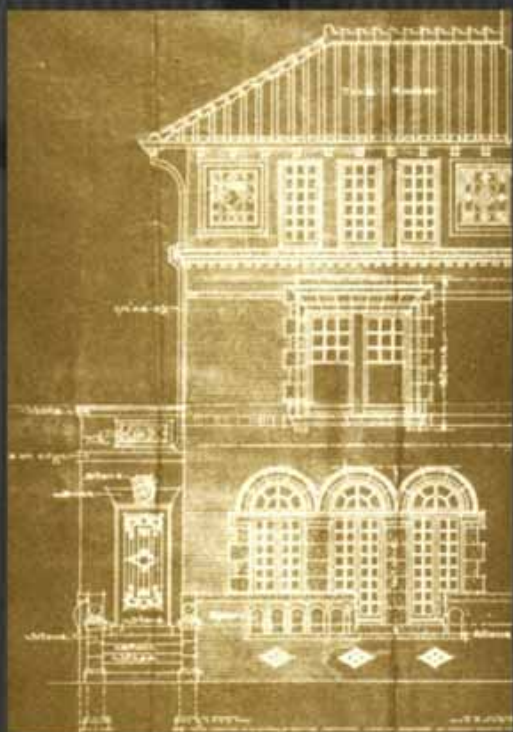


SIXTEENTH STREET

HISTORIC DISTRICT



WASHINGTON D.C.



SCOTT CIRCLE

Scott Circle anchors the
Historic District at its southern boundary.

In 1874 Congress commemorated
Lieutenant General Winfield Scott
(1786-1866) with a bronze sculpture by
Henry Kirke Brown.

The linear progression of Sixteenth Street originates at the White House and Lafayette Square, and progresses northward through the business and financial sector of lower Sixteenth Street, to Scott Circle and the Historic District. It continues up the steep incline to Meridian Hill and Upper Sixteenth Street to its culmination at the Maryland line.

Sixteenth Street's earliest history stems from its immediate proximity to the President's House. It is one of the most important numbered streets in the city, and a major element of the L'Enfant Plan. As it began (and continues today), it is an impressive residential avenue lined with buildings reflecting a myriad of architectural styles. While many of the ornate townhouses and grand mansions that were its first adornments have been replaced by large office buildings and hotels fronting on Sixteenth Street north of H Street, the buildings around Lafayette Square offer a glimpse into the street's grand nineteenth century residential character. Similarly, the area north of Scott Circle retains much of its building stock from the Victorian era and the turn-of-the-century.

Sixteenth Street, the axis between the White House and the north point of the District line, makes accessible the hills above the Washington plain. The prospect gives the street the finest setting of any avenue in the Capital...

Sixteenth Street Architecture, 1978.

Sixteenth Street, like much of Washington, remained essentially undeveloped until the mid-nineteenth century. Prior to the Civil War most of the structures on Sixteenth Street were shanties; fewer than ten structures of any size appear in the area prior to 1861. The population boom brought on by the Civil War and Reconstruction caused rapid development along Sixteenth Street as well as to the rest of Washington. By the 1880s, the street began to take on its present appearance. Rowhouses and detached dwellings were constructed, and by the 1890s the street had become a fashionable residential district; home to men prominent in national politics and community affairs. Churches and other community and national institutions established their headquarters along the street at the same time. Institutional structures stand sympathetically interspersed among residential buildings. These larger buildings, including numerous churches with towers and spires, add to the varied pattern of the streetscape.

These houses at 1601-1609 16th Street were constructed between 1878-1908. Individually designed, they reflect changing architectural tastes, from the Italianate and Richardsonian Romanesque of the 19th century to the Georgian Revival and the Arts & Crafts of the 20th century.

Friends of Meridian Hill



...Something like the Champs Elysee, Sixteenth Street is central, straight, broad and long;...its portal at the District line is the opening gateway for motor tourists to enter the Capital...

Mary Foote Henderson, 1927.





Washingtoniana Division D.C.
Public Library

Decatur House

LAFAYETTE SQUARE

Reservation No. 1 (the present site of the White House, Treasury Building, the Old Executive Office Building, Lafayette Square, and the Ellipse) marks the southern terminus of Sixteenth Street on the L'Enfant Plan of 1791. Shortly after the War of 1812, the area began to take on its physical definition. In 1815, architect Benjamin Latrobe was engaged to design St. John's Church, on the northeast corner of Sixteenth and H streets.

