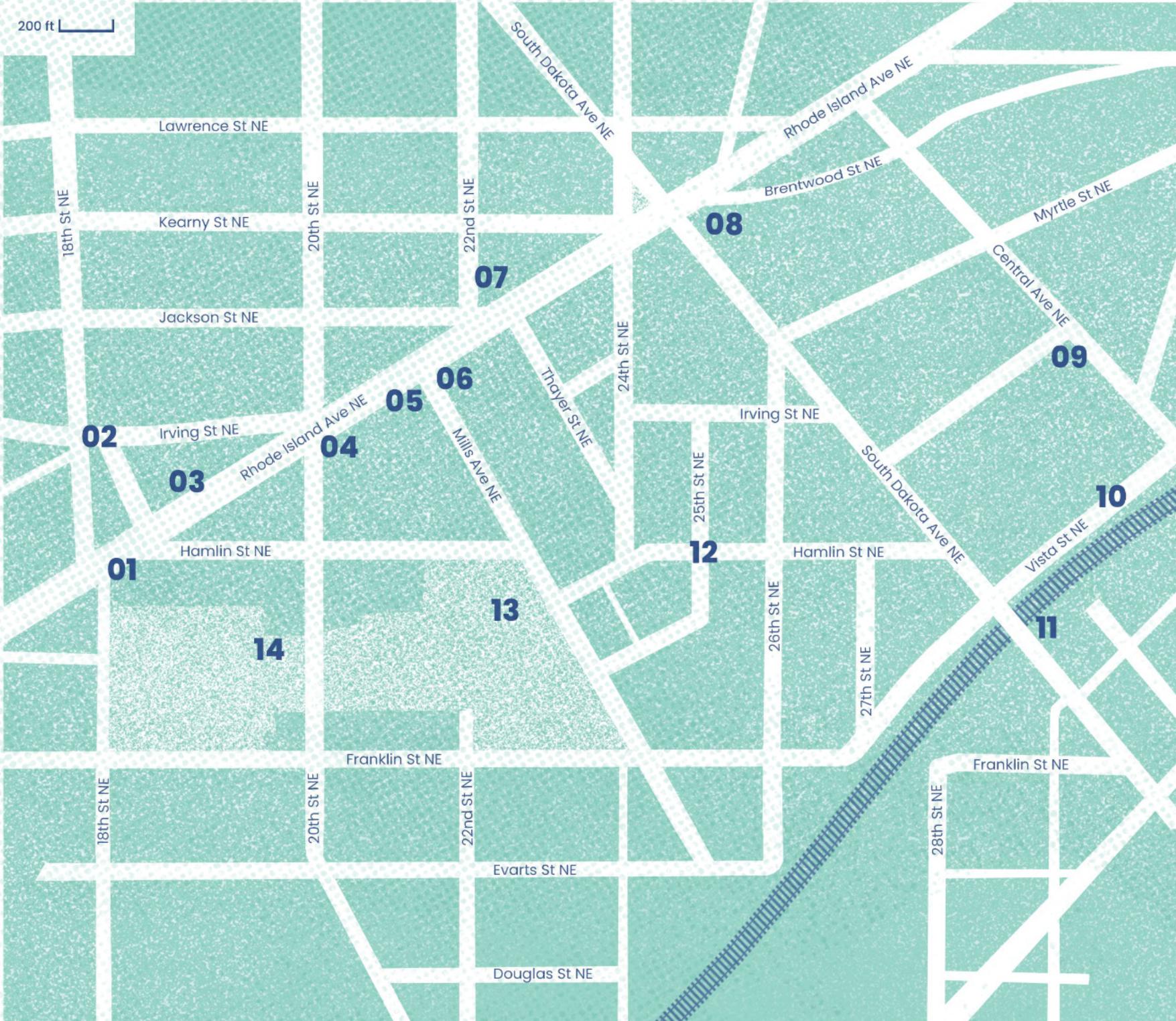


WOODRIDGE

Self-Guided Walking Tour and
Neighborhood History Guide



Note: Some sites on this tour are private residences. Please be respectful and do not trespass.



