

Walking tour: The Civil War and Before March 2024

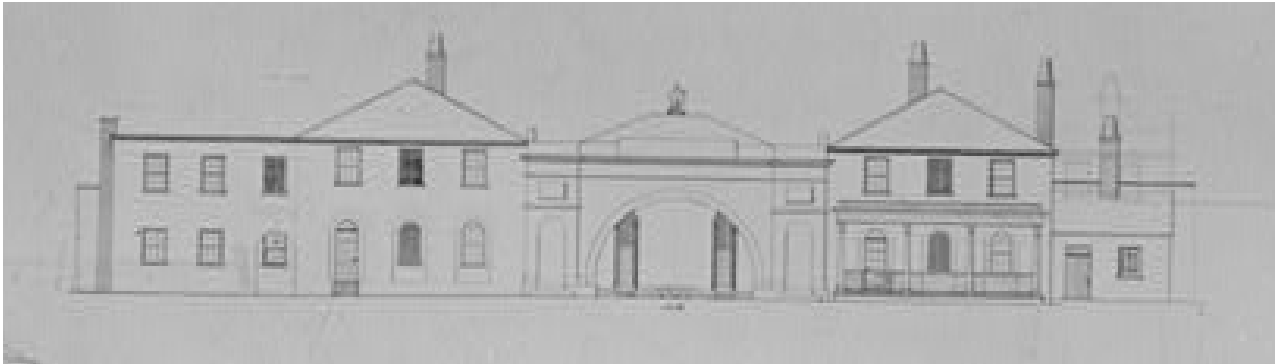
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Themes:

- Building styles/ vernacular architecture
- Washington Navy Yard; large industrial employer
- Navy Yard workers' building program/lifestyle/role in DC history
- Navy Yard community, first Eastern Market
- Black craftsman/homeowners/activists

Meet on the sidewalk in front of the Miracle Theatre, 535 8th Street, SE.

Stop 1. Latrobe Gate, Washington Navy Yard. Benjamin Latrobe designed the main gate in 1806, a long, narrow building along M Street. The north side resembles a miniature triumphal arch with Doric columns. In 1881 the three-story flanking tower buildings were added plus a two-story addition on top of the gate.



Latrobe Gate, original design. loc.gov HABS DC,WASH,74- **Benjamin Henry Latrobe** (1764-1820), was one of the first formally trained architects practicing in the US. He supervised the construction of the Capitol, and designed many projects in a neoclassical style, including St. John's Episcopal Church near Lafayette Square, and the portico at the White House.

Washington Navy Yard

The Navy Yard was established in 1799 and became the largest, most important employer in the city, offering good wages and steady work. White and free Black workers settled nearby and built houses. During an economic downturn in the 1820s, the Navy Yard employed 67 Navy personnel and 360 civilians.¹ To build wooden naval ships from raw

¹ Constance McLaughlin Green, *Washington: A History of the Capital 1800-1950* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1962, Vol 1, 85). "Washington Navy Yard." Wikipedia; Internet, accessed 23 June 2023. John G. M. Sharp, "African Americans, Enslaved and Free at Washington Navy Yard and Daniel and Mary Bell and the Struggle for Freedom." Sharp, *African Americans, Enslaved & Free, at Washington Navy Yard*, 2021, see end note 56, <http://www.usgwarchives.net/va/portsmouth/shipyard/sharptoc/wny2.html> Sharp, *History of the Washington Navy Yard Civilian Workforce 1799 -1962* (Naval History and Heritage Command: Washington DC 2005) 4., accessed 28 July.

materials the Navy Yard maintained 22 forges, five furnaces, and a steam engine to run the sawmill. Blacksmith strikers wielded heavy hammers to beat hot metal into chains and anchors. Caulkers used a special tool to apply oakum (picked from old hemp ropes) between a ship's planks and then applied hot pitch with a caulking iron to make the ship watertight. Frederick Douglass once worked as a caulker at a Baltimore shipyard, quickly mastering the trade.

