This Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action Washington History Resource Guide is a curated list of content from Washington History including:

✓ A special issue released Fall 2020, “Meeting the Moment” came together in the summer of 2020 as a response to the global pandemic and ongoing Black Lives Matter protests.

✓ Profiles of famous as well as less well-known Black women and men who have made their mark on Washington, D.C.;

✓ Articles addressing political and social issues affecting the lives of Black women and men in Washington, D.C., from its founding to the near-present;

✓ Pieces highlighting the impact of local Black women and men on the arts, business, culture and politics of Washington, D.C.

✓ Teachable Moments - short articles designed for classroom use that take a single local primary source and explore its historical context with DCPS curricular needs in mind; and

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**Washington History in the Classroom**

The DC History Center deepens understanding of our city’s past to connect, empower, and inspire. Our vision is to reach into all eight Wards to preserve and elevate the stories of Washington’s diverse people, neighborhoods, and institutions. We will do this work as a welcoming and inclusive community that fosters curiosity and nurtures civic engagement to strengthen our city for all.

*Washington History* is the only scholarly journal devoted exclusively to the history of our nation’s capital. *Washington History* is the successor to the *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, first published in 1897. The DC History Center, formerly known as the Historical Society of Washington, D.C. began publishing today’s *Washington History* magazine in 1989, the same year the organization changed its name. *Washington History* is filled with scholarly articles, reviews, and a rich array of images. It is written and edited by distinguished historians and journalists.

> In the 19 years I’ve been teaching D.C. history to high school students, my scholars have used *Washington History* to investigate their neighborhoods, compete in National History Day, write and produce plays based on real-life historical characters. They’ve grappled with concepts such as compensated emancipation, the 1919 riots, school integration, and the evolution of the built environment of Washington, D.C. I could not teach courses on Washington, D.C. history without *Washington History*.
>
> –Bill Stevens, a D.C. public charter school teacher.

The full run of *Washington History* is available in print as well as online through the JSTOR database, which accessible through the Kiplinger Research Library at the DC History Center.
History Center as well as many public and school libraries. For more information, visit the DC History Center, at www.dchistory.org.

Selected profiles

From left, Lillian Evanti, Duke Ellington, and Loretta Carter Hanes

Dorcas Allen

Benjamin Banneker

Marion Barry
Perry Carson

Charles Drew

Lillian Evanti

Ellington, Edward Kennedy "Duke"

Louis Edwin Fry, Sr.

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Walter E. Washington

Ann Marie Weems

George Henry White
Garnet C. Wilkinson


John Francis Nicholas Wilkinson

Selected articles highlighting local acts of civic activism


Selected articles addressing local arts, business, culture, and community


*Louis Armstrong with others in the Club Charles at 1338 R Street NW; Lois Jones exhibit at the Barnett-Aden Gallery, at 127 Randolph Place NW, the first privately-owned Black gallery in the United States.*


Teachable Moments addressing compensation emancipation, racial covenants, and the civil rights era

These short articles are designed for classroom use. They take a single local primary source and explore its historical context with DCPS curricular needs in mind.

A sample teachable moment is provided at the end of the section.

✓ Using primary sources ✓ Emancipation

✓ Using primary sources ✓ Geography ✓ Map skills ✓ Built environment

✓ Using primary sources ✓ Civil Rights

✓ Using primary sources ✓ Civil Rights ✓ Transportation changes

✓ Using primary sources ✓ Map skills ✓ Built environment
Sarah Jane Shoenfeld, ““Blockbusting” and Racial Turnover in Mid-Century D.C.,” 30-2 (fall 2018), 50-54

✓ Using primary sources ✓ Civil Rights ✓ Geography ✓ Map skills ✓ Built environment
Teachable Moment

The Winding Path to Freedom under the District of Columbia Emancipation Act of April 16, 1862

BY JOSEPH P. REIDY

Washingtonians properly observe April 16 as Emancipation Day, marking the anniversary of the day in 1862 when President Abraham Lincoln signed into law a bill outlawing slavery in the city and compensating slaveowners for the loss of their property. Though nearly 3,000 slaves eventually gained freedom under the law, enslaved people did not suddenly become free on April 16. Much could—and did—go wrong in the months following the passage of the law. This issue’s “Teachable Moment” examines a notable case that illustrates how convoluted and uncertain the journey to freedom could be.

