GEORGETOWN HISTORIC WATERFRONT
Figure 1. View of Georgetown about 1883 from detail of a lithograph by A. Sachse & Co. entitled “The National Capital Washington, D.C.”
GEORGETOWN HISTORIC WATERFRONT

Washington, D.C.

A Review of Canal and Riverside Architecture

United States Commission of Fine Arts
and
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation,
National Park Service,
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Figure 2. One of two horses on facade of house at 34th Street and the C. & O. Canal.
The Georgetown Waterfront area, which lies almost hidden from view by an elevated highway, is the historic heart of a colonial town. Now part of the District of Columbia, this area south of M Street and west of Rock Creek along the bluffs of the Potomac River was platted and named George-Town in 1751.

By the time the town had celebrated its 100th birthday, activities in the hundred-acre waterfront area had included Indian trade, development of a tobacco port, construction of the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal and the Potomac Aqueduct Bridge, establishment of many types of mills, and erection of a market house, firehouse, church, and Masonic Lodge. Just before the Civil War, the waterfront prospered as a transshipment point for trade on the canal and river. Since the 1880's, however, the activities on both waterways have declined as the superior deep-water port across the Potomac in Alexandria, Va., attracted the large cargo vessels, and the railroad replaced the canal for shipment of goods to and from the hinterland. Washington developed commercial areas to service the entire city and Georgetown businessmen began to look for new places to invest.

Today, this evolution of the waterfront area can be traced in the structures and urban form created as Georgetown emerged from an 18th-century plantation into a distinctive section within the Nation's Capital. The historic significance of this waterfront area was officially recognized when the U.S. Department of the Interior designated it a Registered National Historic Landmark on October 7, 1967. As such, it is now included in the National Register and protected by the provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 which requires that any project receiving Federal funds or a Federal license must take into account the effect of the project on the properties in the historic district.

This brochure presents a review of structures that illustrate the history of the Georgetown Waterfront. Commercial buildings, residences, civic structures, and the canal construction are discussed. There was no attempt, however, to describe every historic structure in the area. Rather, the study was intended to provide information about significant and representative structures from which the general history and age of similar buildings in the Georgetown waterfront area can be ascertained. This information can provide a historical context to guide future decisions concerning the appearance of the Georgetown Waterfront.

Unfortunately, many buildings located in this area have already disappeared as citizens and government agencies have decided to demolish them to provide land for new uses. In 1949, the home of Francis Scott Key, which had been built in 1802, was demolished to provide land for the approaches to the Whitehurst Freeway. One of the early naval schools, located at 1042 Wisconsin Avenue, was demolished in 1960, and the houses at 1061–1063 Potomac Street disappeared in the 1940's. In 1967, the monumental Capital Traction Co. Powerhouse on K Street was scheduled for demolition.

The Waterfront Study was undertaken in the summer of 1967 as one part of a survey of all of Georgetown being made by the Commission of Fine Arts with the cooperation of the Historic American Buildings Survey of the Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation of the National Park Service. Provision for such a survey was made in the Old Georgetown Act, a measure passed by the 81st Congress of the United States and administered by the Commission of Fine Arts in order to preserve through regulation the historic values of Old Georgetown. In the summer of 1966, two surveys were completed and published by the Historic American Build-
ings Survey and the Commission of Fine Arts, one titled *Georgetown Commercial Architecture M Street* and the other *Georgetown Commercial Architecture Wisconsin Avenue*. At the same time, a study of Georgetown West was begun by the Commission of Fine Arts with the assistance of thirty volunteer researchers living in the area.

The documentation of historic buildings and other construction, such as the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal, contained in this brochure was recorded by the National Park Service by means of Historic American Buildings Survey Photo-Data Books and Inventory Forms. These records are deposited in the Historic American Buildings Survey Collection at the Division of Prints and Photographs of the Library of Congress and are available to the public for study or purchase.

The history of the Georgetown waterfront has been divided into four periods, each of which is introduced by a general history of waterfront activities at that time followed by a history of typical structures built during each period. A final section of the brochure contains an account of the methodology used for the research. In that section there is also a discussion of the various problems encountered in a study of this type.

For persons using this brochure as a guide to the waterfront, the location of each building and the page on which it is described is indicated on the map below. With this guidance, it is hoped that more people will become aware of the historic heart of Georgetown.

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*Figure 4.* A guide and building identification map of the waterfront area.
early settlement

... before 1751

The River Potomack forms a junction with the Bay of Chesapeake, one hundred and fifty miles from the sea. From thence to the head of tide-water is about one hundred and sixty miles. "This River is seven and a half miles wide at its mouth; ... one and a quarter at Alexandria; and the same from thence to the City of Washington, which is within three miles of the head of tide-water. ..." (Mr. Jefferson's notes on Virginia.)

From the Capes of the Chesapeake to the City of Washington, is upwards of three hundred miles; but the navigation is easy and perfectly safe. A vessel of twelve hundred hogsheads of tobacco has loaded at and sailed from Alexandria, and one of seven hundred hogsheads at George-Town, which is above the City.

When this account was written in 1793 by George Washington's private secretary, Tobias Lear, in his Observations on the River Potomack, the Country Adjacent, and the City of Washington, Georgetown had just been included in the new Territory of Columbia. But while Washington's history was just be-

Figure 5. Map of 1797 by D. F. Sotzmann showing the original boundaries of the District of Columbia.
beginning, Georgetown's had begun much earlier. Tobias Lear's trip up the Potomac had been preceded by 162 years by Capt. Henry Fleete, the first white man to sail past the present site of Washington and along the bluffs of Georgetown, then called Tohogae, a village of Anacostan Indians. Looking for furs, Fleete and his crew had pushed farther west than his predecessor, Capt. John Smith. In his Journal for 1632, quoted in the Columbia Historical Society Records in 1908, Fleete wrote:

On Monday, the 25th of June, we set sail for the town of Tohogae, where we came to an anchor about two leagues short of the Falls, being the latitude 41, on the 26th of June. This place without all question is the most pleasant and healthful place in all this country, and most convenient for habitation, the air temperate in summer and not violent in winter. It aboundeth with all manner of fish. The Indians in one night will catch thirty sturgeons in a place where the river is not above twelve fathoms broad. And as for deer, buffaloes, bears, turkeys, the woods do swarm with them, and the soil is exceedingly fertile.

This was the site upon which Georgetown was founded 120 years later.

The rest of the 17th century saw the gradual colonization of the land between the Chesapeake and the Potomac. King Charles I of England granted a charter to Cecilius Calvert, the second Lord Baltimore, in 1634 for the land north of the Potomac River which Calvert named Maryland. Included in this grant were the future sites of Georgetown and the present District of Columbia. As Calvert attracted settlers to his new colony, he allotted them large landholdings from which he required an annual quit rent. Beginning with grants at the mouth of the Potomac, near Calvert's first settlement at St. Mary's City, colonization progressed along the tidal creeks and rivers.

The Potomac, like all waterways in colonial times, provided the most efficient route for communication and trade with neighbors, villages, and coastal and overseas ports. In response to the increasing trade, a customs office for Maryland was created in 1673. By 1686 it was necessary to appoint a separate North Potomac customs district solely for the collection of duties along the Maryland shore of the river, which of course, included the Georgetown area. The appointed officials were the Collector of Customs and the Naval Officer. Since the river was long and the ports were scattered, one man usually handled the western part of the river and the other the eastern or southern section. All vessels trading in the Potomac had to be cleared by these officials.

The first patent for land in the territory now encompassed by Georgetown was granted in 1703 when Ninian Beall received 795 acres which he named Rock of Dumbarton. Beall was a Scotsman who had fought against Cromwell, was captured, and completed his 5 years of servitude as a political prisoner in Maryland. He was eligible at that time for 50 acres of land, but since he had encouraged so many immigrants to come to Maryland, he was granted a larger area. At the time of Beall's death in 1717, 404 acres of his land passed to his son, George, who still owned them when Georgetown was founded.

Beall's land was indicated on a map of the Potomac drawn by Baron Christoph von Graffenried in 1711 (fig. 7). Graffenried (1661-1743) was a Swiss who had founded a colony at New Bern in North Carolina. He had traveled from there up to the Chesapeake seeking a location for a frontier colony. In his journal, which included a map of his route, he describes his trip up the Potomac to Colonel Beall's, from there on to Frederick, Md., and as far north as Canoy or Conoy (originally Canavest) Island, located about 15 miles downstream from the present site of Harpers Ferry.

The map of the Potomac, which was printed with Graffenried's account of the trip published in French in 1716, was reproduced in the German American Annals of 1914. "Coll. Bells" is written in on the west bank of the "Ruisseau d'Or," now known as Rock Creek. In his journal, which was translated in 1920 by Vincent H. Todd for the publications of the North Carolina Historical Commission, Graffenried wrote of the site of Georgetown.

I believe that there are scarcely any places in the world, more beautiful and better situated than this of the Potomac and of Canavest, which we wished to divide into two little colonies, the first just below the falls. There is a very pretty island of very good ground, and facing it, an angle between the great Potomac River and another little river named Gold Creek, in French Ruisseau d'Or, suited to receive everything which comes up the river, the greatest merchant vessels being able to sail there, as
well as that which comes down from above the falls or from the surrounding country.

On the map, Graffenried noted several areas by letter, including sites in and around the future location of Georgetown (see fig. 7, p. 11):

A. [at Little Falls] At the foot of this fall, to the side we wished to build a house and establish a plantation in order to cart merchandise from there. The greatest merchant vessels can sail up to within a half of a quarter of a league of this fall, which is very convenient for commerce.

B. Just below the falls there is caught a prodigious quantity of the best fish. In the month of May they come there in such numbers that they kill them with a stick.

C. [Theodore Roosevelt Island] This island is all cut out of rock. Above it is a very fine and good soil, sufficient to support a whole family. Indians live there. One could make an impregnable fort of it. It is near this island that we set foot on land when we came down this river from Canavest.

D. [Georgetown] Plantation of Colonel Bell, eight hundred acres of land to sell for 168 £ Sterling. Very suitable and convenient for our design. From there one goes to Canavest horseback or on foot.

Q. [north of Georgetown, near Cabin John] Charming island of very fine land and trees, on one side steep rocks, on the other an approach suitable for boats. This place with the plantation of Colonel Bell would have suited us well.

Another early settler, upon whose land part of Georgetown was later situated,
was George Gordon. He acquired 300 acres from a “James Smith, Planter,” in 1734 which he called his Rock Creek Plantation, after the name of the stream which enters the Potomac at Georgetown. This land lay along the Potomac to the west of Beall’s property. From Smith’s title of “planter,” it can be assumed that he may have used the land for growing tobacco, the principal commodity of the 18th century in Maryland. Gordon, in contrast, was designated in this early transaction as “merchant,” a new type of settler moving into the area.

Four years after Gordon’s purchase, a ferry had been established from the Virginia shore of the Potomac to Gordon’s land. Ten years later, in 1744, Gordon petitioned the Maryland Assembly to permit him to build a “rolling house” for the storage of tobacco, which was rolled in hogsheads from the plantations down the roads to the ships. The act as passed in 1745 called for “laying out one Acre of Land convenient to Rock-Creek Landing, on Potomac River, on the Land George Gordon now lives on, and for Building a Rolling-House thereon.” Furthermore, the act called for:

one good substantial Brick, Stone or Framed House, of Seventy Feet long, and Twenty-two Feet wide, in the Clear, and Nine Feet Pitch, well Weather-boarded, if Framed, and tightly covered with Shingles, and under-pinned with Stone and good Mortar, so as to render the same dry, and sufficient to keep safe Tobacco, or other goods which from Time to Time or at any Times then after the Building aforesaid is com-

pleated, shall be brought to the Landing aforesaid, and required to be there kept or stored.

Around Gordon’s warehouse developed the nucleus of a settlement and port serving nearby Maryland tobacco plantations. Travelers between Maryland and Virginia came through to take the ferry across the Potomac, and planters arrived with tobacco for the rolling house. A sign of the community’s growth was the granting of a license in 1747 for operating a tavern near Rock Creek. That same year, the permanence of the settlement was assured when Gordon’s warehouse was made an official place of tobacco inspection by the Inspection Act passed by the Maryland Assembly.

The Inspection Act was intended to prevent planters from including “trash” in their hogsheads of tobacco. Virginia had passed such an act in 1730 and immediately benefited from the increased price for its tobacco. Under the Inspection Act all tobacco, after it was cured and prized into hogsheads on the plantation, was taken by a flat open boat or rolled to the nearest inspection house. These warehouses were located about every 12 to 14 miles apart along the navigable waters of Maryland. Here the hogsheads were stored until the inspector opened them, burned any trash he might find, and then reprized them. The inspected hogshead was then stamped, weighed, and consigned by the planter to a British merchant or exchanged for a “crop note,” which was used, like tobacco, as a medium of exchange.

The inspection house brought more people to the small settlement around the ferry landing and tavern, and the merits of the site for a town must have seemed unquestionable. A petition was presented to the Maryland Assembly in 1751 requesting that a town be erected on the “Potowmack River above the Mouth of Rock Creek Adjacent to the Inspection House.” The petition was granted. Seven commissioners were appointed from Frederick County, in which the land was located at that time, to acquire 60 acres of land, part from George Gordon and part from George Beall, son of Col. Ninian Beall, and to divide it into 80 lots. Recorded among the papers of the Georgetown Commissioners, the Plat of George-Town (fig. 8) shows the lot numbers, the price of the lots and in some cases the purchasers. The act specified that all buyers of lots, within two Years after they shall take up their respective Lots as aforesaid . . . must erect, build and finish one good and substantial House, that shall cover four hundred square Feet of Ground at the least, and that it be made in every Respect tenantable, with one good Brick or Stone Chimney thereto.

If the lot were not improved it reverted to the Commissioners.

This procedure followed the pattern for the founding of all colonial Maryland towns. The colonial legislators or a land speculator would suggest a location. Then the Commissioners appointed by the Assembly from the county in which the site was located would negotiate with the owners of the land for a fair price, survey the site, lay out the streets, number the lots, and auction off the land.
The plan of Georgetown included sites already laid out and in some cases improved. George Gordon’s Inspection House, on the acre of land he acquired in 1745, is shown by dotted lines south of The Fall’s (M) Street just west of lot 48. The greater irregularity of the lots in that area may indicate land divisions made prior to the official platting in 1751. According to the Plat, Gordon seems already to have improved lots 46, 48, 52, 55, and 75. It is interesting to note that in spite of the references to Rock Creek, which was deep enough for small craft, the original town plan did not extend that far east. Later additions eventually extended the streets and lots to the Creek.

The Potomac shoreline formed the southern boundary of the new town. Just below the bluffs, following the water’s edge, a long street was laid out to service the harbor. The western section was called The Landing (today, Water Street), indicating that the ferry from Virginia probably moored along there at that time. The central part was designated The Keys (today, K Street), undoubtedly in anticipation of the wharves that were to be built. The eastern part was named Wapping (most of this section was replatted into lots), after the area around the docks in London bearing that name. The other streets in the new town were named Duck Lane (33d Street below M Street), West Lane (33d above M Street), Water Street (Wisconsin Avenue south of M Street),

The present street and geographical names are in parentheses if not contemporary with the period being discussed.
High Street (Wisconsin Avenue north of M Street), East Lane (31st Street above M Street), The Fall's Street (M Street west of Wisconsin Avenue leading to Little Falls), and Bridge Street (M Street east of Wisconsin Avenue leading to the portage over Rock Creek).

