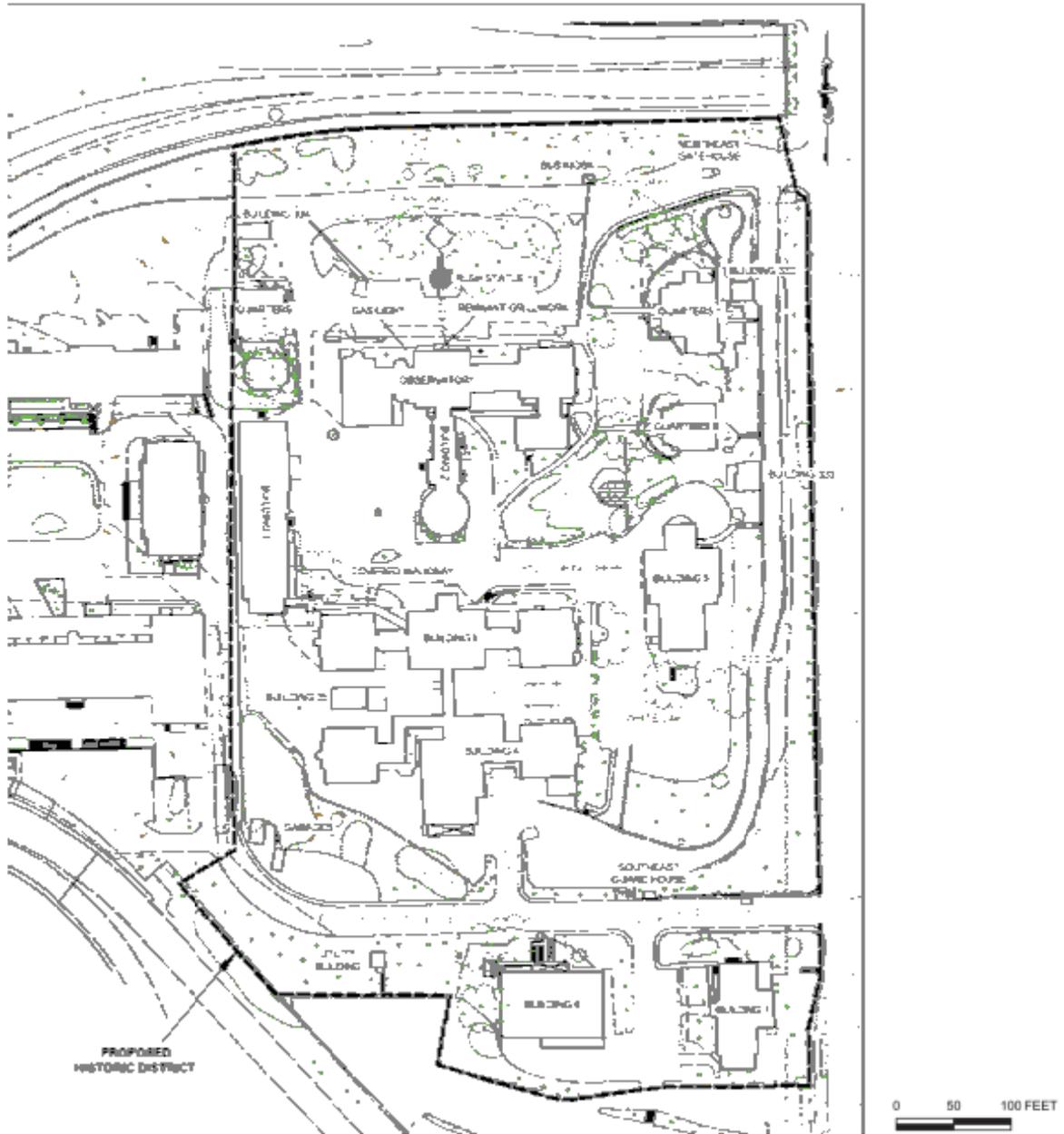
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Base map of historic district, showing contributing buildings and landscape features