The case involved a white man named Alexander McCormick, who claimed five African Americans as his slaves: Mary Thomas, about 50 years of age; her two daughters, Emeline Wedge, 25, and Alice Thomas, 15; and Emeline’s two children, Martha Ann Elizabeth, five, and George Washington, four. McCormick’s farm lay east of the Eastern Branch (as the Anacostia River was then known), straddling the border between the District of Columbia and Prince George’s County, Maryland, near Bladensburg. Much of the property was located on the District side of the line, including a stable, animal pens, and the farmhouse where McCormick, his wife, his servants, and several hired laborers apparently resided. Several cultivated fields, a pasture, and a spring were on the Maryland side.

When Congress passed the emancipation act, McCormick feared that he would be forced to give up his slaves because they lived in the District. So he devised an elaborate scheme to move them to the Maryland side of the farm beyond the reach of the new law. First he built a “quarter,” as several neighbors termed it, on the Maryland side for the women and children to occupy. He then turned his attention to their labor, trying to be sure that they worked only in the Maryland fields and pasture. Among other things, he ordered them to tend the cows in the Maryland pasture and then hand them off each day to one of the hired laborers at the District line for herding across the forbidden soil of Washington to the cowpen. McCormick instructed the women not to set foot on the Washington side of the line, not even to visit Emeline’s husband, George Wedge, a free man, who lived with his parents in the District nearby.

The law gave slaveowners 90 days to submit a claim for compensation to the three-man board of commissioners appointed to review all emancipation cases, but McCormick had no intention of submitting a claim. He was not alone: the commissioners soon realized that many masters were evading the law by leaving the city and taking their slaves with them. Without a master’s request for compensation, which in turn triggered the commissioners’ examination into the validity of the claim, no free papers could be issued. On July 12, 1862, Congress closed this legal loophole by passing a supplemental bill that permitted enslaved persons whose masters did not request compensation to petition the commissioners directly for free papers.

That is precisely what Mary Thomas, Emeline Wedge, and Alice Thomas did. Mary Thomas, who appears to have resisted McCormick’s attempt to move her with her daughters and grandchildren into the quarter in April, requested free papers on July 26, and the commissioners heard and approved her case the same day, unchallenged by McCormick. When Emeline (on her own behalf and that of her children) and Alice later did the same, McCormick challenged their claims. The commissioners opened an investigation, and the following transcription is an excerpt of those proceedings. The original document was written in longhand by a clerk who sought to record the highlights of each witness’s testimony, which was at times punctuated by questions from the commissioners or other participants. Note that words crossed out in the original are omitted here without notation. Ellipses (…) designate where text from the original document has been deleted in the interest of space. Illegible or partly legible words are designated by brackets or bracketed question marks [?].
Emeline Wedg's petition for free papers. Courtesy, National Archives and Records Administration

This 1862 map of the forts defending Washington shows McCormick's property at the upper right, just east of the Anacostia River. The mapmaker spelled his name "Macormick." E.G. Arnold, map, courtesy Library of Congress

This 1861 map of Prince George's County, Maryland, shows the Maryland portion of McCormick's farm to the east of the river. Simon J. Martine map, courtesy Library of Congress

Teachable Moment
1. This date is eight full months after passage of the emancipation act, during which time Alice Thomas, Emeline Wedge, and Wedge's children remained enslaved.

2. "Col" was a contraction for "colored," commonly used in official documents, newspapers, city directories, and the like to identify people of African ancestry. Both the emancipation act and the supplemental act departed radically from convention by authorizing the commissioners to accept the testimony of black witnesses.

3. Emeline Wedge is establishing, contrary to McCormick's assertions and those of several other subsequent witnesses, that she and her sister continued to live and work on the District side of the property after April 16, 1862.