As of 1808 the Yard employed 179 men, including six free Blacks, 43 enslaved Blacks (working as blacksmith strikers, shipwrights, carpenters, and ship caulkers) and three were apprenticed to skilled trades. Naval officers and private citizens vied to have their slaves hired to work at the Navy Yard. By 1850 only five percent of workers were enslaved. Originally, the Navy Yard repaired wooden ships, but in 1806 work expanded to building 50 gunboats. Twenty-two ships were built here. Workers were on per diem, scheduled as needed, and worked six days a week, 12 hours per day with time off for lunch and breaks. They were allowed a whiskey break in the morning. The Navy Yard commandant purchased barrels of whiskey so that workers could drink their whiskey on site, and not waste time in saloons.²

When the British Army invaded Washington on August 24, 1814, the Navy Yard commandant knew that the British must never be allowed to capture the Navy Yard. As soon as he saw the Capitol burning, he knew that that Navy Yard would be next and ordered the Yard burned, including most buildings and two ships under construction (one ship was one week from completion). Local residents climbed over the fence around the Navy Yard and looted the commandant's house. [Photograph on p. 8 shows the commandant's house as of 1936.]

By 1819 the Navy Yard employed approximately 345 workers. White workers resented the number of free and enslaved Black workers at the Navy Yard. They also objected to other working conditions: the 12-hour workday, and a new rule in 1835 barring workers from eating lunch on site (to prevent theft of tools in their lunchpails). In 1835, 175 White workers (75% of the workforce) went on strike, demanding a 10-hour day.³ Striking White workers took out their animosity against Blacks by destroying a successful restaurant, the Epicurean Eating House, at 6th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, run by Beverly Snow, a free Black man. The strike failed, and the workday remained at 12 hours until 1840.

By the early nineteenth century the Anacostia River had silted up and became too shallow for launching large ships. So the Navy Yard's focus shifted to manufacturing metal fittings and developing and producing ordinance such as the Dahlgren gun.

The Navy Yard employed approximately 1,700 workers during the Civil War. The ironclad *U.S.S. Monitor* was repaired here in 1862. President Lincoln visited the Navy Yard many times, probably traveling south on 8th Street to the gate. After Lincoln's assassination, the conspirators were imprisoned here. By World War II, the Navy Yard was the largest naval ordinance facility in the world, occupying 188 buildings on 126 acres. In the 1960s the Navy Yard transitioned to an administrative center.⁴

2018 https://www.history.navy.mil/content/dam/nhhc/browse-by-topic/heritage/washington-navy-yard/pdfs/WNY_History.pdf

² Green, Vol. 1, 36.

³ Federal employees were not barred from striking until the Taft-Hartley Act (1947).

⁴ Green, Vol. 1, p. 36

Stop 2. 1112 8th Street, SE/1114 8th St SE double houses built by 1833. The brick belt courses may be a Greek Revival borrowing. Dormer at 1112 8th? Stepped brick corbel, small 3rd story windows, frieze band windows?, low-pitched roof built c. 1833.

Greek Revival . Popular: 1820-1850. In the early 19th century, Americans became interested in ancient Greek archeological discoveries, Greek democracy and Greece's modern struggle for independence. Greek Revival buildings often have gable or hipped roofs, cornice lines emphasized with wide divided band of trim, an entablature with elaborate door surrounds, columns supporting a porch roof, and small frieze band windows below the cornice. On Capitol Hill, Greek Revival elements were Classically inspired ornament at doors and windows, and entry porch. Example: U.S. Treasury.

Stop 3. 811-815 L Steet, SE Bosckhe 817/819 L Sawtooth pattern of brickwork (dating from c. 1790) with two or three rows of brick set at an angle.

817 and 819 L Street, SE. Sawtooth pattern of brickwork (dating from c. 1790) with two or three rows of brick set at an angle, simple transoms later filled in 817 L—passageway between buildings.
813 L Street SE, built by 1844. .