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Archeological Resources

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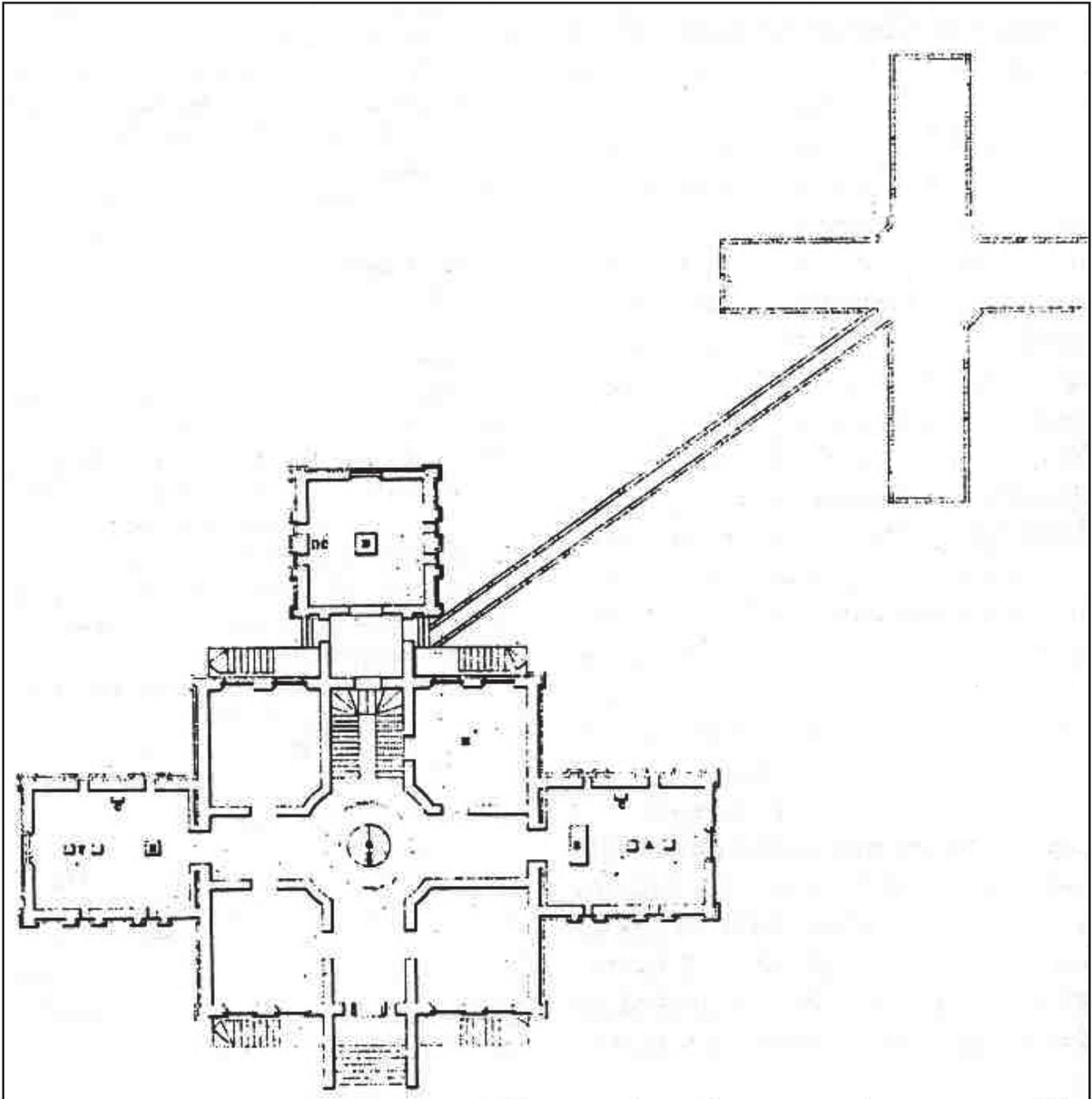
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Magnetic Observatory, Plan circa 1844-45