4. The Sunday was April 13, 1862, and the Thursday, April 17. The testimony of Lewis Cook, below, identifies McCormick's mother as Mrs. Matilda Young of Prince George's County, Maryland.

5. The clerk clearly intended to refer to Emeline and Alice here. Alice's full name was Alice Virginia.

6. Women of the farm, white and black, worked together to prepare harvested crops for market.

7. On December 22, McCormick reconsidered, and, after claiming that he had earlier misunderstood how the hearings were to be conducted, the commissioners allowed him to participate.

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Dec. 16, 1862

Alexander McCormick, owner

(Negroes asking for freedom.)

Emeline Wedge, sworn (Col)

Knows Alice Virginia Thomas, was slave of Mr. Alexx. McCormick. Alice was in the District on the 16th of April last, farm on the line but most of it is in District. Alice was sent in District by her master very frequently getting the cows, water, Cows have to be brought through part of the District to get home from pasture. Alice usually brings the cows. Mr. McCormick's dwelling house is in District and Alice has been employed there a good deal of the time since 16th April last, up there every morning, eats there often. Identifies the girl present as Alice.

Alice Virginia Thomas (sworn) Col

Knows Emeline Wedge now present. Was Alex McCormick's servant on 16th Apr last & he still claims her. Lives on Mr McC's farm, and works most of the time on the farm and at the house in the District

George Wedge (Colored) I know Alice Virginia Thomas. She belonged to Mr Alexx McCormick. 16 April last she was living in District at Mr McCormick's house. on Sunday he took servants to his mothers and kept them there until Thursday, during which time he built a small house on Maryland side—

Alice has been every day in District. She gets up cows every day and cowpen was in District and my wife two or three times a week.

My mother was very ill (two months ago) children came every day to house to see my mother. Weather became bad and children said...

I have seen Alice & Virginia shelling beans at Mr McCormick's kitchen since 16th Apl. Mrs McCormick by them.

I sent to Mr McCormick by wife to let her come to see my mother and he permitted her to come

Mr McCormick being notified came and said he came because he was summoned, that he wanted nothing to do with it here. He believed the law to be un Constitutional and he was willing to bide his time — did not wish to & did not hear the testimony & withdrew.

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Dec 17, 1862

Witness

Emeline Wedge. My child’s name is Martha Ann Elizabeth — 3 years old, is in District at her fathers — is claimed as Mr. McCormick’s slave. Have another child named George Washington — now about 4 years old — is with his father — also claimed as Mr. McCormick’s slave. Were moved, a few days before the Emancipation act passed, over the Maryland line — have been in the District frequently with their master’s consent since the 16th April last.

Dec 22

Lewis Cook. Have been living for 9 months in Maryland with Mrs Matilda Young. I was there when Mr McCormick brought these servants there, on Sunday and until Thursday—4 days when Mr McCormick removed them. I assisted Mr McCormick in mean time to build house in Maryland for servants. Mr McCormick took servants there to live. & It was before act passed knew when
House is some 100 yards on Maryland line farm on both sides of District & Maryland line

James Fowler. I do not know how long during summer I marketed for Mr. McCormick. I marketed all produce of farm. In August they were at work in District but not by Mr McCormick's order—cleaning hogs—Mr McCormick was notat home. I never knew Mr McCormick to require work of them in District. Mr & Mrs McCormick assisted me in gathering & marketing—.

Barrell from which hogs were watered was in Maryland—water was carried from that barrel to hog pen by Ned Nevin & Mr McCormick. .

Often seen house which Mr McCormick built were there every day . . .

I plastered the house, with Mr McCormick—I never heard Mr McCormick talk about it—They could, I could, live in the house. Srove in there, bed in there, bed downstairs, sometimes fire there. one of girls made fire—frame house. I did not see children there.

I am well acquainted with George Wedge character for truth & veracity would not believe much in what he says.