The area surrounding the square soon developed as a residential neighborhood housing many great figures in the political, military, diplomatic and economic life of the nation. In 1819, Commodore Stephen Decatur commissioned Latrobe to design an impressive Federal styled residence. This house is now open to the public, and operated by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Richard Cutts, Dolley Madison's brother-in-law, built a house on the opposite side of the park in 1820. Other impressive buildings constructed on the square included a mansion for financier William Corcoran at 1611 H Street; the Thomas Richie House at 1607 H Street (both demolished in 1922); and the Benjamin Ogle Tayloe House at 32 Madison Place. In 1824, the park was re-dedicated as Lafayette Square to honor the Marquis de Lafayette's contribution to the American Revolution. In 1884, architect H.H. Richardson designed a unique double house for Secretary of State John Hay and writer Henry Adams on the current site of the Hay-Adams Hotel. The square remained a fashionable residential address until the turn of the century.

The Lafayette Square Historic District was designated in 1973.

...My dwelling house in Washington is valuable for its architecture and its location. There is no position in Washington that is more desirable for its beauty and its neighborhood...

...Newspaper editor Thomas Richie referring to his house at 1607 H Street in 1854...



Roth Visual Collections, MIT

Pendleton Mansion, 1313 16th Street; demolished 1941



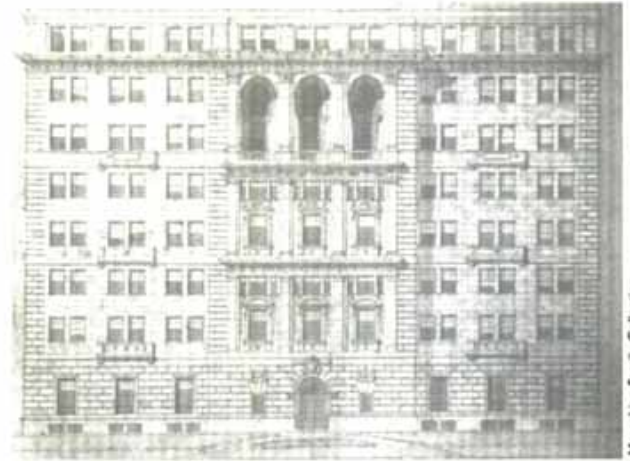
U.S. Commission of Fine Arts

1200 block of 16th Street; demolished 1950's



Historical Society of Washington, D.C.

National Geographic Society Headquarters, 16th & M streets, N.W.



Mesrobian Family Collection

LOWER SIXTEENTH STREET

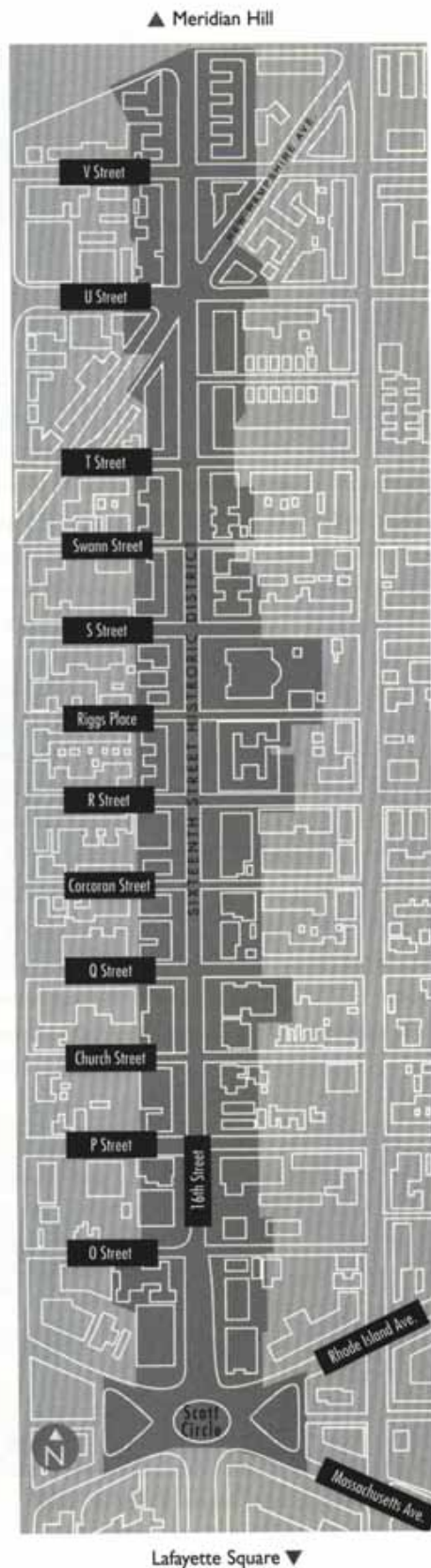
While it is difficult to image today, the area north of Lafayette Square and south of Scott Circle on each side of Sixteenth Street was once a prestigious residential neighborhood. Sixteenth Street, in particular, was lined with some of the city's finest residences, serving as home to many of Washington's wealthy and politically well-connected. The Pullman House (now the Russian Embassy) at 1125 16th Street, which cost \$360,000 to build in 1909, is representative of the opulent mansions which lined Sixteenth Street.