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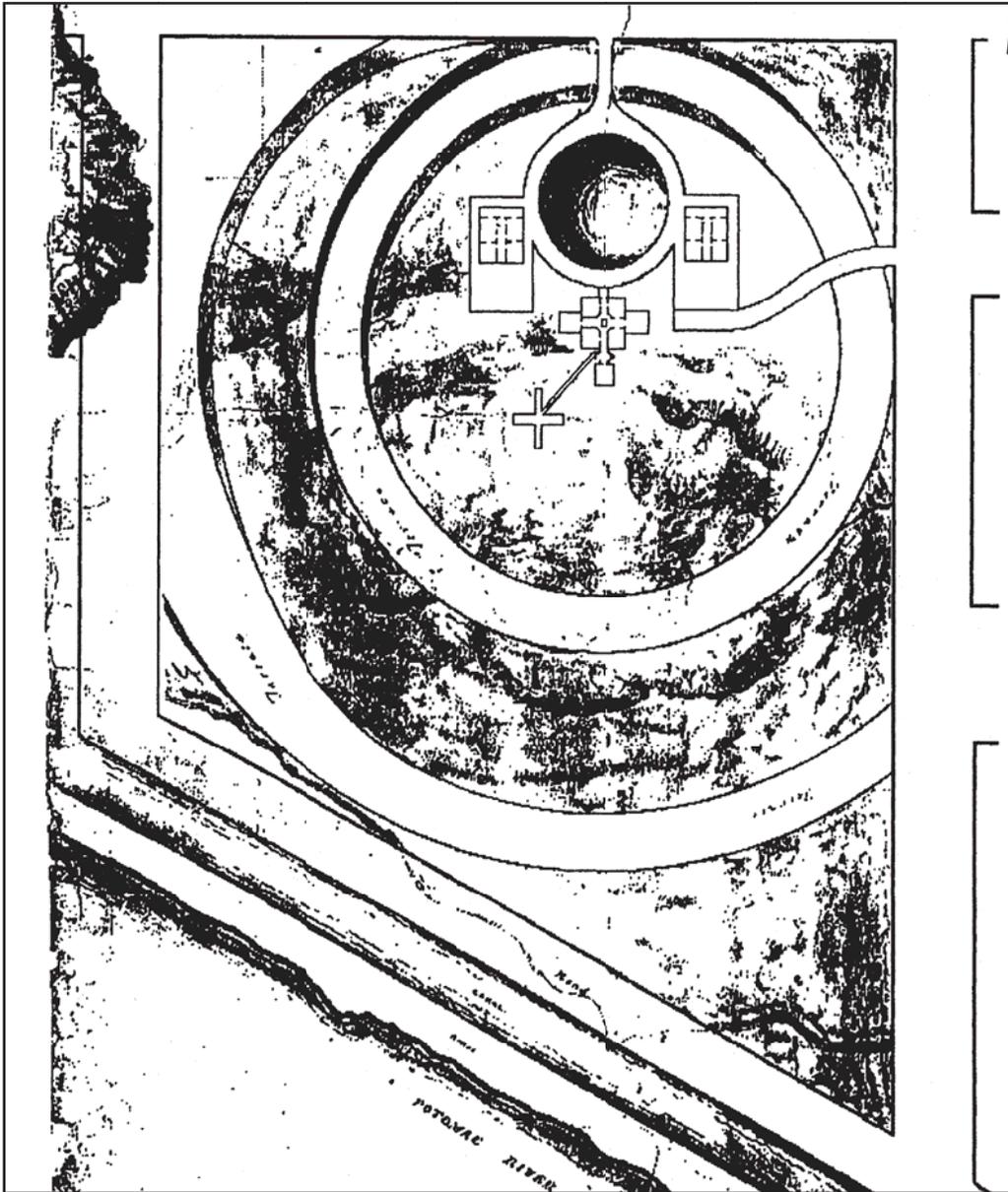
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1844 Strickland Plan of the Old Naval Observatory