Dec. 30. Tuesday.
John H. Owen (produced by Mr McCormick).
I went to live with Mr McCormick 12 May and lived until 23 August. While living with Mr McCormick I knew Mr Mc to allow the servants to come into Maryland. They never came in District line except of their own accord and it was against Mr McCormick's order. When binding rye they were kept on Maryland side. When they came to about line Mr McCormick would stop them and tell them to go no further. . . . I never knew them to be required or allowed to work at house or drive cows or milk them I never knew them to do so except of their own accord

I have heard Mr Mc ordered children away from the house I never knew them to work the sweet potato crop near quarter worked by Mr Mc & myself. Cowpen 100 or 150 yards from line. Sally King attended cows when I was living there then Mr King got cows up generally. I never knew Mr Mc to get them up. I have got them up. I have known cows to go up of own accord. Would go up of their own accord when driven in neighborhood of cowpen. Most of crop was on District side was not work enough on Maryland side for the girls. They were a good deal of time unemployed at quarter while we were at work. I never knew of them being ordered or desired to do anything on District side.

William Wedge. I live in District, round the road short 3/4 of a mile further of George Wedge. Little children have been to my house for two months. Wedges wife & sixty have been at my house every night since children have been there. go back in morning. I have seen Lou driving cattle, have seen her at the marsh and cowpen. Cant say marsh is in District have seen her drive cows to cowpen. Cant say how often, but frequently have never seen her drive them out of cowpen. Cant say whether bars or not. It is not gated. have seen her put up bars when the cows went in.

Servants got to my house sometimes before candlelight sometimes just after sunset, go away when it was light.
On December 30, 1862, the commissioners completed their investigation and dismissed McCormick’s claim that the women had lived in Maryland since before passage of the act. They concluded that the house he had built for them “could scarcely be said to be inhabitable.”

And, although McCormick may have objected to the women and children staying with the Wedges in the District, “he took no steps to have them removed.” Finally, at McCormick’s direction, the women carried “vegetables from the farm to Wedge’s . . . with directions for him to take them to market.” The commissioners found that the petitioners were “entitled to their freedom.” McCormick received no compensation.

Bested but unbowed, Alexander McCormick wrote to the commissioners, protesting “the effect & correctness” of their decision. He held firm to the conviction that the women were “his Slaves” who had “abscended from the State of Maryland.”

For more than eight months after the emancipation law took effect, Emeline Wedge, her sister Alice, and her children remained enslaved despite the clear intentions of Congress. They spent a full agricultural cycle, from spring planting through autumn harvesting, on the farm as their legal ordeal continued. Their courage, ingenuity, and persistence in challenging their master’s efforts to evade the law helped them at last achieve the freedom that the law promised and that they rightfully deserved.

Joseph P. Reidy, a professor of history and an associate provost of Howard University, is writing a book on the winding road to freedom during the Civil War era.

Source
The original petitions of Mary Thomas, Emeline Wedge and her children, and Alice Thomas are among the Records of the U.S. District and Other Courts in the District of Columbia, 1810-1993, Record Group 21, Records of the District Courts of the United States, 1688-1993, National Archives and Records Administration, National Archives Building, Washington, D.C.

For a full transcript of this petition, as well as copies of the original documents of the petitions, supporting documents, and notes from approximately 1,100 petitions that the commissioners reviewed in connection with the D.C. emancipation act, see the Website of the Civil War Washington project at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln (http://civilwarlincoln.org/texts/petitions/).
Case Study: Community Policing in the Nation’s Capital, 1968-1973

What was the Pilot District Project?
The Pilot District Project (PDP) was a federally funded experiment in community policing. The program launched in 1968 with broad goals for police reform and citizen participation in a predominantly African American area of Washington, D.C., and was an early effort to intervene in the ways that police and residents interacted on the streets. Mired in internal struggle and public clashes, the PDP ended without fanfare when the funding ran out.

The PDP launched with broad goals for police reform and citizen participation. The city’s Third District (now most of today’s Ward 1) was selected as the pilot location. Although the PDP faced criticism from some District residents—resentful of attempts by white government officials to exert control over Black neighborhoods—they were active in public meetings and campaigned for positions on the advisory board.

What did the PDP accomplish?
The project enacted several important innovations during its five-year run, including 24-hour police stations, citizen ride-alongs, and a series of bulletin boards to share information about police work. The program also introduced police sensitivity training along with Spanish-language training. Looking back 50 years later, the PDP serves as a timely reminder that the struggle to repair relationships between police and African Americans is not new.