However, like much of downtown, the area became increasingly commercial in the mid-twentieth century. The large houses, many of which were subdivided for boarding house use during World War II or used as inexpensive office space, fell into disrepair. New zoning regulations in 1957 encouraging office development resulted in the demolition of most of the grand mansions. By the early 1970's, the area's residential past had been almost completely erased. Today, the neighborhood is defined by its large hotels, office buildings and clubs.

...An example of unusually good composition is the residence of Senator Pendleton...there is a pretty sweep of lawn on the south which is bounded in turn by the stately residence of Senator Cameron of Pennsylvania... Harpers New Monthly Magazine, 1885.

The National Geographic Society Headquarters was constructed in five phases. Hornblower and Marshall designed the original Hubbard Hall in 1901; Arthur Heaton designed the first additions in 1913 & 1931. Edward Durrell Stone designed the building oriented to Seventeenth Street in 1964; Skidmore, Owings and Merrill completed the headquarters in 1985.

THE SIXTEENTH STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT



The Gothic-styled Church of the Holy City Swedenborgian was the first "national" church built in Washington, D.C. (1611 16th Street, 1894)



Francis Loeb Library, Harvard Graduate School of Design

The Sixteenth Street Historic District includes 119 historically and architecturally significant buildings. The buildings along this section of the street represent its development from the Territorial Government's initial improvements (1871-1874) through the first decades of the twentieth century. The buildings range in type from three- and four-story rowhouses and large detached houses to churches, apartment buildings, and institutional buildings. Generally dating from 1875 to the 1920s, the styles include Italianate, Queen Anne, Richardsonian Romanesque, and Beaux Arts Classicism.

Many of the builders and architects who constructed on Sixteenth Street were locally and nationally recognized. They include such prominent names as Harry Wardman, Jules Henri de Sibour, B. Stanley Simmons and John Russell Pope. The quality of design and workmanship in the buildings are vital to the essence of the district. The collection of structures documents the street's history as a residential avenue and an important approach to the city's monumental core.



U.S. Commission of Fine Arts

...There is probably no other city in the United States which shows a wider range of design in the architecture of its residences, or a more distinctly individual taste in their interior arrangement and decoration...

Demorest's Family Magazine, 1890



Library of Congress, FB Johnston Collection ca.1905

Built in 1892 by Supreme Court Justice Henry B. Brown, 1720 16th Street was later owned by the Russian pianist Basil Toutorsky. The Flemish Revival design features an elaborately scrolled front gable, and an irregular and varied roofline.

Residents of the historic district have included such prestigious and well-known people as General Douglas MacArthur, William Howard Taft's vice president James Sherman, real estate baron Henry Willard, *Evening Star* editor Rudolph Kauffman and Wallis Simpson, the Duchess of Windsor. The street has been home to numerous congressmen, judges, members of the diplomatic corps, and government officials.

The conglomeration of buildings within the historic district reflect the unique history associated with the development of Sixteenth Street — separate from the Dupont Circle neighborhood to the west and Shaw and Logan Circle to the east. Upon the extension of Sixteenth Street beyond Florida Avenue in 1893, the street emerged as a direct route into downtown from the growing suburbs to the north. Increasingly, Sixteenth Street became a noisy and congested commuter route, prompting its decline as a fashionable residential neighborhood.