Stop 4. 1003 8th Street, SE/1005 8th Street, SE, 1003 8th St SE brick, built in 1824 or earlier 1105 8th St built between 1833 and 1844, narrow arched doorway, Federal style. Sawtooth pattern of brickwork with two or three rows of brick set at an angle. The heavy Italianate cornice, metal, and classically elaborated window hoods were probably added during the Italianate Style's popularity between 1840 and 1870. Key Italianate elements: symmetrical form, deep cornice, elaborate door and window hoods.

[The site of the first Eastern Market is to the west, in the Marine Corps Barracks Annex.]

The first Eastern Market

The first Eastern Market was located on Appropriation 16, between K and L streets near 6th Street (now inside the Marine Corps Barracks Annex). William Prout and others donated land for the market as a civic gesture. Opening in 1806, its brick columns and a brick floor, contained a U-shaped arcade featuring butchers, fishmongers, produce dealers, and a butter dealer. After the first market manager died in 1856 the market fell into disrepair, residents demanded a new market, and in 1873 a new Eastern Market opened on 7th Street, SE.⁵

As of 1822, the first *City Directory* lists other businesses serving the community: baker, butcher, grocery, apothecary, shoemaker, dry goods, tobacconist. Philip Otterbeck sold beef, lamb, pork, sausages, and bacon at his butcher shop at 9th and M streets, SE.⁶

Stop 5. 8th and I streets, SE. On the way to Stop 5 we will walk under I-695, where there were once businesses, such as Stanley 5 and 10 cent, on the 900 block of 8th Street, SE. [See photograph, p. 8.] As of 1822 Matthew Wright, an Irish immigrant, operated a grocery store at the northwest corner of 8th and I streets (the building is now gone). He died in 1847, still owning the store, then rented to Thomas

⁵ *City Directory* (1864).

⁶ Estate of Seth Robinson, OS 1011 (1822).

Thornley, who continued to operate the store for years afterward.⁷ Wright owned other houses in Square 904 (7th/8th/G/I). I Street, SE, built in 1858 or earlier; he may have owned one or more houses at 706 through 722 I Street. Wright was also an enslaver; he owned two elderly men (to be maintained by Wright’s heirs), a boy to be emancipated in five years after Wright’s death and, a couple and their eight or nine children to be emancipated if they agreed to move to Liberia. These people probably lived on Wright’s farm in Prince George’s County.⁸

Slavery in DC between 1790 – 1862
 1808, 1827, 1837, 1836: Black Codes: restrictions on Blacks appearing in public
 1835: ” Snow riot” - Striking White Navy Yard workers destroyed a restaurant run by Beverly Snow, a free Black man, because Snow allegedly insulted their wives
 1848: “*Pearl* Affair” - Failed attempt by 76 slaves to escape Washington by ship
 1850: Interstate slave trade banned, slave ownership in DC continues
 1862: Compensated emancipation in DC for 2,981 slaves

Washington's Black population

Year	Total Black population and % of total combined White and Black population	%	Free Black population & % of total Black pop.	%	Enslaved Black population & % of total Black population	%
1800	2,472	30.4	400	16.2	2,072	83.8
1810	5,126	33.1	1,572	30.7	3,553	69.3
1820	7,278	31.2	2,758	37.9	4,520	62.1
1830	9,109	30.1	4,604	50.5	4,505	49.5
1840	9,819	29.1	6,499	66.2	3,320	33.8
1850	13,746	26.6	10,059	73.2	3,687	26.8
1860	14,316	19.1	11,131	77.8	3,185	22.2

Stop 6. 715 8th Street SE, [“Nothing Fancy” tea shop]. This house has large dormers, a denticulated cornice, decorative lintels and sills (unusual); the original windows were probably 6/6. Rev. William Ryland (1770-1846) lived in this house from 1827 until 1846. He was the founding pastor of the Ebenezer Methodist Church on the 500 block of 4th Street (later demolished), an integrated

⁷“Death of an Old Citizen: Thomas Thornley, formerly Warden of the District Penitentiary,” *Evening Star*, 20 Nov. 1885, 3. <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/1a200794650242299ddc668ad5b53c0a>.