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Boschke detail 1857

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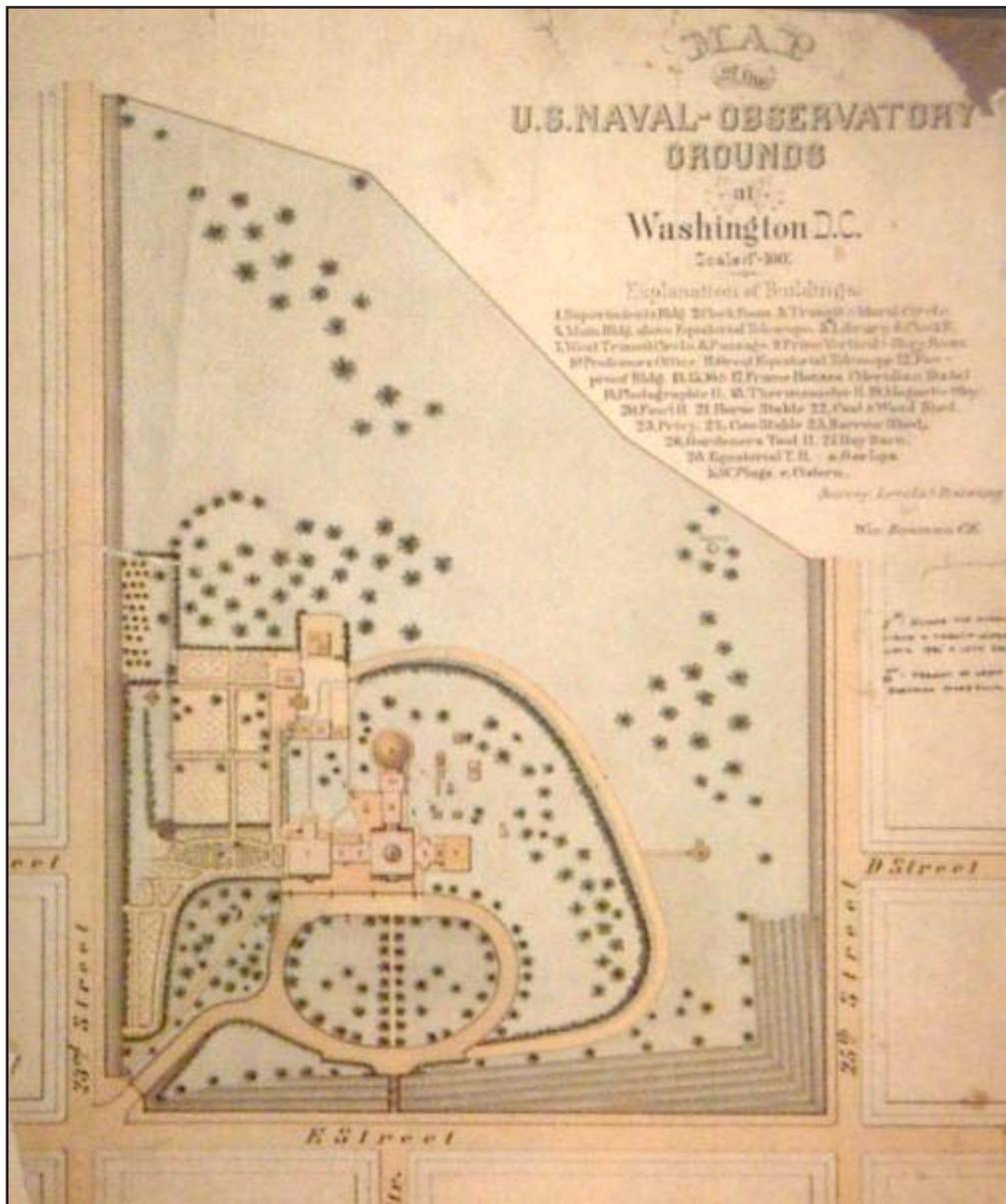
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Baumann's 1873 Site Plan of Grounds