As the town grew new land was platted. To the east of the original area, Beall's Addition was laid out about 1783, and Deakins, Lee and Casanove's Addition between 1793 and 1796. To the west, Peter, Beatty, Threlkeld and Deakins Addition was platted in 1784.

Figure 8. Plat of George-Town in 1751 from the "Georgetown Commissioners' Minutes, 1751-1789."
Tobacco port

... 1751–1827

Tobacco was king in 18th-century Maryland and Virginia and nowhere more so than in Georgetown. Tobacco warehouses sprang up along the riverside. Wharves were built for ships, and taverns were opened for the planters and sea-men. At the end of the century, the Governor of Maryland claimed that Georgetown was the largest tobacco port in the United States. Even during the first quarter of the 19th century, tobacco sales surpassed grain, the other large export crop. During its 75 years as a tobacco port, Georgetown was incorporated as a City, became a center for milling, was included in the new nation's capital territory, and was made a terminus for the Potomac Canal.

Georgetown's prominence in the tobacco trade was largely owing to its being the tidal port closest to the plantations in the interior of Maryland. With the production of tobacco expanding yearly, the Georgetown harbor was busy with the arrival and departure of ships, shallops, snows and sloops bound either for England or coastal ports. In 1762 a public wharf was constructed at the foot of Water Street (Wisconsin Avenue) to handle much of this activity. The Georgetown Commissioners specified that the wharf was to be 60 feet wide and to extend out into the river until it reached a depth of 10 feet at low tide. This would make it large enough to berth several vessels and provide a shallow dock along either end.

Tobacco had been introduced into Europe by traders from the West Indies in the 16th century, and the market expanded rapidly as England encouraged her colonies to export raw materials in exchange for finished goods. The fertile soil was excellent for tobacco, a crop that reaped a larger profit per acre than grain or cotton. Competition between Virginia and Maryland was keen and, in spite of regulations from England, kept the production up.

Much of the tobacco consignment was handled by Robert Peter, one of the first merchants and the first mayor of Georgetown. He was among the original bidders for Georgetown lots. On Wapping Street he owned lot 76 improved by a stone house which may have contained his store. As a factor for the firm of John Glassford & Co. in England, Peter would take tobacco on consignment and in return order items needed by the planters from England. Although his store and warehouses have disappeared, similar ones owned by Francis Dodge, a merchant and shipowner, stand on the corner of K, formerly Wapping, Street and Wisconsin Avenue. Through these large brick and stone houses of Georgetown passed the goods traded between the Colonies, England, and the West Indies.

Most of the early warehouses were built near the western end of the waterfront. Ships coming up the Potomac usually ran along the southern side of Mason's (Theodore Roosevelt) Island and then across the river into Georgetown. This was changed in 1805 when a stone causeway was built from the Island to the Virginia shore forcing ships to sail in the channel closer to the Georgetown side of the River which, it was believed, would grow deeper as a result of the causeway. As a consequence, later wharfage developed toward the Rock Creek end of the waterfront.

Two accounts in the local newspaper of 1790, the Times and Potowmack Packet, indicate the changes and developments taking place in the waterfront area (italics added).

Meeting at Mr. Suter's Tavern in George Town, 14 December, 1790, for erecting a New Warehouse contiguous to the Old Inspection on Col. Normand Bruce's property in George Town.

Edward Burgess
Bernard O'Neill

The warehouse lot which had been granted to George Gordon in 1745, around which the new town had grown, was put up for sale on December 11, 1790, by Andrew Hamilton.

On Monday the 3rd of January next will be offered for sale at the House of Mr. John Suter in George Town that Lot or Acre of Ground wherein the Old Warehouse formerly stood. A good title will be given agreeably to the last Will and Testament of Thomas Hamilton deceased of Prince Georges County.

Andrew Hamilton

For several decades the Tobacco Inspection House was located in Francis Loundes' frame warehouse located at the western end of Water (now an extension of K) Street. It remained there until the continuing production of tobacco required additional space. Richard P. Jackson wrote in his book, The Chronicles of Georgetown, D.C., that:
OBSERVATIONS explanatory of the Plan.

I. The positions for the different Edifices, and for the several Squares or Areas of different shapes, as they are laid down, were first determined on the most advantageous ground, commending the most extensive prospects, and the better acceptance of such improvements, as either war or revenue may hereafter call for.

II. Lines or Avenues of direct communication have been drawn to connect the separate and most distant objects with the principal, and to preserve through the whole a consistency of sight at the same time. Attention has been paid to the prolonging of those leading avenues over the most favorable ground for prospect and convenience.

III. North and South lines intersected by others running due East and West, divide the distribution of the City into Streets, Squares, etc., and these lines have been so continued as to meet at certain, given points with these divergent lines, so as to form on the Space first determined, the different Squares or Areas.

Scale of Poles.

[Diagram of Washington City with notes and observations.]

Breadth of the Streets.

The ground, avenues, and main streets as laid immediately to public view, are from 120 to 160 feet wide, and may be occasionally divided into foot ways, walks of lanes, and a carriage way. The other streets are from 80 to 90 feet wide.

In order to execute this plan, Mr. Ellsworth drew a true Mercatorial line by celestial observation, which passes through the area intended for the Capitol, this line is crossed by another due East and West, which passes through the same line. These lines were accurately measured, and made the basis on which the whole plan was executed. He ran all the lines by a Tantum Instrument, and determined the Avenues by actual measurement, and left nothing to the uncertainty of the Compass.
In the year 1822, the corporation [of the City of Georgetown] passed an ordinance for building two new tobacco warehouses, three stories high, and fire-proof, on lots 46, 47, and 48, situated west of High [Wisconsin Avenue] and south of Bridge [M] Street. The roofs were covered with slate and the doors and shutters with sheet-iron. The buildings were large enough to hold several thousand hogsheads of tobacco, but were found insufficient to receive the quantity of tobacco brought to the town for sale. Consequently, the corporation erected wooden sheds in addition to the brick warehouses. The inspection of tobacco multiplied, and the business so increased, that as high as five thousand hogsheads of tobacco were shipped to Europe in one year.

The inspection of tobacco was moved from Loundes' warehouse into these new buildings in 1824. Ten years later, with the death of the last of the large tobacco merchants, shipment of tobacco had begun to decline rapidly. In another decade, milling had become the dominant business on the waterfront.

Numerous milling establishments were built along the waterfront in the third quarter of the 18th century. The increasing pressure from England to diversify the products of the Colonies was causing plantations to begin the cultivation of wheat and grain. The easy availability of water power from the Potomac River and Rock Creek made milling a profitable business in Georgetown. As early as 1771, an act was passed establishing Georgetown as a site for inspection of flour. By the end of the 18th century, shipment of flour and grains was nearly as great as the shipment of tobacco. After the construction of the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal in the 19th century, the advantages of Georgetown for milling were even greater. The canal permitted the shipment of grain directly
into the city, and created a new source of waterpower.

Georgetown did not suffer any property damage during the American Revolution but was subject to the same decline in trade experienced by all ports during the war. Upon conclusion of the peace treaty, the city quickly regained its prosperity. The construction of warehouses was resumed and the riverside and Rock Creek were filled with wharves and docks. The peak in value of exports for the port of Georgetown was reached in 1792-93, the first year after Georgetown was included in the new Territory of Columbia. The Collector of Customs reported that a total of $364,537.03 worth of exports passed through the Georgetown customs. Much of this trade was coastal, as the foreign trade had already begun to shift to the port of Alexandria. Also about this time, as indicated by figures in *American State Papers on Commerce and Navigation*, it appears that the value of exports from Georgetown declined while the aggregate tonnage increased. This may reflect the shift from the production of tobacco to grain on many Maryland farms.

In 1791 Georgetown was included in the Territory of Columbia that had been selected by President Washington and Congress for the site of the new capital city. The original 10-mile-square Territory of Columbia, as the District was called, can be seen on a map published in 1797 by the German cartographer, D. F. Sotzmann (fig. 5). The Territory extended on both sides of the Potomac from the southern side of the Eastern Branch (Anacostia River), north to include Georgetown and across the River including Alexandria. Being just across Rock Creek from the site chosen for the City of Washington, Georgetown provided an established commercial center and well-equipped harbor for the influx of people coming to live in the new capital.

In 1792 the street pattern of Georgetown was included in one of the editions printed by Thackara and Vallance of the "Plan of the City of Washington," which had been completed that year by Andrew Ellicott according to the design of Pierre Charles L'Enfant (fig. 9). This first printed plan of Georgetown shows the many wharves and docks opposite Mason's (Theodore Roosevelt) Island as well as the expansion of Georgetown since the first plan was drawn 40 years previously. Ellicott also included in the plan a bridge from Georgetown to the Virginia shore and two bridges across Rock Creek. The lower bridge across the Creek was constructed in the same year as the plan appeared, but the bridge across the Potomac at this location was not to exist until 50 years later when the Aqueduct Bridge was completed.

A description of Georgetown during this period was written by Chancellor James Kent of New York in his annotated copy of the aforementioned Tobias Lear's *Observations on the River Potomack*, which is now in the Library of Congress.

George-Town, which as well as Alexandria is included in the federal District tho neither belong to the City of Washington is a pleasant Village situated on the waving Hills on the N. side of the Potomack & about 1 mile W. of the President's House in the City—a small stream called Rock-Creek separating this Town from the City. This Town has a fine view of the Potomack. It has a beautiful appearance from the S. side of the River, & the Hills on the back of the Town which are improved & improving with handsome Country Seats & which in some Situations will now sell for 50 guineas an acre, command a noble View of the Town, of the City of Washington & of the Potomack quite down to Alexandria. Mason's Island in front of the E. End of the Town adds much to the Beauty of the view. The Houses are exceedingly well built of Brick. The town may contain 150 families & between 30 & 40 very good brick Buildings. At the Peace this Place had not above 1 doz. Houses. Tho the Wharfs are few & indifferent I observed 2 ships here, & am told that George-Town on an average ships annually 8,000 HHds of Tobacco—From 150 to 160,000 bbls. of Flour, & between 3 & 400,000 Bushels of Wheat, & that Alexandria doubles it as to both the latter articles, tho in Tobacco George-Town more nearly rivals it, as its Inspection is better &c.—George-Town is incorporated—has a Goal [sic] & small market, the Streets are pretty regular, tho the Hills are waving. . . . George-Town is larger now, & has more trade than Baltimore had in 1775.

The advantages of the Georgetown harbor had already been noted by Lear in his *Observations* as offering the best port facilities for the new capital city. The main channel of the Potomack opposite the city [of Washington], run-
ning near the Virginia shore, that part of the city [of Washington] which lays upon the Potomack had only a small channel, carrying from eight to twelve feet of water, until you come within about three quarters of a mile of George-Town, when the channel turning between Mason's-Island and the city, gives a depth of water from twenty to thirty feet close in with the shore of the city. This renders the water-lots within that small space very valuable; for any ships that come up the river may here lay within twenty yards of the city [of Washington], and the boats which bring the produce of the country down the river, may at all times come here deep loaded as they come down, whereas they could not go, thus loaded, down to the eastern branch [Anacostia River], unless in very smooth weather.

Much of the shipping served the growing wholesale grocery business which flourished in the waterfront for a few years at the end of the 18th century before being superseded by the Baltimore markets. A permanent market house was erected in 1795 on The Fall's (M) Street on lot 42. The fishing business expanded rapidly and included the production of fish fertilizer. A fish market developed behind the produce market. (See fig. 4, No. 7). These markets also served and were stimulated by the settlers who were beginning to pass by way of Georgetown on the route west through Cumberland Gap.

At the end of the 18th century the first of a series of occurrences which were eventually to change the entire appearance and economic life of the Georgetown waterfront took place. This was the construction of the Potomac Canal, precursor of the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal which crosses the waterfront area today. As far back as 1747 the Ohio Co. had been formed to explore

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Figure 12. Detail of Benjamin Latrobe's 1802 plan for the Little Falls Canal through Georgetown. This is the earliest map to indicate any buildings in Georgetown.
Figure 13. Map of Georgetown in 1814 by Francis Fenwick, as redrawn by Hugh T. Taggart.
the possibility of improving the Potomac for navigation north of the fall-line. George Washington was one of the first to envision making the Potomac navigable all the way to Cumberland, Md., and thereby tapping the markets of Pennsylvania, Virginia (and the present West Virginia) and western Maryland. During his trips into the interior on surveying expeditions, he realized more than most men the value of a link between the Potomac and Ohio Rivers.

The American Revolution interrupted Washington's plans for a canal and it was not until a few months after his resignation as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army in 1785 that he could turn again to his project. He secured passage of acts in the legislatures of Virginia and Maryland to organize a company to undertake the work of removing obstructions in the river and constructing locks and canals necessary to circumvent rapids that could not be blasted out. With the appropriate authorization, stock was sold. George Washington, not surprisingly, was elected president of the newly formed Potowmack Co. He was the zealous head of the enterprise until he resigned in 1789 to accept the presidency of the United States.

In August 1785 work was begun, but it progressed slowly, primarily because of labor shortages. By 1802, five canal sections were completed: around Little Falls on the Maryland side; around Great Falls on the Virginia side; around Seneca Falls; and two sections at Harpers Ferry. These varied in length from 50 yards to over 2 miles. Two types of craft used the waterway, log rafts ("gon-dolas") which were brought downstream and usually broken up at Georgetown, and pointed boats ("sharpers") which were poled back upstream. The success of the project was reduced by the fact that although the locks had cost more than $500,000, the river was still not easily navigable north of the falls. Furthermore, the locks and sections of canal worked well only at times of high water and often boats had to wait so long to lock through that they lost money on their cargoes. Nevertheless, these canals provided the precedent for improvements that reached their height in the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal.

The same year that the first canal system was completed, Benjamin Henry Latrobe, then architect for the Capitol, prepared a map titled Plans and sections of the proposed continuation of the Canal at the Little Falls of the Potomac. (See figs. 10 and 12.) This plan plotted a route for a canal parallel with the river through Georgetown. Although it veered north closer to M Street, it is roughly along the same route as the one constructed 30 years later. The plan indicates that even at that early date a more reliable waterway was contemplated.

By 1821, it was decided that a joint committee be appointed by the Maryland and Virginia Legislatures to investigate the Potowmack Co. The Committee found that the Potowmack Co. had failed to fulfill its charter "to provide navigation for boats carrying 50 barrels of flour in the driest seasons." A year later the Virginia Board of Public Works published a report which recommended dissolving the Potowmack Co. and the building of a complete canal system. Although the improvements built by the Potowmack Co. were not as great as originally envisioned, they helped maintain the prosperity of the waterfront in the face of growing competition with other ports and problems with silting of the harbor. Hugh T. Taggart in his account, Old Georgetown, states that while the canals and locks of the Potowmack Canal were used, 1,211,903 barrels of flour and 42,456 barrels of whiskey, among other articles, were brought to tide-water, realizing $238,117.66 in tolls. The value of this merchandise was $9,935,964.00 and 15,000 boats of 179,554 tons in the aggregate were employed in its transportation.