- 01**
Woodridge
Neighborhood Library
- 02**
Queens Chapel Road
- 03**
Fort Saratoga
- 04**
Saint Francis DeSales
- 05**
Men's Clothing Shop
- 06**
Harry and Jacob Spund
Brothers Market
- 07**
Munson O. Bull House and
Real Estate Office
- 08**
Northeast Corner of Historic
Woodridge at Proposed
Brownwood Park
- 09**
Woodridge Elementary
School
- 10**
1834 Routing of Railroad
- 11**
South Dakota Avenue
Bridge Over Freight Rail
Tracks
- 12**
Site of Fort Thayer
- 13**
Langdon Park East
- 14**
Langdon Park West



Neighborhood Introduction

Woodridge is located in the northeast quadrant of Washington, DC, bounded by Bladensburg Road NE, 18th Street NE, Michigan Avenue NE, and Eastern Avenue NE.

This land was originally part of Washington County, falling outside of the “central city.” In the 19th century, new railroads and roadways drew development to the outer edges of the District. In the 1920s, a commercial corridor developed along Rhode Island Avenue, with an essential trolley/street car line traveling from Hyattsville to downtown. This marked a turning point drawing white, middle- and upper-middle class families living in one-

to-two-story, single-family homes to the neighborhood.

Neighborhood tensions rose in the mid 20th century when middle-class Black families began to move into the neighborhood. The Woodridge Civic Association fought for neighborhood integration and continues to organize and advocate for residents’ needs today.

The route displayed in this booklet was created prioritizing the walking path experience. For a chronological exploration of Woodridge history through the map, read in the following order: Sites 2; 10; 12; 3; 8; 11; 4; 6; 7; 9; 13; 14; 5; 1.

01

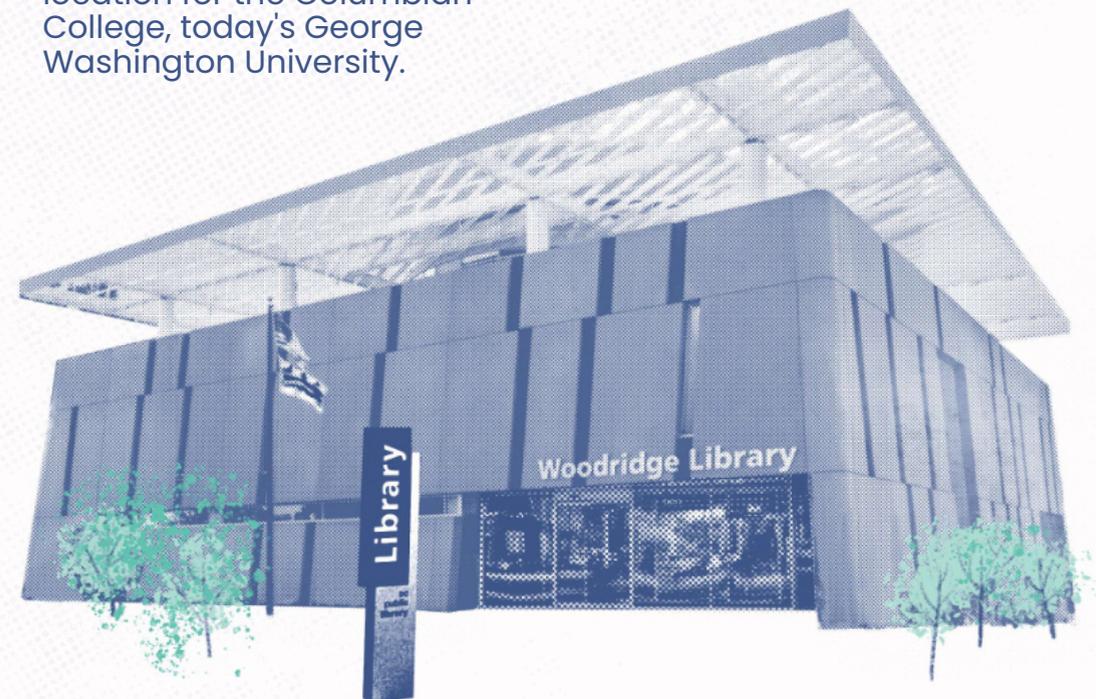
Woodridge Neighborhood Library

Extension of the streetcar service, Washington Railway and Electric Company

Intersection of 18th Street NE & Rhode Island Avenue NE

The Woodridge Regional Library was originally built in 1958 by a DC municipal architect. In 2016, it was rebuilt as the Woodridge Library by Canadian firm Bing Thom Architects. Library programs received supplemental funding by the 1997 bequest from prominent resident Elizabeth Holden. The site had first been proposed as the location for the Columbian College, today's George Washington University.

