

Look Up,

Washington, D.C.

(Georgetown)



An Urban Hike of Georgetown...

Georgetown was formally established in 1751 when the Maryland Assembly authorized a town on the Potomac River on 60 acres of land belonging to George Beall and George Gordon; hence Georgetown. Tobacco was the lifeblood of the community and the town prospered as a shipping center with a profitable European and West Indian trade. Commerce developed along the waterfront, where wharves and flour mills were constructed. During the Revolution, Georgetown served as a great depot for the collection and shipment of military supplies.

The town was finally incorporated in 1789 but after only two years it was included in the new Federal District with the establishment of the nation's capital to the east in 1791. Georgetown retained its own character and rapidly gained a reputation as the fashionable quarter of Washington, drawing eminent visitors and residents from this country and others.

After the Civil War, large numbers of freed slaves migrated to Georgetown. The African American community flourished, becoming increasingly self-reliant. In the 1880s the waterfront prospered. But in the 1890s the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal was severely damaged by a Potomac River flood and the Canal Company was bankrupted. Georgetown went into an economic funk and in the period after World War I, gained a reputation as one of Washington's worst slums; its homes were neglected and the area deteriorated badly. This trend began to reverse itself in the 1930s with the New Deal and reached a high point when Senator John F. Kennedy resided in the neighborhood in the 1950s.

Although there are some pre-Revolutionary buildings in the district, most of the housing stock dates from the period after 1800. In the Federal period, brick replaced stone in construction of both residential and commercial buildings. The mansions of wealthy shipowners, merchants and land speculators were built above the harbor on Prospect and N streets. Hotels, taverns, banks and other commercial buildings were constructed along M Street and in the waterfront area. On the heights above the town, the squares remained intact and undivided. After the Civil War, the brick rowhouse made its appearance in Georgetown.

The Georgetown Historic District is roughly bounded by Reservoir Road, NW, and Dumbarton Oaks Park on the north; Rock Creek Park on the east; the Potomac River on the south; and Glover-Archbold Parkway on the west. Our walking tour will start on the campus of Georgetown University on the western fringe of the old town...

1. Healy Hall
Georgetown University

Georgetown University, founded in 1789, is the oldest Catholic University in America and since 1805 has been administered by the Society of Jesus. The first buildings were constructed around the "old quadrangle." Healy Hall was erected under the stewardship of the Reverend Patrick S. Healy, who undertook the massive fundraising needed to complete the building in several stages between 1877 and 1909. The building houses the elaborate Gaston Hall auditorium and the recently restored Riggs Library and has a 200-foot central clock spire.

2. Copley Hall
Georgetown University

Construction of Copley Hall was completed in 1932 and was named after Father Thomas Copley. At the time of completion, during the 1930's, Copley Hall was a popular venue for informal dances. Today it is an upperclass residence hall.

3. White-Gravenor Hall
Georgetown University

White-Gravenor Hall was built atop the White Memorial Quadrangle in 1932-1933. Originally constructed as the Science-Recitation Hall, it was named after two of the Jesuits who arrived in Maryland in 1634 on the *Ark* and the *Dove* - Andrew White and John Altham, also known as Gravenor. The building has been called a "sermon in stone" because of the Catholic and Jesuit symbolism of its external architectural details. Today it serves as home to classrooms, laboratories, and offices.

WALK OFF CAMPUS
EAST ON P STREET.

4. Convent of the Visitation
11400 34th Street, northwest corner of O Street

Joseph-Pierre Picot de Limoëlan de Clorivière was an officer in the French army and a counter-revolutionary implicated in an assassina-

tion plot against Napoleon Bonaparte. He fled to Baltimore in 1803, became a priest, and ministered in Charleston, South Carolina. After involvement in a trustee controversy there, he was assigned to the Visitation Convent in Georgetown that had started as a girls' school in 1799.

Father de Clorivière oversaw the building of the Federal-style chapel in 1925. When the monastery was built in 1857 it employed the popular ecclesiastical Gothic style of the day. In 1874 when an academy building was needed it was turned out in an ornate Victorian style. All reside happily cheek-by-jowl today.