However, the PDP was a short-lived, controversial program. Conceived as a pilot, it never expanded to other cities. By pretty much any standard, it was not a resounding success. But does that mean it was a failure? Looking back at this project, which operated under both liberal and conservative administrations, helps us understand how citizens and the police force have long disagreed about how we use public space.
Why study the Pilot District Project?
The PDP is a study both in federal intervention in local affairs and a look at grassroots activism. The PDP citizens advisory board was Marion Barry’s first elected office in D.C. Other prominent participants included Carlos Rosario (the leading Latino community activist in Washington, D.C. during the 1960s), Charles I. Cassell (chair of the Black United Front and founder of the D.C. Council of Black Architects), David A. Clarke (served on the first elected Washington City Council), Calvin W. Rolark (founder of the United Black Fund, Inc. and the Washington Informer), and Walter Fauntroy (Citizens Committee for Equal Justice). Fifty years on, this is a compelling and timely story of urban policing, community participation and resilience, federal intervention, and a program with good intentions that perhaps was never up to its herculean task.

How can my students learn more about the Pilot District Project and the history of interactions between the police and residents in Washington, D.C.?
The following suggested resources are available online through both free sites and fee-based databases; the latter can be accessed through the Kiplinger Research Library at the DC History Center, the DC Public Library, the Library of Congress, and through some school libraries.

This excerpt analyzes a key facet of the urban environment - police /community/ City Council relations. In so doing, it captures the city's atmosphere as it began the transition from appointed to elected city government. The author served from 1967 to 1969 as the presidially appointed chairman of the first City Council since Reconstruction.


Since its creation in 1960, SNCC had focused on register- ing African Americans in the rural South to vote, and it had not been very active in Washington. In spring 1965, though, SNCC members sensed an opportunity to organize the Black community because "no one else is doing anything effective" in D.C. despite "the existence of a body of people who want to move." Marion Barry, who came to the city in spring 1965 to take over the local SNCC office, saw the fare dispute as a local issue that could motivate people to participate in an organized protest.

Thomas L. Lalley Pilot District Project files (MS 0885) and Robert Shellow Pilot District Project files (MS 0907), Kiplinger Research Library, DC History Center, https://dchistory.pastperfectonline.com/

The records include Pilot District Project founding documents, minutes of meetings, annual reports, publications, clippings. This material covers the origin and history of the project, including background, structure, events, personnel, and results. Available at the Kiplinger Research Library in the DC History Center at the historic Carnegie Library.

CG 8225: The People and the Police
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLugwVCjzrJsV6H33v35BFdMfxVfOlqrqr
https://catalog.archives.gov/id/73174
"Solution," indeed, took the form of a "law and order" campaign for the Presidency by Richard Nixon in 1968, with its strong racial overtones and the implication that more cops, more guns, more toughness, no more coddling, and presto-no crime. It did not work out that way. Something else must be tried. Across the country of America, there is a large gap between police and inner city residents. On the establishment side there is an opinion that police are justified by performing their duties by virtually whatever means necessary-on the nonestablishment side it is very widely understood that some police will do anything necessary whether justified or not. Washington, D.C., a city of 70 per cent Blacks, the capital of the nation, the place where Congress and the President dwell, is no exception to the rule of police-citizen misunderstanding and alienation on both sides. To this end there are two sides with no bridge between them—Where do we go from here? (The Pilot District Project Newsletter, Vol. 1, No. 1). This paper describes efforts to build such a bridge and in the process to develop data pointing to where to go from there. It is an analysis and evaluation of four four-day intensive working seminars conducted by the District of Columbia Government Pilot District Project (PDP). Designed to enable participants to explore the nature of authority and the problems encountered in its exercise, each seminar was attended by police officers working and civilian citizens living in Washington D.C.'s Third Police District."
Meeting the Moment: Commentary on 2020

*Washington History*, Fall 2020 | Volume 32, Numbers 1,2

“Meeting the Moment” came together in the summer of 2020 as a response to the global pandemic and ongoing Black Lives Matter protests. *Washington History* challenged DC historians to look back into their research and ask: what could DC’s past tell us about how we arrived at this moment? What are this moment’s implications for our next steps as a community? Their essays probe the old structures and experiences, dating back to the District’s founding, that shape our present.