From 1908 to 1910, Rhode Island Avenue was built to extend the streetcar service (Route 82) from Washington City via Eckington to Mount Rainier, Maryland. This site was part of the extension of Rhode Island Avenue NE from 4th Street NE to the DC-Maryland border at Mount Rainier.





02

Queens Chapel Road

Railway Crossroad

Irving Street NE + Queens Chapel Road NE + 18th Street NE

Queens Chapel Road NE is a historic road that formed the western boundary of the area historically called the Granby. The road served as North/South passage for Catholic parishioners and Friars of Bohemia traveling to St. Mary's Chapel at the Marsham Queen Mansion (1725-1765) and later the Queen Chapel of Charles Richard Queen.

In 1893, legislation was passed to establish the "Permanent System of Highways for the District of Columbia," which would extend the city's street grid to what had formerly been Washington County. The new street plan resulted in Queens Chapel Road being replaced north of Irving Street NE, to become 18th Street NE.

03

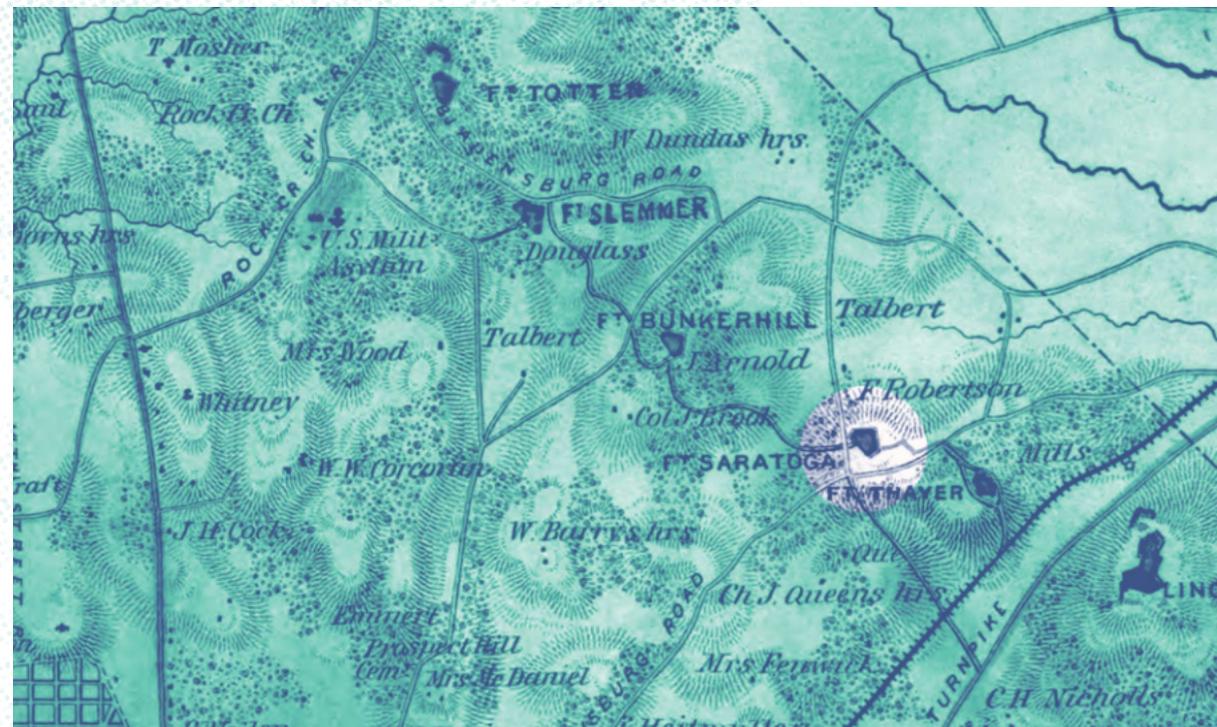
Fort Saratoga

Art Deco Business Row

Queens Chapel Road NE + Brentwood Road NE + Rhode Island Avenue NE

Today, businesses line this portion along Queens Chapel Road NE, Brentwood Road NE, and Rhode Island Avenue NE. But this land was once key in defending the nation's capital from Confederate attack. During the Civil War, the Union Army built fortifications to defend Washington, known as the Civil War Defenses of Washington. The land where this business row stands was