⁸ Probate records, OS 2757, Box 19. The American Colonization Society encouraged free Blacks to emigrate to Africa. “American Colonization Society,” Wikipedia. Internet; accessed 1 July 2023.

congregation (but the Black members had to sit in the gallery). Ryland was a renowned orator, and a friend of President Jackson, who appointed Ryland as the Chaplain of the Navy.⁹

Stop 7. John Philip Sousa birthplace, 636 G Street, SE. Musicians from Italy, Portugal were recruited for the Marine Band. John Philip Sousa was born here in 1854, and later lived at 500 7th Street, SE. At 13, he was apprenticed to the Marine Band, and led the band between 1880 and 1892. He composed marches: *The Stars and Stripes Forever*, *Semper Fidelis*, and *Washington Post March*. He is buried at Congressional Cemetery. The Marine Band performs there in his honor on his birthday, November 4. [See Sousa family's favorite spaghetti recipe, on p. 9.]

Marine Corps Barracks

In 1801 George Hadfield (1763-1826) designed the barracks around a parade ground and the Commandant's House; the mansard roof was added later. Hadfield supervised the work on the Capitol between 1795 and 1798.¹⁰ Several officers lived nearby. In 1908 the officers' quarters, fronting on 8th Street, were added. The Marine Band, established in 1798, is stationed at the Barracks.

Stop 8. Christ Church, 618 G Street, SE, The parish was founded in 1794. William Prout donated lots for the church. The original section was designed by Robert Alexander, a member of the vestry, although this design is often attributed to Benjamin Latrobe. The church was built in 1807, then modified and expanded in 1824, 1849, 1877, and 1891.

Stop 9. 600 G Street, SE [Sq. 877, lots 10 & 11/96]

John Harrison, an assistant surgeon attending at the Navy Hospital at the Navy Yard, lived here as of 1819 and 1822. He was born in Maryland. In 1824, he owned lot 10 (the corner lot, house's location) and lot 11. He died on March 4, 1825, and was buried at Congressional Cemetery with Masonic and military honors. He was survived by his wife Eliza, and children John, William, and Alexander.¹¹

700 6th Street, SE [Sq. 878, lot 22] – across G Street from 600 G Street

John Crabb and Mary H. Crabb owned lots 22 and 23 as of 1819. Crabb, (c. 1774-1824) a magistrate and captain in the US Marine Corps, lived here in 1819 and 1822. He owned slaves. As of 1820, there were seven people in his household: four whites (1 male and one female age 26-44, one female, age 16-25, one male age under 10) and three Blacks: one free male under age 14, one enslaved male age 45 or over, one female age 14-25).

⁹ Madison Davis, "The Navy Yard Section during the Life of the Rev. William Ryland." *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, Washington, D.C., Vol. 4 (1901), 199-221. Elizabeth Draper, "Only a Few of the Many Fine Historical Places and People on Capitol Hill Southeast," privately printed (1954). Probate: Wills, Boxes 0014 Quinlin, Tasker C - 0018 Degges, John, 1837-1847. *National Intelligencer*, 20 Jan. 1846.

¹⁰ "Hadfield, George," Encyclopedia.com. Internet; accessed 16 July 2023.

¹¹ *City Directory* (1822), Real Property Tax Assessments (1819, 1824). Census 1820.

<https://congressionalcemetery.org/records-search/>

Black Navy Yard workers: property owners and activists

Free Black workers at the Navy Yard owned real estate, built houses, and actively participated in civic affairs.

In 1844, George Bell (d. 1845), a carpenter at the Navy Yard, built a two-story frame house on 6th Street between D and E streets in Square 845 (southern part of lot 10) (not extant). He also owned four other houses.¹² In 1807, Moses Liverpool, Nicolas Franklin, and George Bell, started a school for Black children, “the Bell School,” at 2nd and D streets, SE.