Accounts in American State Papers for Commerce and Navigation show that during the war in 1811-12, exports had fallen to $35,740, but within 8 years, by 1819-20, had risen to $489,124.

By the end of the 18th century, Georgetown had begun to feel the direct competition of Alexandria which surged ahead to become the chief harbor for the new Federal City. Baltimore also had grown rapidly and soon exceeded the ports of Annapolis and Georgetown in the amount of shipping. In fact, even the wholesale grocery business, mentioned previously, fell off rapidly when merchants from Washington found it easier to go to the large market in Baltimore than wait for produce to make the long trip up the Potomac to Georgetown. Tobacco was the only item which continued to be exported from Georgetown in large quantities from the town's
founding through the first quarter of the 19th century.

Some of the buildings constructed during this period still survive in their original form, others have been altered in use or appearance. Today, they provide an important visual link with the tobacco era. Houses, civic buildings, warehouses, and the market described on the following pages begin the architectural record of life in Georgetown.

DODGE WAREHOUSE
1000-1006 Wisconsin Avenue

The three brick buildings at the foot of Wisconsin Avenue are reminiscent of the many warehouses which once crowded the Georgetown riverside. The Dodge Warehouse, thus called after the early owners, and the adjoining buildings are the last examples of late 18th century commercial architecture on the waterfront.

The buildings are on lot 74 of the original 1751 Plat of George-Town (fig. 8). Little is known about the early history of this lot, but from the available records a brief chronicle can be pieced together. On the Plat of George-Town, lot 74 is marked as having been acquired by a Mr. Snowden. Forty years later it was in the possession of Stephen West, of Prince Georges County, Md., and at that time was improved by a “large stone house.” According to a provision in the George-Town law, all lots were to be improved within 2 years by a house “that shall cover four hundred square feet of ground at least. . . .” It may be assumed, therefore, that either Snowden built the stone house or else, failing to improve the lot, the land was resold within a short time and in 1760 was acquired by West, who may have been the first one to build on the lot. Today foundations of the first house can still be seen in the stone basement of the corner building at 1000 Wisconsin Avenue.

The first deed that has been found for the property is dated June 25, 1807. At that time Benjamin Oden, trustee for the estate of West, his father-in-law, sold to Allen Dodge and Francis Dodge all that part of Lot number 74 in Georgetown lying within the courses, bound and description following, to wit: [104' by 80'2"—the entire lot 74] together with the stone house and improvements thereon and the use, benefit and privilege of a 6 foot alley binding from Water St. [Wisconsin Avenue] the whole extent of the northern part of the lot sold together with all right title and claim to the benefit of the river and improving to the river in front of said lot which appertains to said lot.

In addition to the remnants of the stone house in the foundations, the 6-foot alley remains today as West Alley, named either for the direction in which it ran or for Stephen West.

Francis Dodge had come down to Georgetown from Newburyport, Mass., with a man named Issac Tenney in the last decade of the 18th century. With his brother Allen, Dodge began business as a trader and merchant in West Indian goods. His first store was probably the stone house on lot 74. The vacant northern half of the lot appears to have been leased by Dodge to his friend Issac Tenney between 1807 and 1813. At some time between these years a two-story brick house was built and occupied by Tenney. This is undoubtedly the building still standing at 1012–1014 Wisconsin Avenue. During the War of 1812, when his business probably declined because of the wartime restrictions and other mercantile difficulties, Dodge leased the rest of lot 74. The southern end was leased to Richard Elliott in 1813, with the old stone house on it. The adjoining brick warehouses now on the lower part of the lot were built by Elliott between that date and 1824. He probably built the two-story brick warehouse adjacent to the corner first and then, as the “old stone house” on the corner needed repair, he rebuilt it in brick. In 1824 Elliott conveyed this property to a Richard Davis as security for a loan and eventually in 1835 it reverted again to Francis Dodge.

By this time Allen Dodge had sold his share in the Georgetown properties, together with his interest in several vessels, to his brother Francis and had returned to Massachusetts. Francis Dodge prospered and purchased lots along the Potomac on the other side of The Keys (K Street), where the Capital Traction Co. Powerhouse now stands. He also bought several vessels and an interest in others, all of which carried on trade along the Atlantic seacoast and with the West Indies. In an insurance policy of 1837 with the Firemen’s Insurance Co., Dodge and John Davidson, who was a partner at this time, are listed as owning the two story Ware-house, brick, covered with slate, situated on the North-West corner of High [Wisconsin Avenue] and Water [K] Streets, in Georgetown, and in the two story brick
Figure 14. Dodge Warehouse on Wisconsin Avenue at the left with adjoining small warehouse and residence.
house, covered with shingles, North of and adjoining the above mentioned house, occupied by themselves as a Wholesale grocery store, Spirituous liquors excepted.

Some of the items being sold by Francis Dodge are listed in an advertisement of 1838 by him and his son, Alexander H. Dodge, in The Potomac Advocate and Metropolitan Intelligencer, the Georgetown newspaper.


When the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal was completed in Georgetown in the 1830's, Dodge also engaged in canal trade. Francis Dodge, Sr., died in 1851, and 6 years later the Dodge business
The property was divided, and the southern half of lot 74 was sold to William Edes, a flour merchant. During the Civil War, Edes obtained government contracts for flour and participated in the trade of grain coming down the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal.

The three brick buildings are examples of the unpretentious utilitarian commercial architecture at the beginning of the 19th century. Built in the Federal period, the buildings have simple symmetrical facades and regular fenestration. The warehouse on the corner has large loading doors on each floor with a hoist above in the gable. This type of warehouse was in use throughout northern Europe from the 14th century and was imitated in the Colonies. The house, the property farthest up the hill and now painted white, has residential dormer windows rather than loft doors, a large chimney indicating several fireplaces, and domestic fenestration. The two street doors indicate that the ground floor probably housed a store or office served by one door, and that the upper floors were a residence entered from the door at the northern end of the building.

This building provides the first benchmark in the continuum of architectural styles in the waterfront area. Additional research is needed in order to document more exactly the dates of construction and alterations. Such research should include a thorough title search, a search of tax assessment records, and reading of the Dodge papers in the Collection of the Peabody Library Association in the Peabody Room of the Georgetown Branch of the District of Columbia Public Library.
GEORGETOWN MARKET
3276 M Street

The Georgetown Market House, built in 1865, is located on the site used as a market since 1795. In that year, the City of Georgetown had a frame Market House constructed on part of lot 42, just one lot west of the Warehouse Lot where Gordon’s Tobacco Inspection House stood. Much earlier there had been a butcher’s market on the site, but this had been replaced by the Georgetown jail by the time the land was taken for a market house. The first market building lasted only one year before being demolished for the construction of a larger and more substantial structure.

For this second building, it was necessary to acquire additional land on the front and back of the lot which originally had been sold to different parties. Construction was begun in 1796, although negotiations for the land were not completed until 1803. The Market House was probably a simple rectangular building with interior stalls and moveable stands and benches placed between the pillars or piers. Along the outside there was space for push carts and wagons from which produce and merchandise were sold. Every day was market day, and the place became a center for social exchange as well as buying produce.

When the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal was built in 1831, the lower third of the original lot was separated from the part upon which the Market House stood. A 30-foot stone retaining wall about 2 feet thick, which can still be seen today, had to be built by the canal company along the edge of the Market House lot. On the southern side of the divided Market House lot, near the corner of Cherry (now Grace) Street, was the Fish Market. (See fig. 4, No. 7.) Bridges were built over the canal from the Market House space to link the two areas and to extend the public alleys which were on either side of the Market House. On the west side of the building was Cedar Alley, which had originally run all the way down to West Landing (Water or K Street). On the east side was East Market Space which was designated Potomac Street in 1818, and which also ran down to the Keys (Water or K Street) along Cherry Street which had been opened by Thomas Beall in 1798.

By 1865, the old market, too dilapidated for continued use, was torn down. In its place, the existing one-story red brick building, originally 40 feet in length, was erected. Constructed on the fieldstone foundations of the earlier market, the new building retains the traditional market-house arcade design in its pattern of fenestration along the flanks. The M Street facade is elaborated with a sheet metal cornice with decorative brackets in the Victorian, Italianate style. Originally the word Market appeared in the pediment over the M Street door. The Georgetown Market finally closed in 1935 when increased traffic made access difficult. Since then the District of Columbia, which took possession of the building in 1871 when the Georgetown government was absorbed into the District’s government, has rented the building to parties.

Figure 17. Front of the Georgetown Market on M Street about 1937.
able to use it for various commercial purposes.

Now one of a rapidly diminishing number of market houses in colonial cities, the Market is a significant surviving symbol of Georgetown's long history of commercial endeavor. Implementation of proposals to rejuvenate the building for a market would make a valuable contribution to the preservation of Georgetown's commercial heritage.

Figure 18. West side of the Market House about 1937.

Figure 19. Georgetown Market House in 1967.

Figure 20. Basement of the Market House with stone supporting piers and brick arches.
As buildings sprang up along the newly opened Thomas Jefferson Street in the first decade of the 19th century, the Masons of Potomac Lodge No. 43, the third Lodge established in Georgetown, were looking for a site for a new building. The Masonic Order had grown out of societies and guilds which were developed by the cathedral builders in England and Scotland as early as the 14th century. The first Lodge in the New World was in Philadelphia and included Benjamin Franklin among its members. Originally the Grand Lodges were under the control of the British Lodges, but after the American Revolution they broke away, State by State, and in 1787 the Maryland Lodges finally became independent. The oldest Lodge in the original District of Columbia was in Alexandria where George Washington, who had been inducted into the Masons in Fredericksburg, Va., in 1752, was Worshipful Master.

The first Lodge in Georgetown was formed in 1789. Soon a second Lodge was chartered in Georgetown, and in 1793 both the Alexandria Lodge and the two Georgetown Lodges participated in the laying of the cornerstone of the Capitol. On October 22, 1795, a petition was sent to the Grand Lodge of Maryland to establish another Lodge. The new Lodge, given the title of Columbia Lodge No. 19, held its first meeting in Georgetown on November 7, 1795. It had 12 members, but only lasted until January 1797. In 1806, another Lodge, Potomac Lodge No. 43, was established and continues to the present. In 1811 it was given a new charter and its name changed to Potomac Lodge No. 5.

Anthony Reintzell, a member of Potomac Lodge No. 5, acquired part of lot 59, on the original Plat of Georgetown, in 1800. He leased this to the Potomac Masonic Lodge in 1810 for $50 per annum with the privilege of purchase for $500. On October 18, 1810, the cornerstone for the new Lodge building was laid. Most of the early history of the Potomac Lodge is recounted in a book by Englert, Kidwell, and Harris, *A Century and a Half of Freemasonry in Georgetown 1789–1939*. The Potomac Lodge met on Jefferson Street until 1840, when the property was sold to Philip Gormley and the Masons moved to quarters in Washington (30th) Street. Gormley used the building for a carpentry shop and his residence for many years. After his death the family kept a grocery store in the building and owned the property until 1947. Today the building houses the Washington office of Doxiadis Associates, city planners.

The building has been altered over the years, but it is still possible to visualize it as it was originally built. The bay windows on the front were added at some time in the 1940's to replace rectangular windows on the ground floor. On the second floor were two roundheaded windows flanking the central arch, which originally surrounded an arched recess. The window arches, and center recess of the second floor, the blind lunette above, and two rectangular panels above the flanking windows were all filled after 1875.
Figure 22. Masonic Lodge about 1870.
For the most part, the interior has been entirely rebuilt to accommodate the changing uses of the building. Two of the original features still exist, the barrel vault of the second floor and a later marble mantelpiece. Recently the interior has been gutted and redesigned for offices. The integrity of the original building leads one to suspect that one of the Masons may have been an architect or builder who employed his knowledge to produce a more sophisticated facade than is usually found on buildings in the waterfront area.

BRICKYARD HILL HOUSE
3134-3136 South Street

The double wooden house on the top of Brickyard Hill is a Georgetown landmark and probably the oldest house in the waterfront area. It was built on the original lot 52 (see fig. 8) which was known as Peter's Square, at some time prior to Robert Peter's death in 1806. The clapboarded house was constructed as a duplex dwelling and has been used as such ever since. It has been well-maintained, and except for some obvious changes, has retained much of its original design. The front doors, which originally opened directly onto South Street, have been closed and the side doors are used instead. The two central chimneys, which have been altered, still serve five fireplaces built on each side of the party wall. The mantels around the fireplaces have survived and are of simple, undecorated wood, except for one in a main room which has fluted pilasters. Both houses are two rooms deep with the stairwell enclosed between the rooms.

The Peter family was active in Georgetown life from the founding of the town. Robert Peter, who had been born in Scotland, was one of the first Georgetown Commissioners and when the town was incorporated in 1789, the first mayor. He owned much property in and around Georgetown, some of which was platted for lots as Georgetown expanded. In 1790 he was among the property owners who offered land across Rock Creek from Georgetown to George Washington for the Federal City.

Robert Peter, Sr., willed the eastern half of the duplex to his son, Robert Peter, Jr., who in turn bequeathed it to his brother David in 1811. In his will, Robert Peter, Sr., described the property presumed to be this house as “the house and the ground thereto attached being the East House of the two now under rent to Mr. David M. Erskine and which fell to me in a later division of my Father's real estate and was valued at $6,000.” The house was in the Peter family until 1830. From 1832 until 1866, Peter Vonessen owned the “house on South Street, or what was known as Brickyard Hill.” The city directory of 1834 listed Vonessen as “grocer and tavern keeper, near Canal Bridge and Congress Streets, east side.” For the past 100 years, the house has had many owners, some of whom owned both the east and west halves jointly.

Figure 23. Side view of the Brickyard Hill House with the entrance door which has been moved around from the front.
Figure 24. Front of the Brickyard Hill House showing the division of the double house by different paint colors, a custom which has been retained for over 100 years.

Figure 25. Wooden pegs used in construction of the Brickyard Hill House are visible in the joists of the floor.

Figure 26. Mantel in the living room of the Brickyard Hill House with simple wooden construction decorated by fluted pilasters.
DOUBLE HOUSE
1066-1068 31st Street

Another double house with clapboarded siding stands around the corner from the South Street example. This Double House, however, is of the more conventional attached-house design with roof ridge parallel to the street.

The basic proportions of the Double House indicate that it was built early in the 19th century. The heavy cornices at the eaves and over the doors and windows were added when the houses were “modernized” after the Civil War. The new trim was intended to bring the houses up-to-date by giving them decoration of the Italianate style, popular in the mid-19th century. The interiors have been greatly altered. Of interest because of its age, the Double House also reflects the changing tastes of the residents.

Buildings like this one which are recognized for their architectural significance, but for which there has not been time during this project for research as to their original owners, are recorded on Inventory Forms of the Historic American Buildings Survey and deposited like the longer Photo-Data books in the Library of Congress.

JOSEPH CARLTON HOUSE
1052-1054 Potomac Street

During the last decades of the 18th century many of the large lots on the
original Plat of George-Town were subdivided and sold off. Lot 41 on the west side of the Market House was divided about this time, and of the newly created lots, number 3 was purchased in 1794 by Joseph Carlton. Carlton was the Postmaster of Georgetown from February 1, 1799, to February 1, 1803.