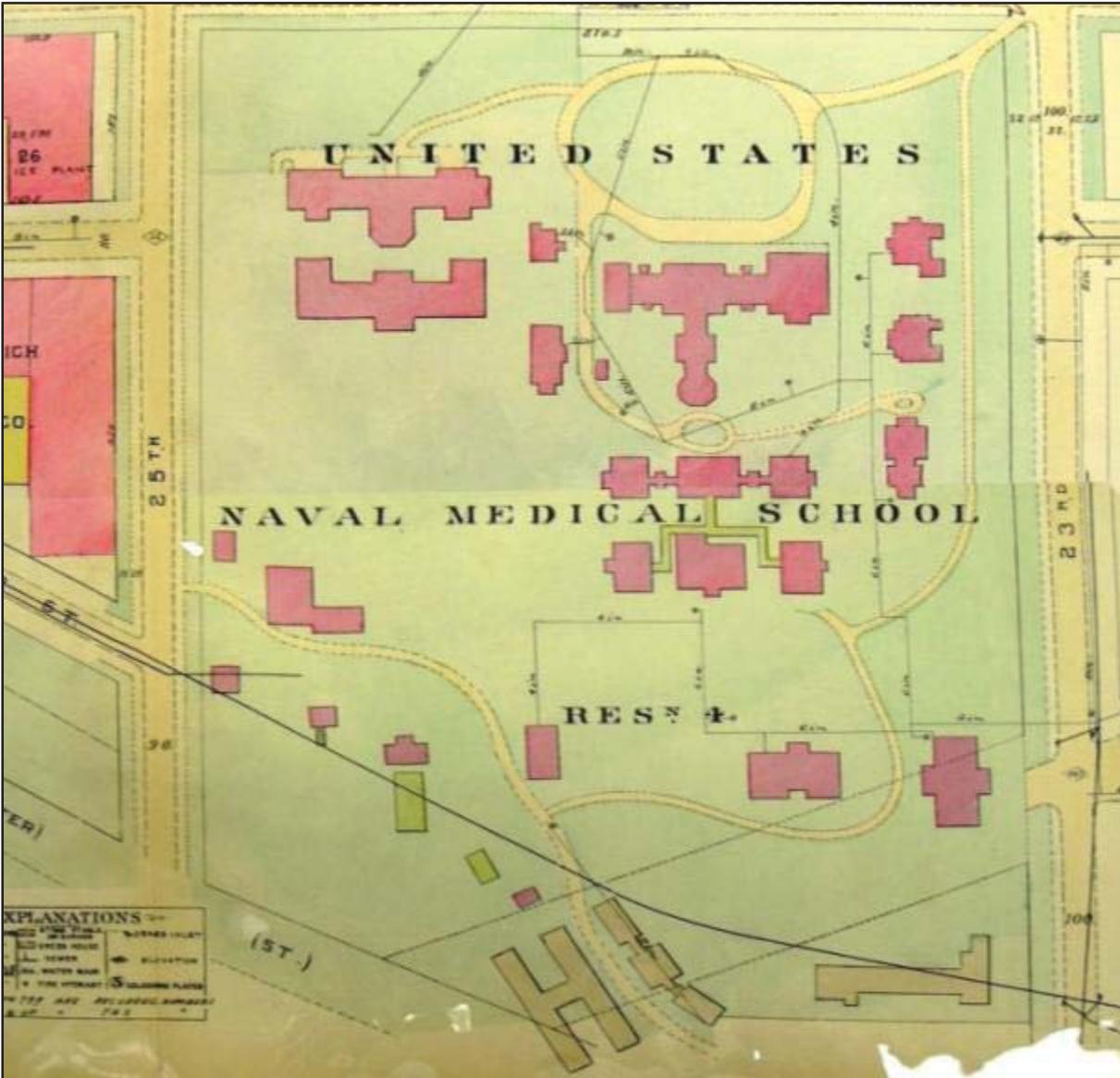
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Baist 1913

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Rush Statue and North Elevation of Building 2. Photo facing south. Date: 2007.

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Building 2, North Elevation. Photo facing southwest. Date: 2007.

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Building 2, Southwest Elevations. Photo facing northeast. Date: 2007.

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Building 2, Southeast Elevations, East Wing. Photo facing northwest. Date: 2007.

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Building 1, East and North Elevations. Photo facing southwest. Date: 2007.

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Building 1, Northern Portion, East Elevation. Photo facing west. Date: 2007.

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Building 1, Southern Portion, East Elevation. Photo facing west. Date: 2007.

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Building 4, East and North Elevations. Photo facing southwest. Date: 2007.

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Building 5, East and North Elevations. Photo facing southwest. Date: 2007.

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Building 6, East and North Elevations. Photo facing southwest. Date: 2007.

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Building 7, West and South Elevations. Photo facing northeast. Date: 2007.

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Quarters A, West and South Elevations. Photo facing northeast. Date: 2007.

