

The Washington that you see today had its birth two centuries ago in a rational yet visionary design unprecedented in its scale. Pierre Charles L'Enfant's plan for the city and its core mall area was influenced by urban planning then current in Europe and by neoclassical landscape design exemplified by Versailles. Brilliantly adapting those ideas to Washington's terrain, L'Enfant placed the Capitol on Jenkins Hill and the President's House on a lower terrace than overlooking the Potomac River. Between them ran Pennsylvania Avenue, to symbolize the separate but connected branches of government. The spirit of that plan lives in the city still.

Present day shoreline
Shoreline in Ellicott's 1792 plan
MAP: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

1790
The result of a compromise between northern and southern interests, the Residence Act authorizes President Washington to choose a site for the capital on the Potomac River. Andrew Ellicott, aided by Benjamin Banneker, surveys a 10-mile square that encompasses parts of Maryland and Virginia. The core of L'Enfant's 1791 plan is the triangle created by the

Capitol, White House, and Mall. The plan calls for grand avenues that radiate from a number of plazas. The cornerstone for the White House is laid October 13, 1792; it is the oldest federal structure in Washington.

1800
The Senate chamber of the Capitol, designed by Dr. William Thornton, is completed, and Congress moves from

Philadelphia to Washington. The House chamber is completed in 1807, with a covered walkway between the buildings. President John Adams and Abigail Adams move into the unfinished President's House in 1800.

1810
Work begins on converting Tiber Creek into a canal. It follows what is now Constitution Ave-

nue, then turns in front of the Capitol.

1814
After the British burn the Capitol during the War of 1812, Benjamin Latrobe begins rebuilding. William Bulfinch completes the restoration by 1829, sheathing the dome designed by William Thornton in copper.

1836
Robert Mills' winning design for a monument

to George Washington calls for a great obelisk with a colonnaded base. His Treasury building, begun the same year, obstructs the line-of-sight L'Enfant wanted between the Capitol and White House.

1846
The portion of the District of Columbia that had been annexed from Virginia is retroceded to the commonwealth.

1848
Construction of the Washington Monument begins. Because of the sandy soil where L'Enfant had specified a monument, it is not built at the exact intersection of the axes. Work on the monument slows after 1854 as the anti-foreign Know-Nothing Party seizes the monument to protest the contribution of a memorial stone by Pope Pius IX. Rising

sectionalism prevents continuation of the work beyond 1858.

1851
Landscape architect Andrew Jackson Downing submits a plan for a national park on the Mall, calling for a series of natural gardens. Only his plan for the Smithsonian gardens is adopted, although his influence is felt in the Department of Agriculture's garden and other parts of the Mall.

Downing's curving paths and varied foliage are quite different from L'Enfant's rational, geometric plan with a Grand Avenue lined with imposing residences, although L'Enfant's well-defined axes remain intact. Today, Constitution Gardens evokes the memory of Downing's plan.

1861
During the Civil War Washington is transformed from a quiet

town into a thriving wartime capital with a booming population. In the decades after the war the city's continuing vitality is evident in ambitious projects that bring new life to the Mall area.

1872
The Washington City Canal is covered over. The Baltimore & Potomac Railroad builds a station on the Mall where the canal had

run between 6th and 7th streets and lays tracks across the Mall. The National Gallery now stands at the site of the station, which was demolished in 1907 when Union Station was completed.

1874
Frederick Law Olmsted's landscape plan for the Capitol calls for terraces that enhance the building's setting on Capitol Hill.

1878
Work is resumed on the Washington Monument. It is dedicated in 1885.

1884
Reclamation of the mudflats begins from the Washington Monument to today's Potomac shoreline, forming what are now East and West Potomac parks.

1902
The McMillan Commission proposes a reflecting pool west of the Washington Monument, a memorial to Lincoln, a major memorial south of the Washington Monument, a bridge between the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington National Cemetery, government buildings in the area between Pennsylvania Avenue and the Mall (Federal Triangle), and restoration of the open, geometric quality L'Enfant wanted for the Mall.

1932
Having used borrowed quarters for 143 years, the Supreme Court finally moves into its own building.

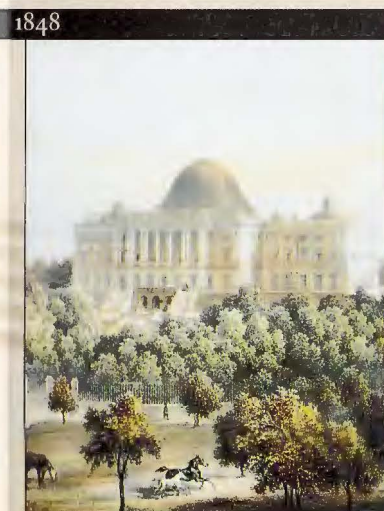
1971
The Mall's World War I temporary structures are removed to make room for Constitution Gardens, completed in time for the 1976 Bicentennial.

1998
The National Capital Planning Commission recommends developing North and South Capitol streets, removing railroad tracks and a free-way that divide the city, reinforcing the connection between the Capitol and Anacostia River, improving the Anacostia waterfront, and linking Georgetown to the National Arboretum.



James Hoban designed the White House in the style of an 18th-century manor house. As shown here, the British in 1814 re-

duced the building to a burned-out shell during the War of 1812. Under Hoban's direction it was rebuilt by 1817.



The Capitol as it appeared with its early copper dome, before work on the extended wings and the current dome began in the 1850s.