In the Georgetown Assessment Records of 1800–1807 he is listed with "1 house and lot," and in the second assessment during that period the property is described more exactly as "1 lot improved on Market Street," the former name for the west side of Potomac Street. Apparently, Carlton built the house shortly after purchasing the land.

The Carlton house still retains the simple six-over-six double-hung windows, recessed rectangular transom lights over the doors, and narrow dormer windows that characterize many of the homes of the middle-class in the growing cities of the early 19th century. For the last decade the house has been used by furniture refinishers.

ADAMS-MASON HOUSE
1072 Thomas Jefferson Street

Thomas Jefferson Street was laid out in 1797 on land owned by Robert Peter and Thomas Beatty, Jr. Beatty ceded part of lot 59 on the original Plat of George-Town to the Corporation of Georgetown for half of the street which was to be 60 feet wide and lie between Fishing Lane (later Congress and now 31st Street) and the original boundary of the town (30th Street). (See fig. 13.) In the next 20 years both sides of the street were lined with new houses.

In 1808 Thomas Adams acquired part of the remaining section of lot 59 and some adjacent land in lot 58,

Beginning at end of 150' southerly from intersection of south side of Bridge [M] Street and the west side of Jefferson Street and running from thence south with west side of Jefferson Street 28'—west and parallel to Bridge Street 104' 9"—north and parallel with Jefferson Street 28'—east and parallel with Bridge Street to beginning.

The present frame house appears to have been built by Adams on his lot before he sold the property in 1812.

The property had many owners until about 1880 when the house and the neighboring house at 1074 were bought by George W. Mason. The Mason family resided at 1072 Thomas Jefferson Street until 1964. The Masons were carriage-makers, and later residents of the house believed that the structure built between the houses was used as a stable and that a brick addition at the rear of the house was used for finishing the carriages.

The house appears originally to have had two doors which would mean that a shop was undoubtedly on the first floor with the family's apartments above. This is a pattern followed by many builders in the waterfront area where a close proximity between shop and home was desirable. The house is of frame construction on a brick foundation. The interior detailing is very simple with wooden mantels, some with the reeded panels common to many of the Federal houses in the Georgetown waterfront area.
Across the street, houses were being built on lot 60, part of which Robert Peter had ceded for the laying out of the eastern half of Thomas Jefferson Street. The Nicholas Hedges House was built on lot 7 of the remaining subdivided portion of lot 60. At Robert Peter's death the property had passed to his brother, George Peter, who had sold it in 1813 to Nicholas Hedges. At some time between 1815 and 1818 Hedges had the present two-and-a-half-story brick house built by Trueman Beck. The Assessment Rolls for 1813 and 1815 list Hedges as owning a vacant lot. The 1818-19 Assessment Roll lists Trueman Beck with a two-and-a-half-story brick house valued at $3,500. It is not clear what the relationship was between Hedges and Beck, but it can be surmised that Beck was the builder for Hedges.

Nicholas Hedges, who owned the property from 1813 to 1821, owned a number of other properties in Georgetown. The Assessments of 1800-1807 indicate that he owned a lot on the "Causway [sic]" (K Street), and two improved lots, one on High Street (Wisconsin Avenue), and one on Washington (30th) Street.
The house was built for use as both a residence and office or shop. Originally there were two doors on the street facade, one for the shop on the first floor and the other for the residence on the upper two floors. When the house was renovated in 1941, the owner bricked up the shop door. The doorway between the two first-floor rooms was enlarged at this time and a modern utilities wing containing a kitchen, bath, and laundry was added to the rear. A rear porch was also added and the brickwork of the house repointed.

The house, built in the Federal style, was originally constructed in Flemish bond but later additions and alterations have been made in common bond. The main door, the only one existing today, is emphasized by a deep wooden panelled reveal which encloses a round arched transom with Gothic arches formed by the wooden muntins above the heavy six-panelled wooden door. The arch over the other door was originally a simple segmental arch similar to those of the windows. Two dormers repeat the arch motif of the main door, although they lack the Gothic arch muntins of the door light and have instead a simple radial muntin design.

The interior woodwork in the Hedges House is particularly handsome and appears to have been installed at the time of the construction of the house. The
Fireplaces on the first floor have restrained carved wooden mantels with reeded panels on either side of a blank central panel. On the second floor, in what was apparently the main sitting room, the wooden mantel is supported by reeded pilasters and has an Adamesque fruit and flower motif with Diana of the Chase framed by ivy garlands in the center. This decoration is made of a stucco-like material called “London putty” or “compo” applied to the wooden panels. Most rooms have simple cable cornice molding, whereas the sitting room has a foliated cavetto molding with a cable base.
Figure 36. Decorated mantel of the second floor living room in the Hedges House.

Figure 37. Dining room of the Nicholas Hedges House.

Figure 38. Detail of decorative London putty on mantel in second floor living room.

Figure 39. Floor plan of the Nicholas Hedges House showing original area and later additions at the rear.
FEDERAL HOUSE
1063 Thomas Jefferson Street

Similar in many ways to the other early houses on Thomas Jefferson Street, particularly the Nicholas Hedges House, this building has some exceptionally fine architectural details in the Federal style. The splayed flat stone lintels with keystones provide elegant accents which are complemented by the keystone arch of the doorway and the keystone in the pediment of the dormer. The brick facade is laid up in Flemish bond, the most popular pattern of tidewater Maryland and Virginia in the 18th and very early 19th centuries. The herringbone pattern of the brick sidewalk provides an appropriate foreground for the house, giving urban quality to the streetscape. This house conveys the essence of the Federal style and is matched in sophistication of design only by the Masonic Lodge farther down the street.

McCLEERY HOUSE
1068 30th Street

The McCleery House, one of the oldest houses in Georgetown, is a two-and-a-half-story house which appears to be slipping from view below 30th Street. This strange appearance verifies the opinion that the house was built before Washington (30th) Street was raised for the crossing over the C. & O. Canal in 1831. The house had been built on lot 23 of Beall’s Addition, part of the land.
owned by Thomas Beall which was subdivided into town lots about 1783. The house may have been built just prior to 1801 when Henry McCleery acquired the lot from Thomas Beall. In 1816 the house came into the possession of John Bowie who with his family, prominent in Georgetown, owned it until 1847. There is a possibility that Bowie may have rebuilt the house when he acquired it or altered it when the street was raised.

The house is constructed with brick bearing walls. Alterations of the first floor fenestration, in order to obtain more light below the street level, are obvious, and the door created on the present main floor was undoubtedly made from a window. The interior detailing is exceptionally sophisticated and more refined than that in other houses of this period. It has been suggested by some that the work may have been done by James Hoban, architect of the White House, because of the Adamesque quality of the decorative detailing. The house, however, was built for a man of moderate means and lacks the scale of the mansions being built elsewhere at this time in Maryland and Virginia.

Figure 42. McCleery House, with entrance raised to second floor level.

Figure 43. Detail of a pilaster in the McCleery House.

Figure 44. Entrance hall of the McCleery House.
Figure 45. Cast-iron tie rod star.

Figure 46. Photograph by George N. Barnard, photographer for Matthew Brady, of Georgetown warehouses, the Georgetown University, and the Aqueduct Bridge, with Union soldiers in the foreground, about 1861.
canal town
... 1828–1889

The construction of the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal opened a new era in the history of the Georgetown waterfront. Although the canal failed to bring the economic prosperity to Georgetown that the city's merchants had hoped for, it did prevent waterfront activities from collapsing completely when the tobacco trade died. By 1850, when the population of Georgetown had risen to 8,366 persons, large tobacco warehouses and wholesale grocery stores had been replaced by a growing number of mills, and the Potomac Aqueduct Bridge had been constructed to link the C. & O. Canal with the Alexandria Canal. (See fig. 104, inside back cover.) The last half of the canal era was dominated by the coal trade. During this time most of the buildings now standing in the waterfront area were erected. It is unfortunate that this interesting period of transition in Georgetown history has been ignored by many local historians.

The appearance of the Georgetown waterfront about 1860 can be visualized with the help of two contemporary sources. One of them is William Gordon's Recollections of a Boyhood in Georgetown. He gives a clear account of the riverside activities prior to the Civil War.

At the wharves, which extended along the whole front of the town, were generally numbers of vessels loading and unloading. Water [K] Street, which was occupied by the wholesale merchants, offered many attractions. It was a busy place, the street crowded with carts and drays, and at certain seasons of the year with lines of large covered wagons, drawn by four or six horse teams with bows of bells on shoulders, and loaded with produce from Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia; the warehouses filled with flour, tobacco, whiskey, salt, grain, and other merchandise. One place was a source of never-ending delight, the old warehouses on the western part of the street near the aqueduct bridge, which in the early days of the town had been used as depots by the Indian traders. From time to time the iron-bound doors were opened and the boys allowed to rummage around. By digging in the moist floors they were able to find Indian beads and bells.

Gordon goes on to write:

Almost in front of these warehouses on the river bank was a large saw-mill of heavy timbers, not enclosed, where the logs which had been floated down the river were hauled up and sawed into lumber. Next to this mill was an iron furnace or smelter where to the delight of the boys the workmen, generally naked to the waist, moved about in the glare of the molten metal. Then there were the numerous flour mills and a cotton factory which we were allowed on rare occasions to visit, the intricate machinery of which inspired admiration and astonishment. Another place we liked to get permission to visit was Brown's bakery, on the north side of the street, where the shipbiscuit, or hardtack, used in the United States Navy, was baked.

A short distance lower was the Corporation Fish Wharf, where thousands of shad and hundreds of thousands of herring were bought by the small river vessels and sold. Here the fish were cleaned for salting and packing by Negro fish-women, rough and profane of speech, but generally kind to the boys of their acquaintance. In front of the wharf, which was a vile-smelling place, the boys would fish, supplied with bait by the fish-women, and as great numbers of small fish were attracted by the offal swept into the river, as many as desired could easily be caught.

The other source of much information about the physical appearance of the waterfront at this time is the Boschke map of 1861 (fig. 47). This is the first map of Georgetown which accurately indicates all the buildings. Albert Boschke was a German employed by the U.S. Coast Survey Office in the 1850's. He undertook a survey of Washington and Georgetown, taking tape measurements of the houses, at his own expense. The map of Washington was published in 1857 and the Georgetown map appeared in 1861. At the outbreak of the Civil War, the United States had no topographical map of Washington and so seized the one made by Boschke, who in the meantime had been forced to leave his job with the U.S. Coast Survey Office because he spent too much time on his maps of Washington and Georgetown.

At the close of the canal period, another map was made which provides even more information about the Georgetown buildings and lots. This was the Hopkins Atlas map of 1887, the first map of Washington and Georgetown to
Figure 47. Map drawn by Albert Boschke and engraved by David McClelland in 1861.
show the material of which each building was constructed (fig. 52).

The canal town era opened on July 4, 1828, with the ground breaking for the construction of the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal. The section of the canal passing through Georgetown was completed in 1831, but the last section of the canal to Cumberland, Md., was not opened until October 10, 1850. This canal project grew out of the interest stimulated by the earlier work of the Potowmack Canal Co. and was built just north of the line indicated on Benjamin Latrobe's map of 1802-03 (fig. 12). From its inception, however, it was faced with several problems which would eventually make the canal an ineffective transport route. Among the short-term problems at the Georgetown end of the canal were the low bridges which hampered trade. In 1858 James G. Berrett, Mayor of Washington, received a letter dated October 19 from W. S. Ringgold stating, as reproduced in Rogers W. Young's account, that:

One of the chief obstacles to the coal trade to Washington arises from the low bridges (chiefly of masonry) over the canal at Georgetown—Loaded boats may pass under them, but the boats now used in the coal trade when empty are too high to return, and are carried to Alexander [sic] to return through that Canal.

This situation was not taken care of until 1866-67.

Among the problems which eventually proved fatal were the competition of the railroad, the failure of the canal to extend all the way to the Ohio River or its tributaries, and the growing obsolescence of man and beast as sources of power. The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad was begun the same day as the C. & O. Canal and by the end of the 19th century had taken over all the shipping to and from the hinterland.

As Young writes in his report:
The peak of canal boating in 1850 marked the end of the pre-machine age in transportation in this country. With the perfection of the steamboat and the railway, the industrial revolution in transportation was completed. The speed of machine transportation soon rendered the simple manual labor of man and beast on the canals obsolete, mainly due to their inability to maintain an effective competition.

In 1851, the first year that the canal was in operation from Cumberland to Georgetown, the upstream or ascending cargoes included fish, furniture, groceries, dry goods, salt, pig and scrap iron, brick, iron ore, and plaster. Coming downstream was flour, wheat, corn, whisky, furniture, nails, potatoes, lumber, rough stone, lime and cement, wood, and limestone. In 1860, the last year before the Civil War when the canal played a significant role in the movement of commerce, the cargoes moving upstream included fish, groceries, salt, lumber and plaster. Coming down the canal were flour, wheat, corn, lumber, iron and coal. The outbreak of the Civil War brought about a major decline in trade on the C. & O. Canal which, in spite of a short increase after the war, never again reached its antebellum glory. As trade declined the canal needed almost constant maintenance. Finally in 1889 a disastrous flood caused such serious damage that traffic had to be greatly curtailed.

One building that has had a variety of uses in response to economic changes on the waterfront is the Capital Traction Co. warehouse which abuts the north side of the canal just west of Wisconsin Avenue. (See fig. 4, No. 11.) Situated on the lot originally occupied by George Gordon's inspection warehouse, the building was begun in 1823 and used as a tobacco warehouse. The oldest portion of the building, which now stretches through additions to M Street, is the section along the canal (figs. 54 and 56). The rough random stonework of the south wall adjacent to the canal is unique in the Georgetown waterfront. Windows which were at one time along the south end have been blocked up. A line of projecting stone brackets along the wall indicates where a porch or balcony ran at one time. With the decline of the tobacco business, the building was taken over in 1854 by a horse-drawn omnibus line for use as stables. When that business ended, the building, by then enlarged, became a storage warehouse and repair shop for public transportation motor vehicles until about 1963.

Many of the buildings in the waterfront area are connected with milling which prospered by proximity to the waterpower furnished by the canal. The Washington Flour Co., which is still located in the waterfront area, began during this period. By midcentury, mills in Georgetown included at least five different flour mills, a grist mill, and a...
In addition, a soap factory, iron foundry, and lime kilns were active. The latter were operated from 1864 to 1908 near the juncture of the C. & O. Canal and Rock Creek. Known as the Godey Lime Kilns they are owned today by the National Park Service and are surrounded by the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkways at K Street. William H. Godey moved his business to the banks of Rock Creek in 1864 in order to be near the canal down which came limestone from the quarry near Harpers Ferry. He had four ovens in which he used the "intermittent" method of heating with wood. The limestone was calcined and made into plaster, part of which was then shipped back upstream.

From 1850, when the canal was completed all the way to Cumberland, until 1889 was the period when coal shipments dominated the canal trade. As a result of this trade, elevated railways began to be constructed along the Georgetown waterfront. These were used to transfer the coal from the barges in the canal to the vessels moored along the riverside. The first elevated railroad was constructed in 1858 when the Aetna and the Midland, two Allegheny coal companies, were authorized by the Georgetown Corporation on May 27:

... to construct ... a railroad crossing over Water Street west of Duck Lane [between 33rd and 34th Streets] by a bridge of proper elevation for the purpose of transporting coal boats to coasting vessels.