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Quarters B, West Elevation. Photo facing east. Date: 2007.

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Quarters C, South and East Elevations. Photo facing northwest. Date: 2007.

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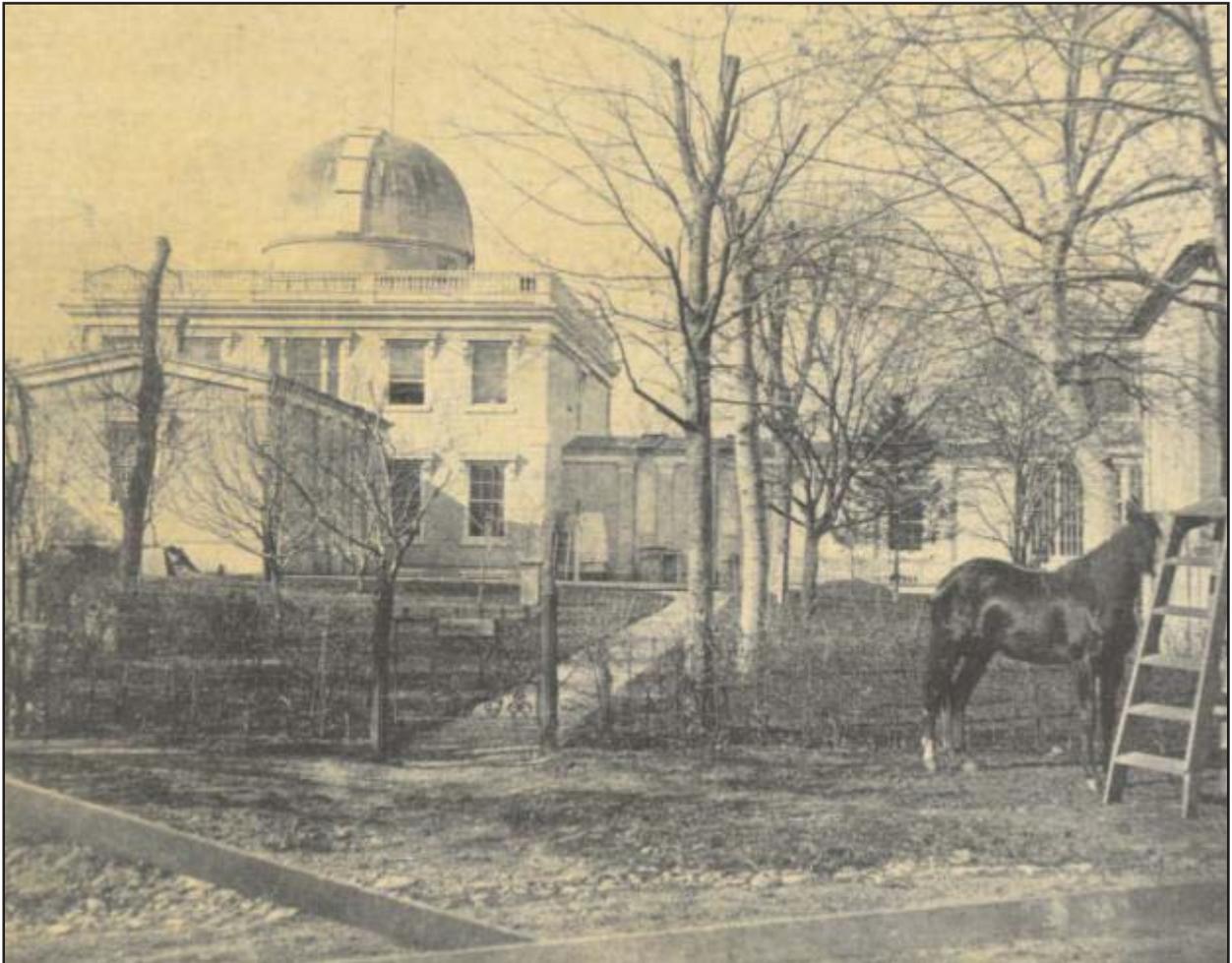
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Southeast View of the Old Observatory, post Civil War. Undated photograph on file at the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Naval Medical Department.