once part of Fort Saratoga. The fort was not preserved and underwent redevelopment in 1923 during the construction of the neighborhood. The row featured local businesses, including Thompsons Furniture Mart, A&P Grocery Store, and Hamlin Liquors, which displayed "Hamlin" on an Art Deco Neon sign with Vitrolite paneling—the first to do so in the neighborhood.



04 Saint Francis DeSales

Catholic Church

2015 Rhode Island Ave NE

Historically, the Catholic Church had a large presence in this area of Washington County. This is the final location of the St. Mary's Chapel, after its merge with St. Francis DeSales in 1908. The growing parish split in 1927 with some departing the 18th Street NE location to Maryland and the rest relocating to the Rhode Island Avenue NE address. The façade is a 1950s addition, after plans to build out the upper sanctuary of the church would never be realized.



05 Men's Clothing Shop

2207 Rhode Island Avenue NE

Constructed in 1923, this was the first building in Woodridge-Langdon to have fluorescent lighting, which came onto the market in the 1930s to compete with the prevailing technology, incandescent lighting. The storefront also featured curved glass windows,

unheard of at the time of its construction. The building was a simple men's clothing shop, but the shopping experience was one to remember. Today, the curved infrastructure remains, despite being replaced with straight panels of glass.



06

Harry and Jacob Spund Brothers Market

Across: Bowling Alley at Mills Avenue

2101 Rhode Island Avenue NE at Mills Avenue NE

Along Rhode Island Avenue NE was a bustling row of shops and entertainment. In the 1920s, this site was home to the Harry and Jacob Spund Brothers Market. The Spund brothers also lived on the property. Along the street, at 2959 Mills Avenue NE, was a bowling alley; its lower-level entrance is still visible today.

The adjacent portion of Mills Avenue is the 1910 extension of Rhode Island Avenue from Hamlin Street North, from Langdon Park. This is all part of the upper property line of the Clark Mills estate at Brentwood Road, before the extension of Rhode Island Avenue expanded eastward.



07

Munson O. Bull House

Adjacent site donated to be the original Woodridge Sub-Library

2200 - 2220 Rhode Island Avenue NE

The house on this corner was home to real estate developer Munson Offutt Bull, who constructed the six adjacent storefronts. The residence later became a funeral home, and today, is home to Damien Ministries. Bull's vision was to create a lively marketplace in the Woodridge-Sherwood neighborhood, cementing his place as a prominent community leader and philanthropist.

Because a public library was highly desired by residents, Bull donated the space at 2204 Rhode Island Avenue NE to make that dream a reality for his neighbors. The original Woodridge Sub-Library opened in 1929 and later closed in the 1950s. A photograph of the original sub-library can be seen on the Neighborhood Introduction page of this booklet.

08

Northeast corner of Historic Woodridge at proposed Brownwood Park

Barbados and Scotland Enlarged

Brentwood Road NE at South Dakota Avenue NE & Rhode Island Avenue NE

In the 1760s, this was a critical corner for travel between Georgetown and the Port of Bladensburg. During this time, predating the founding of the District of Columbia in 1790, this region mostly comprised plantations growing cash crops. This made overland

transportation of crops from farm to port essential. Over time, these tracts of land became privately developed and incorporated into the federal city. In more recent history, this corner was the proposed site for Brownwood Park; later named Woodridge.



09

Woodridge Elementary School

2959 Carlton Ave NE

This school opened in 1928 to relieve overcrowding at neighborhood elementary schools, Langdon and Burroughs. Originally opened as a white-only, segregated school, Woodridge Elementary School began to accept African American students after 1958. In later

decades, declining enrollment caused the school to close, resulting in students transferring to Langdon Elementary in the 2000s. Later, the building underwent an expansion and became the Friendship Public Charter School, Woodridge Campus.