President Lincoln insisted that work on the new Capitol dome continue during the Civil War. It was completed in 1863. This view also shows the Washington

Canal, the Smithsonian building on the Mall, and the unfinished Washington Monument in the distance.



This painting (left), used in the presentation of the McMillan Commission plan, shows the proposed memorial to Lincoln and the bridge linking the memorial to Arlington National Cemetery.

The plan for Washington, D.C., in the 21st century by the National Capital Planning Commission would enhance the Capitol's role as the visual focus of Washington, linking it to the rest of the city and to

an improved riverfront via the landscaped and revitalized Capital streets. The plan builds on the legacy of the L'Enfant and McMillan Commission plans that had shaped the city.

A place created and planned as the seat of government; a young city that powerfully evokes the past; treasury of a nation's heritage; home to hundreds of thousands of people. The nation's capital can be seen from a number of perspectives, all of which are better understood after a visit to the heart of Washington, D.C.—the National Mall area. The Mall's formal structures, ceremonial spaces, and carefully planned vistas have their roots in earlier European capitals designed to showcase autocratic regimes. But these are, in Walt Whitman's words, democratic vistas, where the American people can freely assemble to play, attend cultural events, or petition the government for change. In 1933 stewardship of the Mall area passed to

the National Park Service, whose rangers will help you get the most out of your visit, whether you see the Lincoln Memorial, ascend the Washington Monument, or just relax and enjoy the beauty of our national green.

In Washington, D.C., you can view the magnificent buildings that house the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches of government—White House, Capitol, and Supreme Court. Washington is also where the nation commemorates the wars the country has fought and the men and women who served and gave their lives in them. Less well known than some memorials but quite moving is the Ulysses S. Grant Memorial near the Cap-

itol. The soldiers flanking Grant show the fear, the fatigue, the strain of battle; they give a haunting face to war. The nation's great presidents—those to whom the nation is in debt for their leadership during the republic's formative years or during crisis—are honored here: Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt. Smaller, quieter places like the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site and the Sewall-Beaumont House commemorate the struggles by African Americans and women for equality before the law. The National Archives, Smithsonian Institution, and Washington's other great museums—these are repositories of things the nation holds significant, because they are beautiful, rare, instructive, or because they help us remember.

Architecturally the buildings and monuments of Washington can be powerful, often handsome, sometimes controversial, but they are most important in what they say about us. We read in each the changing concerns, attitudes, and tastes of the culture that built them. Beyond the sites and structures, beyond the events and people they commemorate, are the truths they embody: justice, equality, courage, honor—the tools of a free society. Just as the Mall is the symbolic heart of Washington, Washington is more than simply the governmental center of the United States. This city gives shape to our common heritage and to the diverse culture that is our source of renewal; it is a place that defines us as a people.



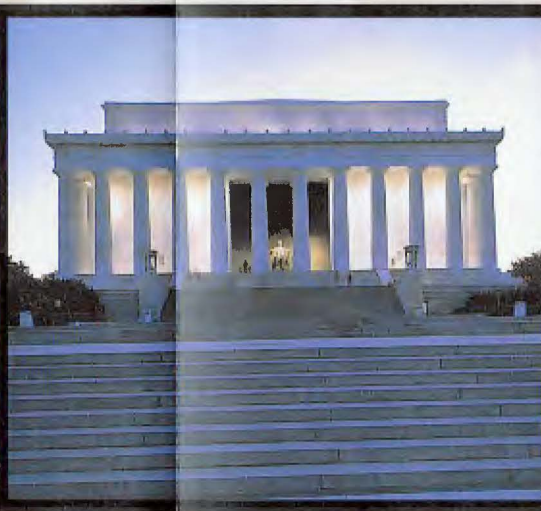
The west front of the Capitol makes a graceful transition down to the Mall in a series of arcades, steps, and terraces. At its base are the Ulysses S. Grant Memorial and Capitol Reflecting Pool.



The White House is the president's home and office. It is the center of the Executive Branch of government and the place where the president receives foreign dignitaries.



The Vietnam Veterans Memorial (above) lists the names of service men and women who died in the conflict or who remain missing.



The Lincoln Memorial (above) was designed in the style of a classical Greek temple. To make the memorial a more effective terminus to the Mall, the



The U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial (above) depicts the moment when Marines raised the flag over Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima during World War II.

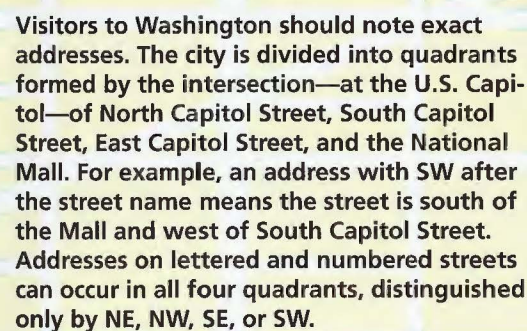


Architect Thomas Jefferson was influenced by classical models typified by the colonnaded, domed Pantheon in Rome—the inspiration for his Rotunda at the University of Virginia. The design for the Thomas Jefferson



Visitors to the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial (detail at left) move through four outdoor rooms, one for each of his terms in office. Sculptures, inscriptions, plantings, and flowing water make this a moving tribute to this important president.

Tourmobile
The Tourmobile, a National Park Service concessioner, offers interpretive tours of the National Mall area, Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, Mount Vernon, and Arlington National Cemetery. Buy tickets at any tour stop or buy in advance from Ticketmaster at www.ticketmaster.com or call 202-554-7950. Tickets include unlimited re-boarding. For lift-equipped tour vehicle service call 703-979-0690.



Find these sites on map directly above

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