In 1848, Daniel Bell, a free Black carpenter working at the Navy Yard, planned an escape from Washington to New Jersey for 76 enslaved people on the schooner *Pearl*. Enslavers learned about the escape, chartered a steam ship, overtook Pearl off the Maryland coast, and returned all the passengers to Washington, where most were sold into the South. A local abolitionist purchased Bell’s family and freed them.¹³

Michael Shiner (c. 1805-1880), an enslaved Black man who gained his freedom, worked as a painter in the Navy Yard. His diary covering 1813-1869 is an important record of Washington history.¹⁴ He owned “Shiner’s Lake,” 9,000 square feet in Square 946 where he filled in a skating pond and built a house at 474 9th Street, SE (not extant).

Stop 10. 523 and 525 6th Street, SE, semi-detached (Square 822 Sq 846 Faetz and Pratt) Federal style¹⁵ Federal Style rowhouse massing, East Coast brick versions with gable roof and dormers, without ornamental details. Gable roofs were originally clad with wood shingles; replaced after the Civil War with sheet metal roofs. Building design: central passage, gable-roofed box, three bays, two stories, wood or brick. The door was located on the longer side of the gable, facing the street. Pairs of houses- economical to build a second house, only need three more walls, share a chimney. Function: residential or commercial, often switching over time.

Stop 11. 503 and 505 6th Street, SE. Side entrance, gable roof

Vernacular buildings

Most of the buildings on our tour are “vernacular”—i.e., designed by carpenters or brick masons, not by architects. British settlers brought their traditional house plans: a one or two-story house with a steep gable roof, the door on the long side and facing the street. Navy Yard workers built houses following these traditional plans.¹⁶ Hall and parlor plan---traditional British one-story house form, door on long side of gable.

Stop 12. 423 6th Street, SE (corner house), **421 ½ 6th Street, SE.** Federal style. The Carbery house at 423 6th Street, SE, built in 1803, was occupied by architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe (1764-1811) while he worked on the design of several Navy Yard buildings. In 1833, the building’s namesake, James Carbery, a local politician and naval architect at the Navy Yard as well as brother of Thomas Carbery, the sixth mayor of Washington, purchased the house, residing there until his death. Extensive

¹² OS 2523 (1844).

¹³ Chris Myers Asch and George Derek Musgrove, *Chocolate City: A History of Race and Democracy in the Nation’s Capital*. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2017, 90-95).

¹⁴ www.chrs.org >History and Preservation > Michael Shiner Diary

¹⁵ Judith Capen, AIA, *Building Styles in the Capitol Hill Historic District*, 4. www.chrs.org

¹⁶ In 1634, Lord Calvert received a royal charter to establish Maryland as a British colony offering religious freedom to Catholics. “History of Maryland,” Wikipedia. Internet; accessed 2 July 2023.

remodeling undertaken in 1889 dramatically changed it from a Federal-style rowhouse to a Victorian-era house with porch and three-story projecting tower, turning it to face Marion Park. In 1920, the Olds family bought the house, and many neighborhood residents recall an elderly Mrs. Olds in the 1970s enjoying the park view from the porch. **The house at 421-1/2 6th Street, SE** Federal-style. Hugh Densley, noted master plasterer who worked on the White House and U.S. Capitol as well as an early developer of residential real estate, built this house and its adjoining neighbor shortly after 1800. Joseph Sparatt, owner of a grocery store, bought the finished house from Densley. The house features Flemish bond brick, stone lintels with keystones above the windows and door, a gable roof with dormer, and an arched fanlight above the front door. For more, see www.chrs.org> house histories.

Federal style: Popular 1790-1820. The style of the new republic. Compared to Georgian, Federal style is more delicate, flatter, less robust, with fan lights as accents. Roof slopes are flatter. Tall dormers on upper story had operable windows. (vs. low-profile dormers on Craftsman-influenced porch front houses, with non-operable windows).