The construction of apartment buildings contributed to the stylistic diversity of Sixteenth Street in the early twentieth century, and reflect the increasing urbanization of the neighborhood. Medium to large apartment buildings are designed in styles ranging from the Classical Revival Roosevelt Hotel to the Art Deco Hightower Apartments.



Washington Post: Reprinted by permission of D.C. Public Library

Roosevelt Hotel

Photographic Archives, National Gallery of Art



Chastleton Apartments

The Roosevelt Hotel (1916) at 2001 16th Street, and the Gothic Revival Chastleton Apartments (1919) at 1701 16th Street, represent two of Wardman's luxury developments on Sixteenth Street.



The richness of the Victorian-inspired architecture is exhibited in the decorative pressed bricks and iron cresting of this row at 1816-1826 16th Street (1878).



The Carnegie Institution, ca. 1950



U.S. Commission of Fine Arts

Carnegie is an independent, nonprofit research institution...It was Mr. Carnegie's intention that the Institution be home to the "exceptional" person...given the time, the equipment and funds...to produce the best work which they are capable of...

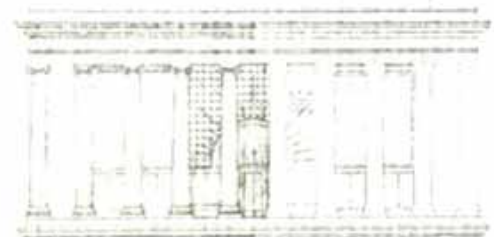
Carnegie Institution, 1986.

Institutional uses spread northward from lower Sixteenth Street at the turn-of-the-century, reflecting the growth of the city and the rising prestige of the street. Churches and academic, social and diplomatic institutions erected buildings along the predominantly residential street. The First Baptist Church (1888), the Church of the Holy City (1894), and Foundry Methodist Church (1904) are among the earliest churches in the historic district. Between 1880-1920, many religious groups sought to establish a strong spiritual presence in the Nation's Capitol by funding the construction of elaborate "National" churches, many of which located along Sixteenth Street. The Carnegie Institution, a philanthropic research institution founded by Andrew Carnegie, moved into its building in 1908. In 1917, the Women's Congressional Club, established its headquarters at 16th and U streets. The impressive Temple of the Scottish Rite was designed by John Russell Pope and completed in 1912, and the Jewish Community Center at 1533 Sixteenth Street was dedicated by President Coolidge in 1928.

...It is one of the most eligible, appropriate and beautiful sites for the Temple in this splendid Capitol. The frontage is on 16th Street, which is one of the most desirable of all the avenues, or boulevards, of this city...



Supreme Council, 1911, in reference to the Scottish Rite Temple at 1733 16th Street.



From *The Architecture of John Russell Pope, Vol. 2*



Washingtoniana Division, D.C. Public Library

MERIDIAN HILL

Meridian Hill, including its park and many impressive Beaux-Arts mansions, was largely the creation of Mary Foote Henderson, wife of Senator John Henderson (R-Missouri). The Hendersons came to Washington in 1887, purchasing property on Sixteenth Street north of Florida Avenue. Henderson Castle, erected in 1888, served as an impetus for development in the rural area of Meridian Hill. For three decades, Mary Henderson worked to promote the thoroughfare by sponsoring the construction of expensive private residences and embassies, and lobbying to have national monuments and government buildings located in the area. In 1898, she commissioned Paul Pelz, co-designer of the Library of Congress, to design a new Executive Mansion for the site. In 1906, she proposed that land be purchased by the government for use as an urban park. The creation of Meridian Hill Park entailed 25 years of work by many artisans including landscape designer Horace Peaslee, sculptor John J. Earley, the National Park Service, and the Commission of Fine Arts. In 1911, Henderson unsuccessfully petitioned for the erection of the Lincoln Memorial at the crest of Meridian Hill.

The extreme limit of the fashionable quarter extends a little to the West of Dupont Circle and as far north as Florida Avenue. One of the finest houses, however, suffers nothing from standing just beyond the border in Columbia Heights. It is the beautiful home of ex-Senator John B. Henderson, which commands one of the finest prospects of land and water anywhere in Washington...