10

1834 Routing of Railroad

Washington Branch of Baltimore and Ohio

Vista Street NE from Central Avenue, west to South Dakota Avenue NE

To extend the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad (B&O) to downtown Washington City in 1834, land was purchased from the Calvert and Mills families. Construction teams excavated a deep gorge that would allow for the passage

of trains from Bladensburg to Washington. This is part of the original path and has been in continuous operation since 1834. The route is now part of the freight railroad company CSX Transportation.

11

South Dakota Avenue Bridge Over Freight Rail Tracks

Crossing the deep gorge, US Capitol gleams in the distance on the western side

Vista Street NE & South Dakota Avenue NE, looking southwest

This is one of three bridges that cross the Washington Branch of the B&O Railroad. Visible from the bridge, atop the Capitol dome sits the Statue of Freedom cast by Woodridge resident, sculptor Clark Mills. Out of the many who worked at Mills Studio and Foundry, one enslaved man, Phillip Reed, is directly credited in the development of the statue.



12

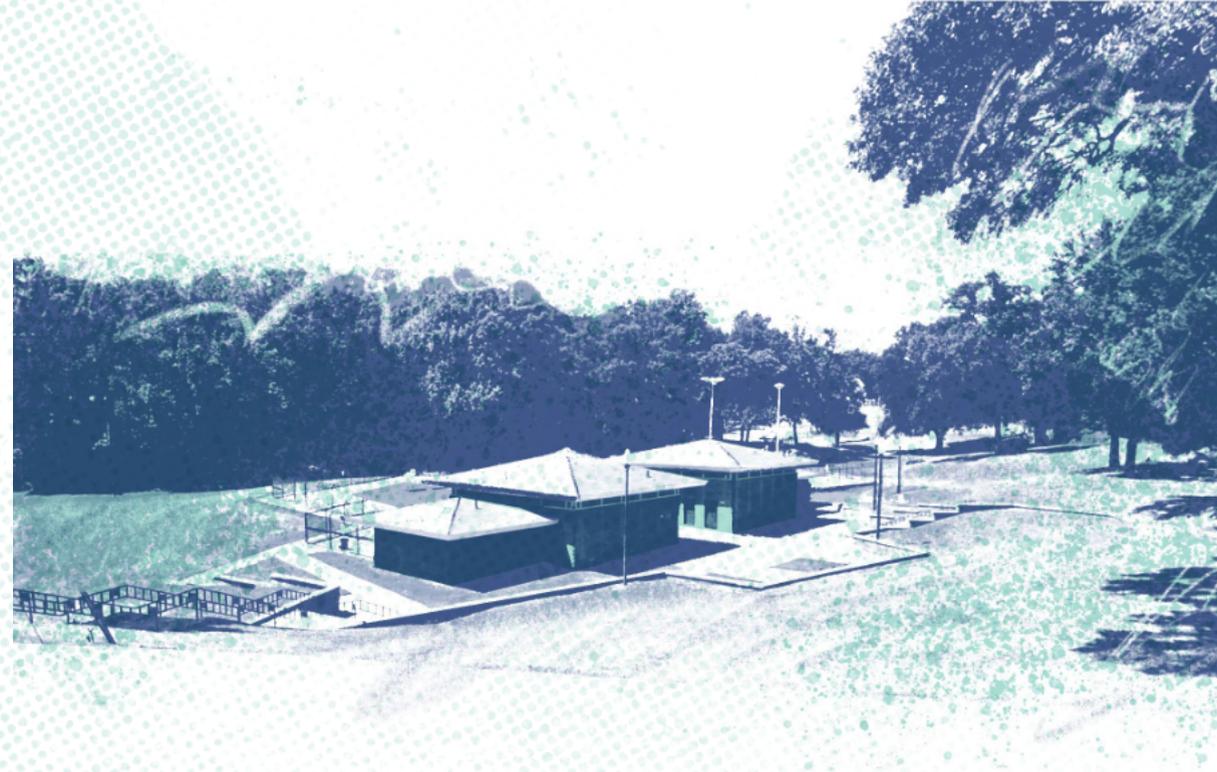
Site of Fort Thayer

Civil War earthworks fort, in use from 1861 to 1865

25th Street NE & Hamlin Street NE

On this site stood Fort Thayer, one of seven temporary Civil War earthworks forts built by the Union Army. Fort Thayer was built on leased land and lasted until 1910. This fort was not preserved or marked as part of the present-day network of trails and parks, as other Washington, DC Civil War era forts were. After a

1908 proposal to Congress went unanswered, landowners Henry A. Vieth and George Husted subdivided the land into the subdivision of West Woodridge, adjacent to East Langdon, in line with city-wide efforts to meet the housing needs of a rapidly expanding post-war population.