Stop 13 . The Maples, sidewalk in front of 628 South Carolina Avenue, SE. The Maples is one of the oldest houses still standing on Capitol Hill, built between 1795 and 1796. Architect William Loring designed this Georgian house for a British Army officer, William Mayne Duncanson: a gable-roofed, two-story five-bay brick house, projecting three-bay pedimented pavilion. A two-story outbuilding was used as a carriage house and living space for enslaved people.

By 1800 Duncanson was in financial distress, and the house was empty until Francis Scott Key bought it in 1815. Later owners: Augustus A. Nicholson in 1838 and 1856 by Delaware Senator John M. Clayton in 1856. He added a ballroom decorated by Brumidi (not extant). In 1871 Emily Edson Briggs (1830-1910) bought the entire square including the house and lived here for 40 years. She was one of the first woman journalists and covered the Civil War in a series of letters from "Olivia," her pen name. Friendship House operated a settlement house in The Maples beginning in 1937. After Friendship House closed in 2010, The Maples was sold, and is now part of a condominium, duplex, and townhouse complex. Horace Peaslee (1885-1959), a nationally renowned architect, restored the original Maples house, early wings and stable and added new construction to the sides of the house.

Enlightenment: Men control their future and the physical world. The Age of Enlightenment or the Enlightenment,¹⁷ also known as the Age of Reason, was an intellectual and philosophical movement that occurred in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries, with global influences and effects. The Enlightenment included a range of ideas centered on the value of human happiness, the pursuit of knowledge obtained by means of reason and the evidence of the senses, and ideals such as natural Law, liberty, progress, toleration, fraternity, constitutional government, and separation of church and state.¹⁷

Georgian Style. Popular: 1730-1790. 18th century: Influences: Enlightenment principles, fine living, ostentation; Characteristics: order, symmetry, hierarchy, containment, frequently with a central projecting pavilion topped with a temple front, sash windows spaced evenly (and never paired), classical detailing handled in a robust way. Belt courses hipped or gable roof, horizontal orientation.¹⁸ Demands attention. The White House is an example.

¹⁷ "Age of Enlightenment," Wikipedia. Internet; accessed 3 July 2023.

¹⁸ Judith Capen, AIA, *Building Styles in the Capitol Hill Historic District*, 4. www.chrs.org

Stanley 5 and 10 cent store, 900 block of 8th Street, SE (demolished for SE Freeway in 1960s)



Tingey House (Quarters A), Residence of the Chief of Naval Operations, near 8th and M sts, SE, Washington Navy Yard, built in 1801, later remodeled. Loc.gov HABS DC,WASH, 74A (1936).

*John Philip Sousa's
Favorite Spaghetti Sauce Recipe*

Two quarts tomatoes

One Tomato paste

Put in kettle on top of stove and simmer 2 and a half hours

Add:

--Pepper, salt

--Two onions cut in small slices

--Four all-spice and four cloves, after it starts to boil.

*After 2 and a half hours, add
meatballs (pelotas) made of:*

-- One pound chopped round steak

-- One onion, chopped fine

-- One cup bread crumbs

-- A little parsley, salt and pepper.

Make meat balls the size of plums.

Put them in sauce and boil for one and a half hours.

*Fifteen minutes before it is finished, add three bay leaves
to sauce.*

Courtesy Nancy Metzger

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More to see

- US Navy Museum, 11th & O streets, SE & tours of Navy Yard
<https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/museums/nmusn.html>
- Leonidas Scott house, 208 5th Street, SE, built in 1859 by a free Black carpenter
- Shotgun houses: 1229 E Street, SE (reproduction) and 518 9th Street, SE (altered).
- 541 7th Street, SE: Carpenter Gothic, built in 1857 or earlier.

How old is that building? www.dc.gov> [historyquest](#) and put cursor on building to see information