Other coal shipping structures were erected and within a short time the entire western end of the waterfront was
Figure 50. Wood engraving of the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal and Aqueduct Bridge made about 1888.
Figure 52: Hopkins Atlas map of Georgetown, 1887.
Figure 51. View of the Aqueduct Bridge, ferry landing, and Civil War soldiers on the Virginia shore of the Potomac about 1861, by the studio of Matthew Brady.
covered with elevated railways. New wharves were built and docks provided for the river vessels. One of the most successful of the coal merchants was Alexander Ray, who constructed the Ray Coal Docks and owned over 129 feet of the waterfront. The warehouse on the south side of K Street now occupied by Corson and Gruman was built at this time by Ray for his business. By the 1870's coal was the chief product being shipped along the canal. In 1871, the peak year, 850,000 tons of coal came down the C. & O. Canal.

Most of the buildings now standing in the waterfront area were built during the canal period. Typical of the warehouses of the mid-19th century is the brick building (fig. 49) now occupied by the Warring Barrel Co. on the south side of K Street. (See fig. 4, No. 10.) The brick is laid up in the common bond popular at that time. It has a wooden framing composed of two rows of large square wooden columns and beams supporting a heavy wooden roof system. The projecting brick ribs of the three-bayed facade serve as structural reinforcements.

The only remaining church in the area, Grace Protestant Episcopal Church, was built in 1850 as a mission church for the men working on the C. & O. Canal. Many residences were also constructed at this time in the waterfront area. There were a few single-family houses, but the most common type in the last half of the 19th century was the rowhouse. This residential architecture shows the Victorian decorative detailing popular throughout the second half of the 19th century. Characteristics included were brick cornices, segmental arches over the windows, and in some cases scroll-like modillions supporting cornices decorated with dentils and rosettes. Many houses had shops on the ground floor to take advantage of their commercial location. Usually the door to the shop was simple in design while the door to the residence above was more ornamental.

The end of this period marks the close of the Georgetown waterfront as a competitive transshipment point. Since 1890 its business activities have been influenced more by its proximity to the center of Washington than by its riverside and canal location.

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**CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO CANAL**

Built to link Georgetown and Cumberland, Md., the C. & O. Canal was begun in 1828 and completed in 1850. One hundred and eighty-four and a half miles long, it crosses Georgetown between M Street and the Potomac and runs from the mouth of Rock Creek eight-tenths of a mile west to the Aqueduct Bridge, which connected it for over 40 years with the Alexandria Canal.

Since the Erie Canal, which had been started by the States of New York and Pennsylvania in 1817 with the identical aim of opening up interior trade was a known success, there was much interest in Georgetown in a canal. Two experienced engineers engaged by Congress reported in 1827 that a canal from Washington to Cumberland, Md., could be constructed for about $4,500,000. Encouraged by this, subscription was begun in October, and in June of the following year the new Chesapeake & Ohio Canal Co. was organized. The chief engineers, Charles B. Fisk and Benjamin Wright, were selected.

On July 4, 1828, construction was begun with the first spadeful of earth turned by President John Quincy Adams at Little Falls. During the first year of work everything seemed to go well. The total work force reached over 3,100 men, many of whom had come from England as indentured workers. Land for the canal in Georgetown was acquired. The first annual report was printed, and optimism ran high. By November 1830, the first section of the canal was completed from Little Falls to Seneca, Md. The following year the section from Little Falls through Georgetown to Rock Creek was finished.

Before the canal was actually completed, the first map of this Georgetown section of the canal was published in 1830, by William Bussard. (See fig. 48.) It indicates the locks and basins described by two engineers in 1831 for Congress in the Report of Col. John J. Abert and Col. James Kearney, of the United States Topographical Engineers, upon an Examination of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal from Washington City to the “Point of Rocks.” Water had not yet been let into this section of the canal and bridges were still being built, but the canal portion itself was virtually complete. Engineers Abert and Kearney examined the basin where Rock Creek enters the Potomac at the point where a weir and wide lock had been con-
structed (fig. 58, A). They reported that lock No. 1 was a stone lock "faced with the Aquia Creek freestone, . . . [having] the appearance of a good piece of masonry." It measured 100 feet long, 15 feet wide, with a lift of 8 feet. This was the standard lock size for the entire canal (fig. 58, B). The pool following lock No. 1, measuring 100 by 40 feet, was "inclosed by a stone wall, generally well constructed, but at places there appears to have been too many small stones admitted," (fig. 58, C). The pool following lock No. 2 was a little different (fig. 58, D). The engineers' report stated that "its sides are secured by dry stone walls. There is a drain from the streets of the town into this pool." Abert and Kearney felt that the drain should have gone alongside the pool and discharged into the basin, and not directly into the canal pool. At the pool above lock No. 3, they observed that its sides were "protected by a wall of dry masonry. There are stone steps on each side of these pools, conducting to the bottom . . ." (fig. 58, E). These steps are no longer to be found. "The whole of the canal, which passes through the town, is to be revetted by a stone wall, the greater part of which is already built, and is a specimen of good work."

Stone bridges arched the canal where it cut across streets. These were completed at Green (29th) Street, Jefferson Street, Congress (31st) Street, Washington (30th) Street, where the bridge had a 40-foot span, and at High Street (Wisconsin Avenue), where the bridge had a 54-foot span. "All these bridges are very neat and substantial structures, faced with the freestone of Aquia Creek, well laid, with hammered faces."

Of all the stone bridges eventually completed the only remaining one is the High Street (Wisconsin Avenue) Bridge. Abert and Kearney described it as follows: "The span of this is to be 54 feet. The abutments are partly completed, and the centering for the arch is erected, and as much of the work as is done, is

Figure 53. The Wisconsin Avenue Bridge at the end of the 19th century.
certainly of very substantial character,” (fig. 58, F).

In spite of these optimistic reports, by 1834 the company was in financial difficulties: 62 miles of the canal had been completed, as far as Harpers Ferry, but the company was almost out of money. The next 17 years of construction to complete the canal were characterized by great financial difficulties. Fortunately, the State of Maryland continued to invest in the work until 1839, investing more than $6 million in the project. Delay was also caused by a controversy with the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad about the right of way between Point of Rocks and Harpers Ferry. Work, however, proceeded steadily. The Aqueduct Bridge, crossing the Potomac and ultimately linking the Alexandria Canal with the Chesapeake & Ohio in Georgetown was finally begun in 1833 (fig. 58, G).

Besides trade, another advantage of the canal, foreseen by the Georgetown

Figure 54. The canal facade of the Capital Traction Co. warehouse with its rusticated stonework.

Figures 55, 56, 57. Views of the lock and wall construction of the C. & O. Canal visible when the water is drained from the canal.
businessmen, was the waterpower it created. The canal, over 35 feet above the level of the Potomac at lock No. 4, could provide a new source of power for milling and thus stimulate more business in Georgetown. After a good deal of discussion, Maryland and Congress finally made this source of new power available to the merchants and millers in 1837. Among the many millers leasing water was George Bomford, whose mill is now occupied by Wilkins-Rogers Milling Co. (fig. 58, H).

By 1837, the canal was completed 107 miles above Georgetown; by 1839, to within 50 miles of Cumberland, Md. William Elliot, in his guide to Washington of 1837, tells us that,

the embankments are acquiring, by time, greater solidity, and the president [of the Canal Company] thinks they warrant the belief, that no further interruptions will take place, in consequence of breaches in the banks. The inner slope of the tow-path has been covered with broken stone to a considerable extent, and it is proposed to continue this mode throughout the entire route.

"In addition", he notes that "the dredging machine in Georgetown basin, has had great effect removing the deposits of sand and gravel."

The last stretch of the canal to Cumberland was finally opened on October 10, 1850. The cost of the difficult enterprise had been far more than expected. In Randolph Keim's guidebook to Washington of 1880, the author asserts that it was completed "at a cost of $13,000,000 of which Maryland subscribed $5,000,000, the United States $1,000,000, Washington, $1,000,000, and Georgetown, Alexandria and Virginia, each $250,000." The enumerated constructions are impressive:

The execution of the enterprise was a work of great difficulty. There are 75 locks of 100 ft. in length, 15 ft. in width, and averaging 8 ft. lift; 11 aqueducts crossing the Monocacy river, consisting of 7 arches of 54 ft. span; also 190 culverts of various dimensions, some sufficiently spacious to admit of the passage of wagons. The canal is fed by . . . [7] dams across the Potomac, varying from 500 to 800 ft. in length and from 4 to 20 ft. elevation . . . The tunnel through the "Pawpaw Ridge" is 3,118 ft. in length and 24 ft. in diameter.

One of the most ingenious of the facilities built to service the canal trade was the "Outlet Incline." This device, rather like a dry dock on wheels, received laden canal boats on a wooden trough, let out the water, and then eased the trough (and boat) down the bank, a 40-foot drop, at a 30° slope, from the canal into the Potomac. The machine, largest of its kind in the world, was completed on July 10, 1876, by William R. Hutton, engineer. Situated 1 mile above Georgetown, it served until 1889 when a disastrous flood destroyed it, as well as much of the wall which separated the canal channel from the Potomac River.

Because of a reduction in cargo owing to the competition of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, increased road construction, and the opening and development of other eastern ports, traffic on the canal, especially after the flood of 1889, declined rapidly. The expenses of general upkeep and constant repairs necessitated by the canal dikes being washed out were increasingly difficult to meet. When a flood in 1924 again devastated the canal, it ceased commercial operations. Its ultimate fate was in doubt until October 1938, when the Department of the Interior bought the 184 mile length from Georgetown to Cumberland for $2 million. A press release by the Department announced that "the 22 miles between Georgetown and Seneca are to be restored by the National Park Service . . . to its former physical state as a historic site." The Department also agreed to honor the leases of the mills with the canal company to maintain water in the Georgetown section of the canal. Extensive restoration work on this lower section was done in 1938 and 1939, with barge trips beginning in 1938. Above Georgetown, work in repairing flood damage, restoring the towpath and embankments, and reconstruction work on lock No. 15 was done in 1940 by the Civilian Conservation Corps. Since then the canal has been maintained and restored by the National Park Service as a recreational and scenic asset.
Figure 58. 1857 chart of the Georgetown harbor by R. W. Burgess of the Topographic Engineers Corps, with the elevated railroads, topography, and canal shown. Letters identify parts of C. & O. Canal discussed in the text.
The anticipated success of the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal in bringing great amounts of inland products to the port of Georgetown spurred quick action across the Potomac in Alexandria, a rival port. Merchants there conceived the idea of linking their city with the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal by an extension of the canal which would make Alexandria just as desirable a terminus for canal traffic as Georgetown. In 1830, Congress granted a charter to the Alexandria Canal Co., and negotiations were started with the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal Co.

It was soon determined that the two canals would have to be joined, across the Potomac, by an aqueduct bridge. Such a construction would allow the canal boats to cross the river without unloading their cargoes into sailing ships, a break of bulk which would have made the extension of the shipments to Alexandria prohibitively expensive in comparison with delivery at Georgetown. The aqueduct was begun from the Virginia side of the Potomac in 1833, the same year that the 7-mile branch canal to Alexandria was begun, and both were completed 10 years later in 1843.

The Aqueduct Bridge, termed in the 19th century "a stupendous work," was considered one of the most remarkable engineering achievements of the time. It was almost a quarter of a mile long, and its piers were founded on solid rock, below 35 feet of water and mud in certain places. Reports of it were published both in America and abroad. Today

Figure 59. Colored print "drawn from nature" by F. Dielman and lithographed by E. Sachse & Co., Baltimore, showing the canal and Aqueduct Bridge about 1865.
there are three vestiges remaining: a stone course from the northern tip of the Virginia causeway abutment, below and to the west of Key Bridge; one of the original stone piers, protruding about 6 feet from the water level in front of this causeway remnant; and on the Georgetown side, the massive aqueduct abutment of two stone arches which was built by the C. & O. Canal Co. The heavy and impressive stonework, as well as the total effect of the massive structure, is reminiscent of the bridges and aqueducts of Imperial Rome.

Probably few structures of this kind can be documented as completely as this one. Daily progress can be followed in the reports and day accounts of its architect, Maj. William Turnbull of the U.S. Topographical Engineers (predecessor of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers). The U.S. Government took special interest in the project because of its desire to have the canals improve domestic trade and communication, and because Alexandria was at that time still within the District of Columbia.

The site for the Georgetown abutment had already been fixed by engineers of the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal, Wright and Roberts, in 1829. After being appointed to carry out the project, Major Turnbull conducted his own examination of the river bottom and the site, starting in late August 1832. His survey showed a greater depth of the river and mud than suspected, and he elected to take a different angle, one that was at right angles to the flow of the water, rather than the oblique angle of Wright and Roberts. He suggested to the Mayor of Georgetown that the lower part of 35th Street be used for the abutment site, pointing out that it could someday be an approach to a roadway upon the piers of the aqueduct. The mayor thought this a sound idea, but no action was taken by the appointed committee, and Turnbull was compelled to place the abutment upon the site designated by Wright and Roberts adjacent to the west edge of the extension of 36th Street.

The description of the plan for the aqueduct in Turnbull's Report, which appeared in 1838 in House Document 459, states:

Having no instructions on this point, we were left entirely to the guidance of our own judgment. . . . It was to consist of twelve arches of stone, supported by eleven piers and two abutments; the arches to be one hundred feet span and twenty-five feet rise. . . . This plan was approved of by the president and directors, with the exception of the superstructure, the cost of which, being beyond the limited means of the company, was left for after consideration. The plan was further altered by rejecting the abutment piers; but eventually these were restored, on the recommendation of the engineers. A causeway of earth, three hundred and fifty feet in

Figure 60. Aqueduct abutment in Georgetown in 1900. See changes in 1967 photograph, figure 67.
length, was substituted for three of the arches at the southern extremity of the work [Alexandria side].

The adoption of the causeway made a change in the arrangement of the piers necessary; and it was then decided that the aqueduct should consist of eight piers, one hundred and five feet apart at high-water mark; two of them to be abutment piers, each twenty-one feet thick; and six of them piers of support, to be each twelve feet thick at high-water mark. The southern abutment to be twenty-one feet thick, with circular wing walls, thirteen feet average thickness at the base; sixty-six feet in length on each side, to connect with the slope walls of the causeway. The northern abutment, which is to be built by the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company, is not yet decided upon. Each of the piers to have an ice breaker on the upstream end.

Advertisements for bids to build the aqueduct were published on January 29, 1833. Several bids were received, varying from $99,029.13 to $247,909.63. The procedure seems to have been thereafter to hire out specific parts of the work to different firms. The first firm engaged contracted to build the cofferdams, watertight dams necessary for underwater construction in rivers. A new and improved plan was to be used, since no cofferdams to sustain the pressure of 35 feet of mud and water had heretofore been built. These cofferdams were a complete failure. The water within rose and fell with the tides, no matter how vigorously the pumps worked.