13

Langdon Park East

North and Eastern part of the Clark Mills estate preserving the High Flow stream to the Foundry at the Railroad Tracks

Franklin Street NE & 24th Street NE, Eastward

Once heavily wooded and untamed, Langdon Park was designated as a public amenity in 1929. In the construction of the park, 20th Street NE was extended, bisecting the park into two (east and west).

This eastern portion of Langdon Park includes the Langdon Recreation Pool and Community Garden at its southeastern tip, at Franklin Street NE and 24th Street NE.

This portion used to be the site of the Clark Mills estate protecting a high-flow stream to the Foundry at the Railroad Tracks. It is believed that the Mills family housed enslaved laborers on this site. The spring was once exposed until the 1950s and now flows underground, as part of the buried waterways to the Hickey Run of the Anacostia River.

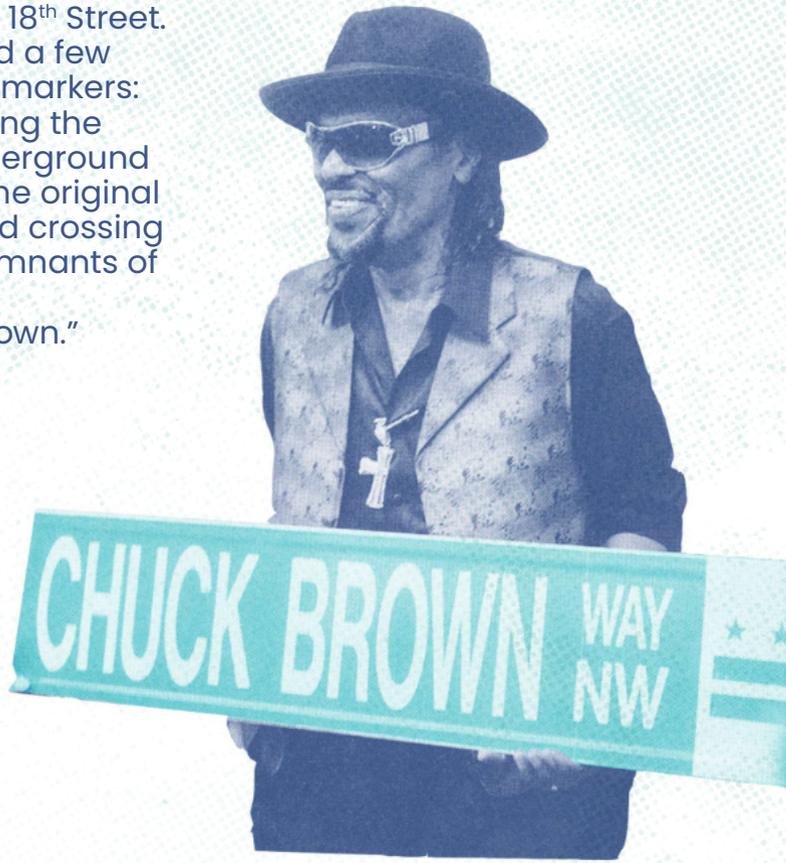
14

Langdon Park West

North and Western part of the Clark Mills estate preserving the High Flow stream to the Foundry at the Railroad Tracks

Franklin Street NE & 24th Street NE, Westward

Like its eastern sibling, Langdon Park West was designated a public amenity in 1929. This portion was also part of the Clark Mills estate that preserved the High Flow spring. The western side of Langdon Park was renamed "Chuck Brown Park" after the original amphitheater was removed. It also includes a 9-11 Memorial Grove at its western edge along 18th Street. In the park, you'll find a few historically relevant markers: a stone wall indicating the start of the now underground spring; an edge of the original Queens Chapel Road crossing the park; and the remnants of the horseshoe pits, nicknamed "Chucktown."



Acknowledgements

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For more information and details about the project's efforts, please contact info@dchistory.org

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