TURN RIGHT ON 34TH STREET.

5. John F. Kennedy's 2nd Georgetown House
1400 34th Street, northwest corner of O Street

When John F. Kennedy came to Washington he decided to make Georgetown, that had been one of the city's worst slums just a few years before, his home. He eventually lived in five different homes in the neighborhood - this was his second.

TURN LEFT ON O STREET.

6. Bodisco House
3322 O Street, NW

One of Georgetown's largest brick houses was put up by banker and land speculator Clement Smith. He hooked a buyer with deep pockets - the Czarist government of Russia. The name that has stuck to the grand house is that of Alexander, Baron de Bodisco who represented the Kremlin under the Polk Administration in the 1840s. Everyone in the neighborhood knew the 60-year old Baron when he married a 16-year old Georgetown girl, Harriett Beall Williams. Not that it was another Washington scandal - Henry Clay gave away the bride and the wedding was attended by the President and his full cabinet. By all accounts the union was a happy one.

TURN RIGHT ON 33RD STREET.

7. **John F. Kennedy's Last Georgetown Home**
3307 N Street NW, at the corner of 33rd Street

This townhouse was the Kennedy's fifth, and last, Georgetown home. John and Jackie lived here the longest, from 1957 until they left for the White House. The doorstep became famous as the place where the President-elect announced his cabinet choices.

TURN LEFT ON N STREET.

8. **Smith Row**
3255-3263 N Street, NW

These five brick Federal-style houses were built by developers Walter and Clement Smith in 1815, designed well enough that they have been little altered through the decades. Contrast this to Cox's Row in the block to the west at 3327 to 3339 that needed restoration due to remodeling. Cox was a prosperous merchant. He married an heiress who brought the land now filled by Georgetown University into the marriage. Cox persuaded officials to jiggle the city boundaries so he could run for mayor and put in 22 years as Georgetown's top official. No one ever stayed in the post as long.

TURN LEFT ON
POTOMAC STREET.

9. **St. John's Episcopal Church**
southeast corner of Potomac and O streets

The congregation organized in 1796 and is Georgetown's oldest Episcopal parish. The church building dates to 1804 and owes much to William Thornton. Thornton was trained as a physician but was also a writer, horse-breeder and publisher. In his spare time he worked on the Capitol and other important early city buildings. St. John's Episcopal Church is much modified but the bell tower is thought to be original.

TURN LEFT ON O STREET.
TURN RIGHT ON 33RD STREET.

10. **Yellow Tavern**
1524 33rd Street

The Yellow Tavern, later known as White Horse Tavern, was in business in 1788. The tavern was a favorite stopping place for travelers and tobacco merchants and the odd notable dropped in from time to time. Thomas Jefferson could be found at a table on occasion and when the Marquis de Lafayette visited in 1824, Mayor John Cox entertained him "with a dinner of reed-birds, followed by dancing to music from the balcony."

TURN LEFT ON VOLTA PLACE.
TURN LEFT INTO POMANDER WALK.

11. **Pomander Walk**
south side of Volta Place, between 33rd and 34th streets

The buildings in this alley went up in the 1880s and were an overlooked slum for much of their life. Spruced up today, the ten tiny houses create a charming Georgetown nook.

RETURN TO VOLTA PLACE AND
TURN LEFT. TURN RIGHT ON
35TH STREET.

12. **Volta Bureau**
1537 35th Street, NW

Born in Edinburgh, Scotland, Alexander Graham Bell moved to Canada with his family in 1870 and a year later moved to Boston to teach at a special day school for deaf children. He became a renowned educator by opening a private normal class to train teachers of speech to the deaf and as a professor of vocal physiology and the mechanics of speech at Boston University. In fact, the invention of the telephone in 1876 was almost a speed bump in his work with the deaf. The French government awarded him a \$10,000 Volt Prize for the telephone which he plowed into establishing the American Association for the Promotion of the Teaching of Speech to the Deaf, headquartered here in his father's house at 1527 35th Street. This building was built by Pea-

body and Stearns in 1893; it looks like a temple in yellow brick from the street but is a more traditional office building when viewed from the back.