Work was begun again, with new machines, in January 1834. It took from March 4 to March 26 to pull out all the old cofferdams. A new and heavier type of cofferdam was made, apparently after Major Turnbull's own design, in which an inner wall was constructed of 40-foot timbers, and an outer wall of 36-foot piles. This was sunk into the mud, the inner piles driven down to bed rock (through 18 feet of water and 17 feet 4 inches of mud at pier No. 2, from whence they began), and the outer piles driven well into the mud. The space between the piles was filled with clay puddling.

On September 2, 1834, pumping of the water inside the dam was begun. So many accidents, breaks in the machinery, ruptures in the cofferdam, and similar mishaps occurred that for weeks only about one hour of pumping could be achieved on any given day. Excavating machinery was finally put in place in October, but again breaks and flooding held up work. By October 22, 6 feet of the mud had been removed, but pumps broke, mud oozed in, leaks kept appearing and flooding the excavation, dredging machinery was buried by sand, ropes stretched or broke, and laborers would not work in cold weather. Such disruptions made the work a nightmare. Major Turnbull was determined, however, to press on. Finally, on December 3, 1834, rock bottom was reached in the cofferdam for pier No. 2. This was a remarkable achievement because there were few American precedents for founding large stone piers on solid rock in rivers, and none at this depth.

Unfortunately, Congress did not continue its financial support in 1835, but private citizens raised money, and work
began again on April 22. The masonry for pier No. 2 was finally completed on August 1, 1835, at a total cost of $6,986.18. On June 23 work had begun on pier No. 1, the cofferdam of which had been put in place shortly after that of No. 2. On July 1 of the same year, the cofferdam for the south causeway abutment was begun. A floating sawmill was constructed which greatly speeded the work, but even with this, progress was slow. Work continued in this manner on the piers until 1840, when the last one was completed. The annual “Report from the Topographical Bureau,” of November 1837 had stated:

A more difficult work has been rarely heretofore undertaken. It may with propriety be considered, for boldness of design and skillfulness of execution, as unprecedented among works of that kind.

The following year, the annual report said that the bridge “is probably one of the most extraordinary works of modern times, equally adapted to reflect credit upon the country as upon its engineer’s skill.”

The northern abutment, which still stands today on the Georgetown waterfront, was a less difficult task. Plans for it were begun as early as 1828 when the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal directors had decided to extend the canal through Georgetown to Rock Creek. The Alexandria Canal Co. had great difficulty, however, in getting the C. & O. Canal Co. to construct the northern abutment. Finally, in 1837 the C. & O. Canal Co. reached an agreement and the abutment was begun in 1840 following Major Turnbull’s scheme.

In a report made to the Topographical Office, Col. J. J. Abert wrote that the aqueduct was of plain and sturdy construction, and thus was not frivolous or expensive. He thought that the C. & O. Canal Co. could have no real objection in continuing it in the same style. The arched plan proposed was more expensive than the causeway on the Alexandria side, he noted, but in Georgetown it had to cross a street and so could not be a solid abutment. Recognizing the esthetic factors, Colonel Abert stated that:

There is no doubt the expense of this connecting structure could be much reduced by the simple erection of stone piers to sustain a wooden trunk; but the undersigned, for one, would regret a plan which would so disfigure the town, and, therefore, recommends that the work necessary to carry the connecting basin across the street should be an arch of stone.

Actual work on the site for the abutment was begun in 1839. Between March 31 and April 3, 1840, an old wharf was removed, and on April 6, the frame of the abutment cofferdam was put in place. By May 23, it had been completed, pumped out, and mud excavation began. Seven days later, the excavation was complete. Major Turnbull reported that “... the rock was swept off. The mean depth of the rock below high water mark was 19.8 feet; the lowest point was 25 feet below high water.” Masonry was begun on June 3, and by the 24th it was 2 feet above the high water mark. On July 27, they “commenced setting the ring stones of one of the arches in the northern abutment,” and on the 30th the keystone of the second arch was installed. On the 10th of September, Turnbull could report that.

Figure 63. Plan and section of the Aqueduct Bridge, “shewing the condition of the work at the close of the year 1840.”

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one of the arches in the northern abutment was closed today." Finally, after a break in the canal wall and a fire had held up work, the second arch in the northern abutment was completed by the end of November.

Major Turnbull's report of December 31, 1840, was full of optimism. The last pier was completed, and the northern abutment lacked only the parapet walls.

When I reflect upon the numerous difficulties which we have overcome in the progress of the work, and recall the disheartening predictions of that numerous portion of the community who looked upon the attempt to establish foundations at so great a depth, and in a situation so very exposed and dangerous, and who did not fail to treat it as an absurdity, I cannot but congratulate myself upon having so happily succeeded; and whilst so doing, I recollect, with a very grateful sense of what I owe them for it, the very generous confidence which the president and directors of the company always reposed in me.

The final stage of work was devoted to the superstructure. This was to be of wood, constructed in the manner used essentially for covered bridges in which wooden trusses supported the load between the piers. White oak and North Carolina heart pine were used. The trough measured 17 feet wide, and 7 feet deep.

The completed bridge was opened for use on July 4, 1843, 10 years after work was begun on the Virginia side. The local enthusiasm over this engineering feat can be glimpsed in contemporary guidebooks. William Morrison's guide, pub-
lished in 1842 before the bridge was quite complete, includes an engraving of the completed bridge which makes it look as though its framework sides were covered with sheathing. Since this was the practice with trusswork covered bridges, the artist must have thought that a sheathing would ultimately be added. Actually, Major Turnbull had taken the precaution of having all the wood soaked in a recently perfected preservative, so that the protective covering needed over covered bridges could be dispensed with here. Bohn’s Hand-Book of Washington, written in 1861, described the bridge as “stupendous” and noted that it has “attracted the attention of European as well as American architects and men of science.”

The history of the Aqueduct Bridge does not stop here. Over the years the superstructure was changed several times. The traffic across the Potomac had grown so much that by 1856 the narrow carriage lane across the Aqueduct Bridge was inadequate.

A number of suggestions were made for altering the Aqueduct Bridge, but these were cut short by the Civil War. In 1861, the aqueduct was simply drained. The bed was used as an ordinary bridge with a wooden approach crossing the Georgetown Canal, connecting 36th Street with the abutment. After the war, in 1866, the bridge was returned to the Alexandria Canal Co., which leased it to the Alexandria Railroad & Bridge Co.

In 1868 Congress authorized the two companies to erect a highway bridge over the trough and charge tolls. The original Queen-post truss bridge was re-

Figure 66. Aqueduct Bridge in 1905 with the iron truss, built in 1888, on the original stone piers.
moved, and a new wooden superstructure of Howe trusses, strengthened at the sides with laminated wooden arches, was added. The new bridge had two levels, the lower chord of the truss supporting the canal trough and towpath and the upper supporting the toll road. Because of local objection to the high tolls, Congress authorized the purchase of the bridge in 1881. The Alexandria Canal Co. refused to sell it, so the bridge was condemned and closed to all but foot traffic. Finally, in December 1886, the Alexandria Canal Co. accepted the purchase price of $125,000.

The superstructure was again changed when a light iron truss bridge was put on the existing stone piers in 1888. Numerous repairs were subsequently made to the piers. In 1903–05, pier No. 5 was completely replaced. In 1908 new girders were added. Need for a larger and more substantial bridge led to congressional authorization in 1916 for a replacement. In 1920 the present Key Bridge was begun. It was first opened to the public on January 17, 1924.

The two bridges existed side by side for many years until the iron superstructure and the upper parts of the piers were removed in 1933. In order to eradicate an “eyesore,” as it was described by the press, and to enable local rowing meets to have nine full lanes, all but one of the piers were blasted out by the Army Engineers in 1962 to a depth of 12 feet below the low water line. The rubble was taken to Anacostia Park, where it was used as foundation for sea walls. Pier No. 1 was retained and juts about 6 feet out of the water, 30 feet from the Virginia shore.
The stone abutment on the Georgetown side stands essentially as it was built, except for the northern arch, which was raised between 1900 and 1909 to enable railroad cars to pass under it. Two types of iron fencing from the aqueduct have been preserved on the top of the abutment. One is cast in a gothic lancet pattern and fastened into the masonry at the edges of the stonework and probably dates from 1868. The other type, far more utilitarian, is made of riveted strips of iron. Originally it was part of the guardrail for the 1888 iron bridge, which crossed at a higher level than the top of the abutment.

BOMFORD MILL
3261 K Street

The milling industry, which had started early in Georgetown history, increased rapidly with the new power provided by the C. & O. Canal. In the first half of the 19th century, it was the major industry of the waterfront. By 1831, the C. & O. Canal was sufficiently completed to provide a 30-to-35-foot fall for water-power for mills. Illustrative of the development of milling in the 19th century on the Georgetown waterfront is the Bomford Mill, which exists today as the Wilkins-Rogers Milling Co.

George Bomford bought lot 79, on the original Plat of George-Town (fig. 8), around 1820, from the estate of

Figure 69. Sketch of the Bomford Mill from Boyd’s Washington and Georgetown Directory, 1886, facing page 452.
Thomas Beall, descendant of Ninian Beall. He started his mill there about 1832 in a building along the west side of Potomac Street, just south of the canal. Potomac Street had been deeded by Thomas Beall to the city of Georgetown in 1798 and was originally called Cherry Street.

Col. George Bomford, as noted in the Dictionary of American Biography, lived from 1782 until 1848. An army officer when the War of 1812 began, he was assigned to ordnance duty. He made this his specialty and became the greatest ordnance expert of his time in the United States. About 1820 he moved to Washington and purchased Kalorama, the famous estate of Joel Barlow now commemorated only by the name of Kalorama Road in northwest Washington.

The first Bomford Mill, built in 1832, was for the production of flour. According to Jackson in his book, Chronicles of Georgetown, this mill lasted only 12 years.

In the month of September, 1844, the large merchant mill erected by Colonel George Bomford, at the foot of the market house, was destroyed by fire.

Bomford was alert to changing markets and competition, and when he rebuilt his mill he decided to shift to a new form of milling not before undertaken in Georgetown. Jackson reports,

In the spring of 1845, Colonel Bomford erected a cotton factory on the ruins of the old mill, which went into operation in 1847.

The cotton mill was described by Mrs. Corra Bacon-Foster in “The Story of Kalorama” published by the Columbia Historical Society.

... [Bomford] constructed an immense water wheel and erected a four story building on the site in which he placed three thousand spindles and one hundred looms. The mill provided employment for more than one hundred men and women.

The large employment figure had been one of Bomford’s goals in establishing a cotton mill. He saw that this type of mill would benefit Georgetown more than a flour mill because it would provide a greater number of jobs. The mill, unfortunately, was not a success. Even though, as Mrs. Bacon-Foster wrote, “the city of Georgetown had assisted by remitting all taxes [Bomford] found himself seriously embarrassed.” The cotton mill was sold by Bomford’s estate in 1850 to Thomas Wilson of Baltimore, who operated it until the beginning of the Civil War, when the supply of cotton was cut off.

References to the cotton mill are contained in agreements of various kinds with Alexander Ray who purchased the southern half of lot 79, along Water (K) Street, in 1847, “for the purpose of erecting a grist mill thereon.” One of the first references is in the lease to Ray of 100 inches of water rights by Bomford, who had a lease for 400 inches from the C. & O. Canal Co. The deed recites that Bomford:

by lease with the C & O Canal is entitled to a water right of 400 in. to be
supplied by said Company from their Canal for use of said party's mill house being situated on Lot #79 in Original Georgetown, immediately south of the Market House of the grant of which water right is for 20 years renewable forever, and that Bomford has recently sold to Ray portion of Lot 79 being the lower or southern part and fronting 40 feet on Water Street and extending back with Potomac Street upon which Ray is to erect a mill and Ray has agreed with Bomford for the purchase of 100 inches absolutely of said water right and to additional inches contingently, therefore, Bomford conveys to Ray 100 inches of water right and granted and leased by said Company to Bomford to be furnished from the present Cotton Mill and Factory of Bomford through a circular orifice to be made in the side of said factory. The bottom of said orifice to be level with the top of the present 30 feet water wheel of said factory to be conducted therefrom in a trunk to be constructed at his own cost. . . .

Another reference is in a deed of 1859 between Ray and Wilson, for part of lot 80, to the west of lot 79, the east line of which is to be drawn south with the “Wall of the Picken House attached to and forming part [of] the cotton factory building.”

The mill was taken over by A. H. Herr sometime between 1865 and 1870. By the 1880’s the mill was known as the Pioneer Flour Mills. About 1883 the building must have been substantially enlarged, because the city directory of that year has an advertisement which says the mill was “rebuilt 1883.” Herr and his partner, James S. Welch, operated it as a flour mill with succeeding partners until 1913, when, under the name of George W. Gissel & Co., the business went bankrupt. Many maps and sketches of Georgetown in the 1880’s show the tall mill building south of the Market House.

Today the Bomford Mill and the adjacent Ray’s Mill house the Washington Flour and Indian Head Corn Meal mills. The owner, Wilkins-Rogers Milling Co., still holds a lease from the National Park Service for waterpower from the C. & O. Canal. The large water wheel can be seen, as can the old millstones which are still used to grind corn. Two stone plaques south of Bomford Mill on the building at the corner of Potomac and K (still sometimes called Water) Streets read: “Erected for A. Ross Ray and Bro. by Henry Rohrer in 1847” and “Rebuilt by Wilkins-Rogers Milling Company in 1922.”

RAY’S WAREHOUSE
3260–3262 K Street

Alexander Ray, who had established the Ray Mill adjacent to the Bomford Mill, was one of the largest property owners in the Georgetown waterfront area. He was born near Georgetown in 1799, married Harriett Ross in 1822, and soon thereafter began his career in the coal and milling business on the Georgetown waterfront. His extensive holdings included lots 29 and 30 which lay between the riverside and the south side of Water Street, just west of Potomac.
When Georgetown was laid out, no lots had been designated along the shoreline. Gradually, as land was needed for wharfage and docks, the shoreline was filled out, and lots were created on the south side of Water Street. Lot 29 differed from the other parcels of land in having a tailrace which entered the Potomac at this point, creating a dock for mooring barges. (See fig. 52.) The lots were purchased by Ray's two sons, Andrew Ross and Albert Ross, from Joseph Nicholson in 1853, and were used in the family business.

The Ray business had started with the gristmill built on land acquired from Colonel Bomford in 1847 but was soon expanded into the shipping and coal trade. In 1851, Ray bought part of lot 80, adjacent to Bomford. In 1853, he acquired the two water lots, one having the tailrace, and he soon bought the southern part of original lots 32, 33, and 34, which abutted on the canal. Along the river, he acquired lots 35 through 46 "with wharfs." Much of this property was used for the coal business, since Ray was an agent for the Loacoming Coal & Transportation Co. of Washington. In 1855, Ray requested permission from the C. & O. Canal Co. to build a basin or dock on the south side of the canal between the Aqueduct and lock No. 4. On the Hopkins map of 1887, this dock can be seen on Ray's lots 32 and 33 just east of the present 34th Street (fig. 52). The waterside lots owned by Ray were below this dock. In order to facilitate the shipment of coal from the canal boats to the river boats, Ray constructed elevated railways over Water Street from the canal dock to the Potomac. These railways are shown in dotted lines on the 1857 chart (fig. 58) and on Boschke's map of 1861 (fig. 47).