Peterson's Magazine, February 1895



National Archives

...We were able to move from the hotel into our new home, No. 2600 Sixteenth Street, the beautiful Venetian home...It is perhaps a mile away from the center of the residential section of the city, but is beautifully situated on high ground and on the main residential Street of Washington...

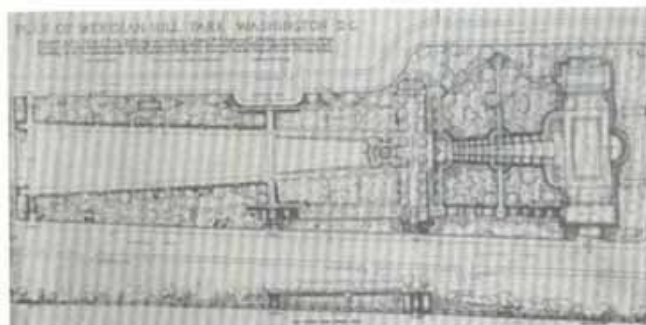
Oscar S. Strauss Diaries, 1908.



2460 16th Street NW

Library of Congress, ca. 1920

The street's diplomatic reputation began in 1907, when Henderson commissioned architect George Oakley Totten, Jr. to design speculative mansions for foreign diplomats and wealthy Washingtonians. The Baroque-styled Embassy of France at 2460 Sixteenth Street was the first of many Henderson-Totten collaborations. With Henderson's money and Totten's architectural talents, they constructed 16 notable residences on or adjacent to Sixteenth Street. Today, the street continues to have a significant diplomatic presence -- many still located in Henderson-Totten buildings -- with 19 embassies and chanceries.



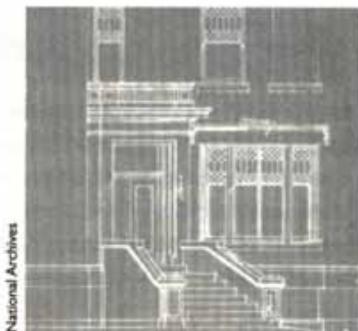
Park Plan, Horace W. Peaslee, 1928

Complementing the beautiful buildings on the hill, Meridian Hill Park represents a formal Italianate garden encompassing twelve hillside acres. The park, with its cascading fountains and outdoor sculpture, represents an outstanding park composition and some of the earliest use of pebble-dash concrete in the country.

SIXTEENTH STREET TODAY

Sixteenth Street remains today a major residential street with grand mansions, ornate rowhouses, handsome apartment buildings, and some of the city's finest religious and institutional architecture. Many of the buildings have been carefully and sensitively restored since the Sixteenth Street Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1977. Renovation of many of the buildings has resulted in their continued use as association headquarters, community and arts organizations, embassies and residences. As it was one hundred years ago, Sixteenth Street remains a beautiful, vibrant, urbane avenue with unparalleled architectural treasures.

Several community groups contribute to the on-going preservation and revitalization of Sixteenth Street. The **Dupont Circle Citizens Association**, founded in 1922, is the neighborhood's largest membership organization. Through its committees and monthly meetings, the association is involved in zoning, environment, education, safety, historic preservation and related issues which affect the quality of life in the Dupont Circle area. The **Dupont Circle Conservancy**, a preservation advocacy organization founded in 1978, regularly monitors proposed alterations to historic buildings in the Dupont Circle neighborhood and provides community comments to the Historic Preservation Review Board. The **Friends of Meridian Hill** was founded in 1990 to work with the National Park Service to restore and revitalize Meridian Hill Park. The organization regularly sponsors clean-ups and other events to showcase the urban park.



National Archives



U.S. Commission of Fine Arts

1623 SIXTEENTH STREET

The restoration of this picturesque Queen Anne mansion at 1623 16th Street, constructed in 1886, was undertaken in 1991 by The Green Door, a social service agency.

This brochure was developed by the D.C. Preservation League, Traceries and the D.C. Historic Preservation Division as part of a series to provide information for residents and visitors on the social, cultural and architectural history of Washington's historic districts. This project was funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, through the D.C. Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, Historic Preservation Division.

Information in this brochure is based on the National Register nomination for the Sixteenth Street Historic District (1978). Uncredited photos by Traceries.

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Historic Preservation Division
Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs
Government of the District of Columbia
MARION BARRY JR., Mayor
HAMPTON CROSS, D.C. Historic Preservation Officer