The issue is available for purchase through the [DC History Center Store](https://www.dchistoryfoundation.org/), and each article listed below is available through [JSTOR](https://www.jstor.org/).

**POLITICS OF DC SPACES**

**Capital Power** Intersection Corner of Marginalization and Emancipation, by Christopher Klemek.

_Does DC protest matter?_

**Lafayette Square** The People's Park, by Matthew R. Costello.

_Where Americans gather to protest_

**President's Park** From Free to Fortified, by Thomas E. Luebke.

_Designing for public access and presidential security_

**Black Lives on 16th Street**, by John DeFerrari

_19th century Black presence_

**Unfinished Business in a Divided City**, by Mara Cherkasky

_The lingering impact of race-based housing policy and practice_

**Black Freedom's Lincoln Spaces**, by Derek Gray

Interpreting the memorials to Lincoln
The Chocolate State, by Brandi Thompson Summers

Attaching Statehood to Black Lives Matters

DEMOCRACY IN DC STREETS

1848 The Pearl, by Mary Beth Corrigan
Enslaved Washingtonians caught escaping, riots ensue

1919 Defending Black Lives, by David F. Krugler
White mobs and police riot against Black community and are repelled

1932 The Bonus March, by Jennifer D. Keene
President Hoover’s DC Commissioners order police, assisted by U.S. military, to forcibly break up peaceful protest encampment

1971 Mayday, by Lawrence Roberts
President Nixon’s men authorize army to break up anti-Vietnam War protests

1991 Mount Pleasant, by Patrick Scallen
Latino and Black young people battle police after inebriated man shot by an officer

ACTIVISTS

My Life Then and Now, by E. Ethelbert Miller
The poet, writer, and literary activist recalls his political awakening

Defending Tenants in the Midst of a Plague, by Amanda Huron
How the 1918 flu pandemic resulted in rent controls

Black Health Matters, by Mary-Elizabeth B. Murphy
Dr. Ionia Rollin Whipper, Black health disparities, and voting rights

"I Would Carry a Sign" Black Youth Challenge Jim Crow, by Paula C. Austin
Tracking children as political actors
Organizing Howard, by Joshua M. Myers  
*Roots of the 1989 protest that forced Lee Atwater off Howard's board of trustees*

Science and Freedom, by Rachel Watkins  
*The fallacy of biological differences along racial lines*

**LAW, ORDER, DEMOCRACY**

Say Their Names, by Sarah Jane Shoenfeld  
*A century of Black people killed by DC police*

The Silence of the Founders, by Kenneth R. Bowling  
*The missed opportunity to abolish slavery in the Constitution*

Suing for Freedom in Washington, by William G. Thomas III  
*Survey uncovers more than 500 lawsuits by enslaved people in DC challenging legality of slavery*

Race, Policing, and Reform, by Kate Masur  
*Racist policing rooted in its role as a means to protect private property and regulate the poor.*

Learning from Our Ancestors, by Chris Myers Asch and George Derek Musgrove  
*Seizing opportunities to address racial inequality in policing*

1968 Courts, Curfews, Citizens, by Kyla Sommers  
*Washingtonians volunteered to assist the thousands arrested for looting, rioting, and curfew violation in 1968*

DC Black Radical Politics and Federal Law and Order, by Lauren Pearlman  
*How federal law-and-order measures undermined DC Black leaders and activists in the 1960s*
**Fulcrum in the Federal System**, by Bell Julian Clement

*Washington's unique place within the federal system made the protests of June 2020 powerful*

**New Institutions, Better History**, by Eric S. Yellin

*Seizing the opportunity to tell a fuller, more truthful history beyond stories of "great men"*

**Justice in the Public Square**, by Howard Gillette, Jr.

*How urban policy continues to transform the District and disrespect its African American communities*