Lot 29, which lay conveniently between the railways and Ray's Mill, was improved by a brick warehouse in 1855. This warehouse was built alongside the tailrace, or dock, and was referred to in assessment records as a "large brick warehouse." On the east side of the lot, early accounts refer to a "small brick tenement, 10 x 12 feet, 2 story," As the Ray enterprises grew, it must have become necessary to have a central office. It appears that he took this small brick structure and enlarged it or rebuilt it into the existing two-story office building at sometime before 1885.

The brick warehouse and office were both built in a simple, utilitarian style. The interior floors have been removed from the warehouse, but on the exterior the hoist beam for loading and unloading goods still projects over Water Street. The office building has a more domestic appearance and is in the vernacular style of the 1880's.

Alexander Ray died in 1878 leaving his property on the waterfront to his sons. Ray's will stated that:

I wish and direct that the business of the "Mill" and also that of the "docks" be conducted and carried out jointly by my sons, Andrew Ross and Albert Ross, that both properties be kept always in the best repair and the most effective working condition, that they keep the properties properly insured. . . .

These conditions were adhered to for only a short time, and in 1885 the property was sold, with lots 29 and 30 going to George W. Gissel who also acquired Ray's Mill on the north side of Water Street. The tailrace was deeded by him to the city of Georgetown to be used as a sewer outlet from the mill property. He used the buildings on lots 29 and 30 as office and warehouse until he went bankrupt in 1913. The property had many owners until it was purchased by the Corson & Gruman Co. in 1952. The tailrace, or dock, was not filled in until after 1936.

DUVALL FOUNDRY
1050 30th Street

The handsome brick warehouse which overlooks the C. & O. Canal at 30th Street was constructed about 1856 on lots 26, 27, and "Wapping," in Beall's Addition. These lots were among those added to the eastern edge of Georgetown in 1783 by Thomas Beall, grandson of Ninian Beall. Wapping refers to the street, shown on the plat of 1752, that had formerly run along the edge of the Potomac and which was subsequently platted with lots formed in Deakins, Lee, and Casanove's Addition between 1793 and 1796. (See fig. 13.) Wapping appears to have been a public right-of-way until 1853, when it was finally included in the deeds of conveyance for lot 27.

William T. Duvall bought lots 26, 27, and Wapping in 1854, and 2 years later he secured a loan with which he probably built his foundry on what was then called Washington (30th) Street. Over the next 10 years he secured additional loans, and it may be assumed that he
enlarged the building during that time. In the 1861 map by Boschke (fig. 47), for which data was gathered in 1857, the building appears in its present shape and size. Duvall seems to have continued in business until about 1870. The property changed hands many times after that. Around 1900, it was turned into a veterinary hospital. Today it is owned by the Washington Gas Light Co.

Figure 73. Canal facade of the Duvall Foundry in 1967.

Figure 74. Street facade of the Duvall Foundry.

Figure 75. 1914 view of the Duvall Foundry when it was used as a veterinary hospital.
The two-story building, eighty-eight and a half feet long, is of brick which has been painted a metallic silver. The sides are relieved by recessed bays separated vertically by pilasterlike strips which reduce the monotony of the long brick walls. The large arched door on the canal side was probably used at one time for loading and unloading products from the canal barges by way of a ramp. Since the building was constructed, alterations have been made, windows blocked up, doors sealed off, and changes made on the interior.

**BIRCH STABLE**

1083 Thomas Jefferson Street

Just south of M Street on Thomas Jefferson Street is a two-story brick building built between 1865 and 1871 to serve as a stable for the horses and hearses of the Birch undertakers. The adjacent building on the corner of Thomas Jefferson and M Streets was built at the same time as a home for the Birch family. This property was used continuously from 1861 until 1965 by Joseph F. Birch, and later Joseph F. Birch's Sons, undertakers.

The buildings stand on lot 60 of the original Plat of George-Town (fig. 8). The lot had been owned by Robert Peter, who deeded the western part to the city of Georgetown for Thomas Jefferson Street in 1797. The remaining land was incorporated into Peter's other lots to the east of the new street and replatted with them into smaller lots.

Joseph F. Birch acquired lots 1 and 3 from this replatted area in 1861. At that time there was a frame dwelling house on the M Street end of the lots. Birch demolished this house and built his new establishment.

Joseph Birch was listed in the city directory of 1860 as a cabinetmaker as well as an undertaker, a usual combination of trades at that period. The two loading doors on the second floor of the stable suggest that the building may have served as his cabinet shop as well as a stable. A hoist beam at the south end of the west elevation may have been used for raising hay and lumber to the second floor. The building is constructed of red brick laid up in the common bond popular in the 1860's with six rows of stretchers for every row of headers. The carriage doors have diagonal cross-shaped framing. The bracketed cornice provides an urban character not always found in stables.

*Figure 76. Birch Stable on Thomas Jefferson Street.*
VIGILANT FIREHOUSE  
1066 Wisconsin Avenue

The oldest existing firehouse in the District of Columbia was built for the Vigilant Fire Co. in 1844. The company, which had taken its name from its new engine, christened the *Vigilant*, was organized in 1817. At first the company occupied a small frame structure on the site. Auctioned off in 1843 and moved across the street by its new owner, this building was demolished in 1964. The second and present building was used by the Vigilants until 1883, when the private fire companies were incorporated into the municipal department and the building was no longer needed. Since that time, it has been used for a variety of commercial purposes.

The firehouse is a rectangular structure, 24 feet by 44 feet, with its gable end facing the street. There was one room on each of the two floors. A hatch in the ceiling of the second floor led to the cupola over the eastern gable. The front of the firehouse had two large doors for the fire engines. The tie-rod plate in the center of the eastern gable was fashioned in a V for Vigilant instead of the traditional S shape which appears on the rear gable.

A colorful account of early firefighting can be found in *The Fireman's Record* by Albert J. Cassidy. Among the many practical jokes played by rival fire companies, he describes an event involving the Vigilant Fire Co. as follows:

About the year 1840, some members of the Vigilant and Western Star Companies built a bonfire on the Brickyard Hill and sent a messenger to the Union [Fire] Company in the city to inform them that the business portion of the town was in danger of destruction. The Union in great haste soon arrived on the scene of the fire, and were so disgusted that the language used was neither select nor complementary. In return they received a volley of stones, their engines and lamps were broken and the crowd pursued them across the creek.

On the outside of the Vigilant Firehouse is a plaque memorializing a sadder moment in the history of the Vigilants. “Bush, the Old Fire Dog, died of Poison, July 5th, 1869, R.I.P.”

*Figure 77. Early photograph of the Vigilant Firehouse.*

*Figure 78. Measured drawing of the Vigilant Firehouse in the collection of the Historic American Buildings Survey in the Library of Congress.*
High on Brickyard Hill stands the gothic revival church of Grace Parish. The only church in the waterfront area, it was begun in the mid-19th century as a mission church for boatmen and workers from the adjacent Chesapeake & Ohio Canal.

The freestanding church is situated in a spacious yard at Wisconsin Avenue and South Street in lot 69 on the original Plat of George-Town. Lot 69 had been acquired at the time of the platting in 1752 by Robert Peter. When the original large lots were subdivided in 1812, the southwest corner became lot 39. It was on this section, now occupied by a 12-foot granite cross, that a mission church was started in 1855 in a small frame building by three vestrymen of St. John's Episcopal Church in Georgetown. For some time, the Reverend Henderson Suter was in charge of the mission and held Sunday school there with students from the Virginia seminary as lay readers. About 10 years after its founding, Henry D. Cooke, Governor of the District of Columbia, became interested in the little mission church. He purchased lots adjacent to the church, originally all part of Peter's lot 69, and gave $25,000 for construction of a larger church. Governor Cooke had already provided funds for refurbishing Old St. John's Episcopal Church at 3240 O Street in 1845.
The Washington Star carried the following account of the church in its issue for July 14, 1866.

A NEW CHURCH—The Grace Church Parish of the Episcopal denomination is about erecting a commodious church edifice to be used in future instead of the little wooden chapel with which the parish began as a mission a short time ago. The site of the edifice adjoins that of the chapel on the hill between the canal and Water, High and Congress Streets, and is an excellent location for such a church. The building, we understand, is to be about twice the size of the present chapel, and designed for an ample audience chamber, rooms for Bible classes, the Sabbath school, and a library for the Rector. It is to be constructed of blue gneiss from the Potomac quarries, of which large quantities suitable for building purposes can be obtained within a short distance of the town, and style of architecture true Gothic.

When a rectory was built in 1895, the Washington Star stated, “Grace Church is doing a good work among the surrounding poor. It is in the midst of one of the poorest section of Georgetown and in touch with the most deserving.” Three years later a parish hall was erected.

The church has considerable architectural interest because of its resemblance to Oak Hill Chapel on R Street. The latter was designed in 1850 by James Renwick, architect of the Smithsonian. Both buildings are made of ashlar granite and have steeply pitched roofs. Astride each church gable is a masonry bell-cote. The Grace Church facade is more modest than Oak Hill Chapel. Instead of the dominant rose window of the Oak Hill Chapel, Grace Church has a double-lancet window and two subordinate lancet windows above subsidiary entrances.

The interior of the church is simple. The altar is enhanced by a later carved wooden reredos with an octagonal canopy. At the west end is the choir loft with a curved central section in front of the organ. Pointed trefoil elements provide decorative relief in the panelling of the loft balustrade.

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CANAL COMPANY HOUSE
1061 31st Street

A small, two-story building at the edge of the canal on 31st (originally Congress) Street is closely linked with the history of the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal. The building was constructed about 1830 by the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal Co. for use as a storage room. Later it became a tavern but was shortly thereafter turned into a stable. The horses or mules drawing the barges were stabled below while the drivers lived above. Even after the demise of the canal, the building continued in use as a stable until 1941. At that time it was purchased and renovated for apartments. In 1963, the building was again renovated and now contains three apartments.

The exterior walls are painted light gray with army green trim. The fenestration is accented by brick flat arches and wooden and iron lintels. It is diffi-
cult to tell whether the openings on the first floor are original. The two windows of the upper floor certainly appear to be unaltered. On the interior there still remain many reminders of the building's earlier appearance, old doors, strap hinges, moldings and fireplaces. In the basement the rubble foundation and wooden joists are visible.

VICTORIAN HOUSE
1050 Potomac Street

This building is an example of the heavily corniced architectural style that became popular throughout the United States between 1850 and 1870. In this building, which may have been used as both a store and residence, the flat brick surface is relieved by carefully integrated cornice and window designs. The broad wooden cornice with brackets marking each bay is one of the most characteristic aspects of this type of design. The slight arch of the cornice above the windows serves to emphasize the brick segmental window moldings that extend down the sides of the windows and terminate in a single header brick. The doorway may originally have had a similar molding which has disappeared with alterations.

The interior has been greatly altered but still retains original features such as the wooden floor joists, turned wooden balusters and newel posts, picture and ceiling moldings, and carved wooden mantels.
CHERRY HILL
ROWHOUSES
1033-1043 Cecil Place

From the middle of the 19th century, rowhouses became increasingly popular in Georgetown. Rowhouses were often constructed by speculative builders who recognized the needs of the increasing population for housing at an economical price. The days when many men could easily afford to own several large lots had passed, and cities throughout the United States experienced a tremendous growth of row housing in the last half of the 19th century.

Cherry Hill is the name of the top of the hill in Georgetown which rises on the east side of Potomac Street, formerly called Cherry Street. At the top of the hill, Cherry Alley intersects Cecil Place which runs from Grace Street, formerly Cherry Alley, to Water Street. These streets were lined by rowhouses at the end of the 19th century. The buildings have the simple details common to many small rowhouses built between 1870 and 1890. Brick stepped cornices with brick dentils cap three-story structures unrelied in design except by the low arches of the second and third floor windows. Each house measures 24 by 12 feet with a small garden behind it.
WHEATLEY ROWHOUSES
1018–1032 29th Street

Between the eastern boundary of the original Plat of George-Town and Rock Creek was the land that became known as the Deakins, Lee, and Casanove's Addition when it was subdivided into lots as part of Georgetown in 1793–96. Lots 51, 52, 58, and 59 were purchased in 1853 by Francis Wheatley, who appears to have owned them unimproved until his death in 1883. The following year the lots were divided among his descendants, Charles, Samuel, Walter, and William Wheatley. Since the eight rowhouses that were built on lots 58 and 59 appear on the Hopkins Atlas map of 1887 (fig. 52), they must have been constructed just prior to that date.
Francis Wheatley owned other property in Georgetown, some of which can be seen noted on the *Hopkins Atlas* map. He was owner of a large lumber business which had its office for many years on Water (K) Street just below the site of the rowhouses on Greene (29th) Street. After Francis Wheatley's death, his sons carried on the lumber business until about 1903. His son Samuel was a District Commissioner from 1886 to 1889, and his son Walter was a Senior Warden of the Potomac Lodge No. 5 of Masons in 1874. Since Francis Wheatley and his sons had homes in the fashionable section of Georgetown north of M Street, the rowhouses on 29th Street were built to be rented and not for the Wheatleys' own use.

The row, which is numbered today 1018-1032 29th Street, exhibits a restrained version of the bracketed style. The brick is laid up in common bond, the pattern of eight rows of stretchers for every row of headers, which was popular throughout the last half of the 19th century. The detailing is very similar to that on 1066-1068 31st Street, which was remodeled at about this time. The heavy cornice is supported by vertical scrolled modillions and decorated with a dentil-like course and by rosettes. Although the windows have been given a simple treatment of flat-capped lintels, the doors, in contrast, have bracketed flat hoods that correspond with the design of the cornice brackets. At each door a course of raised ornaments just under the hood connects the consoles. The overall dimensions of each house are 28 feet by 12 feet, 4 inches.

**McGOWAN AND SHINN ROWHOUSES**  
*1058–1066 30th Street*

Next door to the early 19th century house on Washington (30th) Street which was described in the previous section, is a row of five houses which was built in the 1870's. These houses, which were owned and possibly built by McGowan and Shinn, are similar to the Wheatley Rowhouses on 29th Street. The projecting cornice of pressed metal above the wooden box fascia rests on two staggered wooden surfaces and is articulated by simple brackets. The doors originally all had rectangular transoms and deep wooden lintels similar to those over the windows. A string course marks the baseline of the first floor and separates it from the English basement. Recent attempts to “colonialize” several of the doorways have not improved the appearance of the row.

**LIBBY ROWHOUSES**  
*1021–1037 30th Street*

The nine houses just south of the C. & O. Canal on Washington (30th) Street are more elaborate than the Cherry Hill rowhouses but are similar in design. The houses were constructed on lots in the Deakins, Lee and Casanove's Addition. These rowhouses were built shortly after 1887 on land owned by Joseph and J. E. Libby. In these houses, the brick cornice has been extended to great depth. The...
heavily corbeled brick is capped by a dog-tooth row of stretchers just below the pressed metal crown. This cornice breaks in the middle of the row, where the buildings adjust to the descent of the grade of the street. The segmental arches of the upper windows have been echoed over the double windows and entrances of the first floor. The present fanlike decoration and fluted wooden pilaster strips of some of the doors are not original. Major remodeling was done in 1958.