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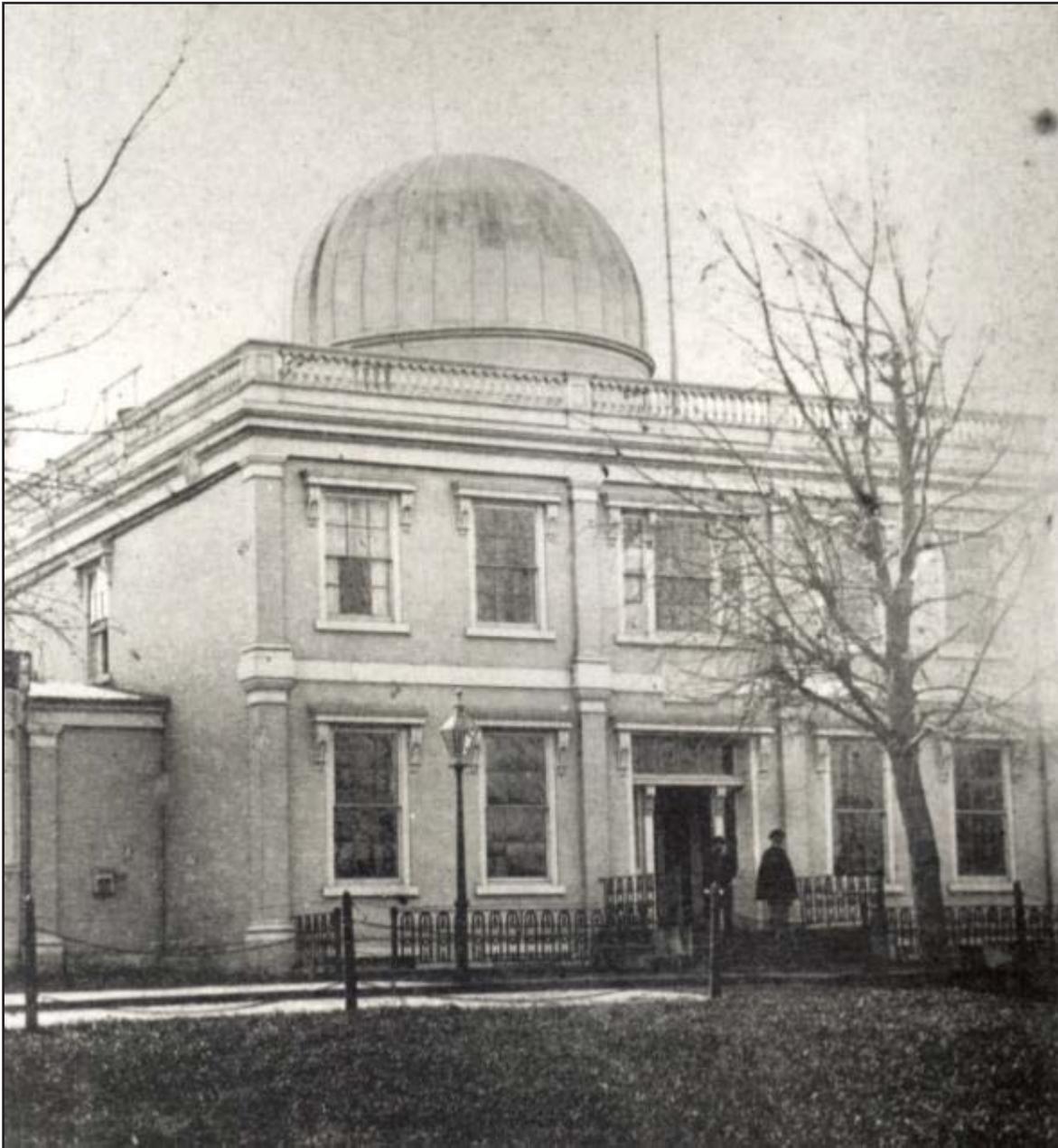
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Wrought Iron Grillwork with Gas Light at the Old Observatory Building. Undated photograph on file at the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Naval Medical Department.

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Old Naval Observatory (Building 2), North Elevation.. Circa 1935 photograph on file at the James Melville Gilliss United States Naval Observatory Library.