Figure 90. Libby Rowhouses at 1021-1037 30th Street.
Washington neighborhood

... 1890 to the present

In 1895 the final step was taken to integrate Georgetown completely with the city of Washington when its street names were changed to conform with the names of Washington streets. When Georgetown had been included in the Territory of Columbia it was a chartered city, but in 1871 its charter was revoked and Georgetown became part of Washington. Now, it lost more of its individuality. Bridge Street became M Street, the eastern end of Water Street became K Street, and streets such as Greene, Washington, Congress, Market, and Frederick received numbers corresponding to the north-south numbered streets in Washington.

Other changes were taking place at the end of the 19th century which, although less immediately noticeable, had a paramount influence on life in Georgetown. There was a major decline in the trade on the C. & O. Canal, primarily because the coal supply was being exhausted. Technological changes, especially in railroads, were making the canal obsolete. Baltimore was developing as a railroad terminus and cargo shipping harbor while Alexandria took over completely all foreign trade for the upper Potomac region.

In 1924, the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal stopped operations, and in 1938 the National Park Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior purchased the waterway. After making extensive repairs, particularly on the section that traverses Georgetown, the Park Service opened the canal for pleasure craft and the towpath for pedestrians.

The industries which had been established along the canal and riverside declined in number. Those which could adapt remained, such as the mills using the waterpower from the canal. Some were able to switch from use of the canal for transport to the railroad which has a spur that comes into K Street. A few companies remained which required a riverside position to receive shipments from Potomac barges. As warehouses were vacated by those moving to other locations, new industries which could use large space or could afford to demolish the existing structures and were not constrained by site factors, moved into the waterfront.

All these changes brought Georgetown into a closer relation with the rest of the city of Washington. The area that had been a separate city was, by the 20th century, a section of a much larger and more viable urban area. Georgetown and Washington had reversed their roles: whereas in 1792 the city of Washington had relied on Georgetown for houses, services, and communication, now Georgetown drew its life and its government from Washington. Highly individualistic, Georgetown nevertheless became a Washington neighborhood.

Two additions to the waterfront which characterize these changes were the Capital Traction Co. Powerhouse and the Washington Canoe Club. Both buildings represent a new use of the waterfront, and both were constructed in an architectural style that was just emerging at the end of the 19th century. The Powerhouse, which provided the power for the streetcars servicing Washington, was constructed in brick, the traditional building material of the waterfront, but employed a more sophisticated and monumental style than the earlier buildings. The Washington Canoe Club, in contrast, followed a late 19th century architectural style employing a romantic use of shingling and a direct relation to the natural setting. Sheltered by the Potomac palisades, the long low green Canoe Club is reminiscent of the country houses of New England coastal resorts in vogue at that time.

In spite of these two major contributions to the waterfront, the industrial aspects of the area, plus the increasing age of the residential structures, made the waterfront, as well as a large portion of the rest of Georgetown, undesirable as a place to live. The city of Washington was producing new neighborhoods where the members of the growing bureaucracy went to live. Georgetown slipped into disrepair as the "old" section of the city. During the 1930's, however, the pressures for housing by the rapidly increasing numbers of persons coming to Washington contributed to a new interest in Georgetown. Its proximity to downtown Washington plus its pleasant villagelike scale attracted the upper middle class. Since 1945, there has been a metamorphosis. From being decrepit, the town has become a flourishing neighborhood, which in the last 10 years has extended into the waterfront area.
The residential buildings have been rehabilitated, and many persons requiring small offices, such as architects, city planners, designers, and others, have chosen to work in the waterfront area.

As a neighborhood of Washington, Georgetown has also had to serve the rest of the metropolitan community. In 1949 the Whitehurst Freeway was constructed over K Street to provide access to the Key Bridge from the center of Washington and to eliminate through traffic from the narrow Georgetown streets. While serving modern efficiency, the freeway has delayed interest by private groups and individuals in the rejuvenation of the riverside. Many citizens and groups, however, have become interested in a program for improving the appearance and the use of the area. Among these have been the Georgetown Canal and Riverside Council, the Georgetown Citizens Association, and the Georgetown Planning Council. As the proposed programs are formulated, an understanding of the history of this unusual tidewater port and canal town should help in evaluating the impact on the area of implementing any specific plans.

Figure 91. The Georgetown waterfront around 1910.

Figure 92. Georgetown waterfront about 1861, with the two-tone Brickyard Hill House visible in background.
Figure 93. Georgetown in 1948, before the Whitehurst Freeway was built over K Street. Note the piers of the Aqueduct Bridge at left.
One of the most interesting of the large buildings constructed in the waterfront area is the Capital Traction Co. Powerhouse. Symbol of a new technology at the beginning of the 20th century, it is now scheduled for demolition because it is functionally obsolete. For 22 years this building housed the generators and equipment for supplying power to run the streetcars of Washington. The streetcar lines, which in many cities were instrumental in creating the new and expanding shape of an urban area, now remain in Washington only in the form of abandoned rails and within the memories of the older citizens.

The large red brick building has the blocky massiveness and easily perceived geometry of many of the buildings being designed at the end of the 19th century by followers of H. H. Richardson. It is conceived in clear volumes—the front with its long five-story gallery, the massive transeptlike section with its immense lunette window, and the back section running out to the river. The brick is laid up in panels with projecting moldings to indicate logical divisions which break up the monotony of the large surfaces. White stone sills, cornices, and keystones further accent the architectural massing. The large arched window at the west side is somewhat reminiscent of certain buildings by Louis Sullivan, such as his Security Bank of 1907–08 in Owatonna, Minn. The imposing scale suggests the large machinery that had
been at work in the vast interior spaces which are still impressive today.

The powerhouse is located on lots 7, 8, 9, and 10 along the Potomac (see fig. 13) which have been owned from time to time by some of the most prominent people in Georgetown. At some time between 1814 and 1830, the lots along the riverside were delineated and sold to persons wishing to have wharves and warehouses on the Potomac. Lots 7 and 8 had been in the possession of Francis Dodge, Sr., and Alexander H. Dodge, owners of the Dodge warehouse at the corner of Water (K) and High (Wisconsin Avenue) Streets. In a deed of trust in 1858, the Dodge property is described as “all those lots including wharves in Georgetown on south side of Water [K] Street between High Wisconsin Avenue] and Congress [31st] Streets, and warehouses thereon as lately occupied by them and used as their place of business.” In 1873, these two lots and warehouses were purchased by the New York, Alexandria, Washington & Georgetown Steamship Co. The Capital Traction Co. acquired the lots in 1910.

Adjacent to those lots on the west were lots 9 and 10 which had been owned during the first half of the 19th century by Henry Foxall. One of the wealthiest men in Georgetown in the early 19th century, Henry Foxall owned a foundry upstream from Georgetown which supplied armaments to the Government. The Dictionary of American Biography states that he was born in England in 1758 and worked in ironworks there and later in Ireland until 1797, when he emigrated to Philadelphia. There he entered into business with Robert Morris, Jr., son of the Revolutionary financier, to start the Eagle Iron Works. He moved to Georgetown in 1800 and established the Columbian Foundry on the Potomac just above the present site of Georgetown University. His foundry supplied a large amount of the armaments for the War of 1812. It is said that the battle of Lake Erie was delayed until Perry received the cannon from Foxall Foundry. Foxall was mayor of Georgetown from 1821 to 1823. He returned to England, having sold his foundry to Gen. John Mason in 1815, and died there shortly thereafter.

When the property was acquired from Foxall’s heirs in 1858, it contained a “3 story brick warehouse and wharf (30'3” wide)” and on the adjoining lot a “2 story brick warehouse . . . and wharf adjoining.” To the east of the latter was another “similar warehouse.” These three warehouses on Water Street were in a highly desirable location next to the corporation (or public) wharf. The land was owned for 30 years by Sarah Berry whose will in 1883 included “the three story brick warehouse situated at the S.E. corner of Water [K] and High [Wisconsin Avenue] Streets . . . and also the 2 story brick warehouse east of one adjoining the same with the ground belonging to each.”

These four lots were all acquired by May of 1910 for the new powerhouse erected during the next year. The building was used until 1943. Since then it has been empty, except for occasional uses such as occurred in 1965 when the American Institute of Architects held their “Powerhouse Ball” there during their annual convention. During the summer of 1967, the District government purchased the property and announced plans to demolish the building in order to construct a proposed Potomac River Freeway. At the time, the Georgetown Spectator newspaper wrote:

At the height of its operation, the plant had twelve boilers which operated five turbo-generators producing 18,500 kilowatts of electrical power which was in turn carried to four sub stations located through the city. Each sub-station was fed by a high tension cable carrying 6,600 volts. At the sub-station, this power was converted to 600-volt direct current and fed to conductor bars in the tracks to run the cars.
Representative of the new uses of the waterfront and the new architectural styles around the turn of the century is the Washington Canoe Club. The club house is in the shingle style made popular by the architect H. H. Richardson and the architectural firm of McKim, Mead, and White. Buildings and houses in the shingle style proliferated at the summer resorts of the wealthy of that era. The style was an obvious choice for the design of a recreational building. The romantic influence which was still in evidence in the early 20th century can be seen in the turrets and arch forms.

The ground floor is given over almost entirely to the canoes, while the second floor contains the club house facilities. Recessed at the western end of the second floor is the men's dressing room and at the eastern end, the lounge. In between is a ballroom ornamented by columns supporting the hipped ceiling at either end and by built-in benches. At the north end, or inland side, is a brick fireplace, and at the opposite end, on the water side, is a wooden bandstand.

Figure 99. Washington Canoe Club.
Methodology

The research for this brochure was done in connection with a summer field project jointly sponsored by the Historic American Buildings Survey and the Commission of Fine Arts. Each summer various areas in the United States are selected for HABS projects. The teams sent to each area consist of architects and architectural historians who survey, measure, photograph, and record the physical properties of selected buildings and obtain historical data about the buildings surveyed.

Georgetown buildings have been surveyed by the HABS on numerous occasions. Since 1933, individual structures which seemed of exceptional significance have been recorded as part of the staff work. The Francis Scott Key House was surveyed, and measured drawings made, before it was demolished. Sections of the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal, the Wisconsin Avenue Bridge, the houses adjacent to the Market, and some 60 other Georgetown structures have already been included among the HABS records. In 1966, a summer team in Georgetown made a survey of architecturally significant buildings on M Street and Wisconsin Avenue. Among the buildings surveyed at that time included in this brochure are: The Market House, Grace Protestant Episcopal Church, and the Dodge Warehouse.

The 1967 HABS summer project lasted for 13 weeks and concentrated on the buildings south of M Street. Fifteen buildings were chosen to be described by complete Photo-Data Books, and nine more were recorded on briefer HABS Inventory Forms. The project consisted of the selection of the buildings, analysis of their present architectural form, identification of the owners and uses of each building since it was erected, and photographing each building. This standard HABS research method was augmented for the purposes of this brochure by research into the history and urban form of the waterfront area.

Criteria for selection of a building for HABS research in Georgetown were based primarily on its architectural significance, either local, regional, or national. Of secondary importance for this survey was historical significance. Another criterion was inclusion of the building in previous lists of landmarks, including those by the Joint Committee on Landmarks, the American Institute of Architects, various guidebooks, and the National Park Service staff. From the approximately 200 structures in the waterfront area south of M Street, 24 were selected for inclusion in this survey.

The architect made a thorough survey of each of the buildings selected. This comprised an examination of the interior and exterior of each building, noting original construction and alterations, measuring the building, and giving a complete description of the building materials, details, and method of construction.

The architectural historian began documentation by establishing a chain of title for each building for which a Photo-Data Book was being prepared. Although this takes considerable time, and establishing an unbroken chain of title is often impossible, it does provide a list of names which can then be used in checking other sources of information. After the title search, the names of property owners were checked in the assessment records of Georgetown. These records give information about the property, and often about the house or improvements, thus furnishing a more specific clue as to the date of erection of a building. Another source of information that yielded facts about the property owners and tenants was the Washington and Georgetown city directories which exist from 1822. In addition to these primary sources, several secondary sources were consistently used. Biographical information about persons who appeared in the chains of title were searched for in articles printed in the Records of the Columbia Historical Society (1894 to the present) and in Georgetown histories such as The Chronicles of Georgetown, D.C. by Richard P. Jackson. Many other sources of data, such as newspapers, personal papers in the collection of the Peabody Room of the Georgetown Public Library, customs records, and records of the District of Columbia, could have been checked if time had permitted.

In order to provide historical background, a more extensive search for graphic material relating to Georgetown was made by the author than is usual for an HABS project. Print and photograph collections of the Library of Congress, the District of Columbia Public Library, and other government and private collections yielded material to augment and support the individual building histories. These maps, prints, and old photographs provided information about the sequence of street and lot layout, often indicated building locations, showed the appearance of the waterfront at early periods, and could be used to check written descriptions of the waterfront.

In addition, photographs were made of each building being surveyed dur-
ing the summer. About 130 photographs were taken, including an exterior view of each building and also interior pictures, details, and occasionally a photograph of the setting or landscaping of specific buildings. There was an effort in some cases to photograph a structure from the same position from which an earlier photograph had been taken so that the two could be compared in order to note easily any changes that had been made.

All this information was put into outline form in the Photo-Data Books or, if for a less important building, onto the HABS Inventory Forms. The object of these forms is to present known facts and not to present hypotheses. The Photo-Data Books and the Inventory Forms are deposited in the Division of Prints and Photographs of the Library of Congress. Anyone desiring to study them may do so, and copies of the research, photographs, and, if available, measured drawings, can be ordered from the library.

This survey of buildings on the Georgetown waterfront is not intended by any means to be a definitive study. It is intended merely to point out those buildings having exceptional merit and to link them with the general history of the entire area. Much more information is needed on several facets of the waterfront's history. Some of the buildings, including the Capital Traction Co. Powerhouse, the Washington Canoe Club, the Warehouse on the canal (3222 M Street), and the Dodge Warehouses should be studied further. In addition, investigation should be made of maritime records to identify the amount and type of trade being carried on from the Georgetown harbor. Newspapers of Georgetown or ones in which Georgetowners advertised should be indexed and used, business records should be read, and in specific locations archaeological work should be undertaken. Some of the records which could be investigated for more information on specific buildings include the District of Columbia building permits, the records of the Alexandria Historical Society, the library of the Daughters of the American Revolution, the original papers about the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal in the National Archives, later assessment records, papers of the Association of Oldest Inhabitants, and material owned by the Columbia Historical Society.

It is hoped that the summer's work has provided leads and background information from which further research can be done. The Georgetown waterfront has much history which is of special interest not only because of its unique relation to Washington, but also because it illustrates the economic problems that many colonial ports faced in the 19th century.

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Figure 103. "The river is frequently covered with vessels with their forests of masts reaching towards the sky, awaiting their turn to be loaded with coal, before sailing to a distant clime." Jackson, Chronicles of Georgetown, 1878.
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Outside back cover: Potomac Boat Club, 1886 Regatta Crew.
Figure 104. Chart of the Potomac River, 1838, showing the C. & O. Canal, the Alexandria Canal, and the piers of the Aqueduct Bridge.