TURN RIGHT ON DENT PLACE.

13. John F. Kennedy's 3rd Georgetown Home 3321 Dent Place

This was the third of John F. Kennedy's five Georgetown homes; he and Jackie moved in as newlyweds.

TURN LEFT ON 33RD STREET AND LEFT ON WISCONSIN AVENUE. TURN RIGHT ON R STREET.

14. Scott-Grant House 3238 R Street, NW

This classically proportioned house was built by Alabaman A.V. Scott in 1858. During the Civil War he put it out for lease and attracted some famous Union Army officers. General Ulysses S. Grant rented it one summer and General Henry Walker Halleck moved in, filling the house with soldiers, drilling troops on R Street and bugling reveille each morning.

15. 3259 R Street, NW

Although obscured by hedges a variety of Victorian elements can be seen on this 1854 house, including a Second Empire mansard roof and gingerbread trim around the porch.

16. Dumbarton Oaks 3101 R Street, NW

Dumbarton Oaks was created by Mildred and Robert Woods Bliss, heir to a patent medicine fortune and diplomat in the US Foreign Service. In June of 1920, they purchased a much-altered 1801 Federal-style house and 53 acres.

After buying the property, the Blisses altered it significantly, renovating and expanding it to include the Music Room and, eventually, the Museum. They worked with Beatrix Farrand to

transform the land surrounding the house into a showplace with terraced gardens and vistas.

WALK DOWN 31ST STREET.

17. Tudor Place 1644 31st Street, NW

Designed by William Thornton at his innovative best, Tudor Place was the home of Thomas and Martha Custis Peter, granddaughter of George Washington, who left her the \$8,000 in his will that was used to purchase the property in 1805. The property, comprised of one city block on the crest of Georgetown Heights, had an excellent view of the Potomac River.

A previous owner of the property had begun improvements by building what are now the house's wings. Thornton then provided the central structure and the joining elements to the wings, combining them with buff-colored stucco over brick. Over the years, both the home and gardens have been enriched by 180 years of Peter family ownership.

TURN RIGHT ON Q STREET.

18. Bowie-Sevier House 3124 Q Street, NW

At the turn of the 19th century Washington Bowie, a merchant and shipper, owned this entire block. In 1805 he built the original five-bay center portion of the now much-expanded Federal-style house. How much has it expanded? In 2007 the mansion sold for \$24,000,000, shattering the record for the most expensive home sale in Washington DC by \$10 million. Imagine how much Bowie's entire block would be worth today.

TURN RIGHT ON 31ST STREET.

19. John F. Kennedy's 1st Georgetown Home 1528 31st Street

This is the first house John Kennedy moved into when he settled in Georgetown. As a freshman congressman in 1950, this was his bachelor pad.

TURN LEFT ON P STREET.

20. Linthicum House
3019 P Street, NW

Edward Linthicum steadily improved his Georgetown circumstances as a merchant, his success eventually landing him in Dumbarton Oaks. But before that he was able to afford this exquisitely crafted federal home in 1829. Note especially the meticulous detailing on the wide doorway.

TURN LEFT ON 30TH STREET.

21. Francis Dodge House
1517 30th Street, NW

The Dodge brothers, Francis and Robert, operated the most successful pre-Civil War shipping business in Georgetown. So successful that when Francis went looking for someone to design his new home in 1850 he couldn't land any bigger names than Andrew Jackson Downing and Calvert Vaux. It was noted by Vaux, in a letter from his client in 1854 that Francis complained about the \$15,000 cost of building his new Italianate villa, although he was quite satisfied with the comfort the excesses provided. Robert's villa stands nearby, at the corner of 28th & Q Street.

TURN LEFT ON Q STREET.

22. Cooke's Row
3307-3029 Q Street, NW

This spectacular quartet on the north side of Q Street provides a picturesque Victorian island in the Georgetown sea of Federal-style row houses. The two end units are French-inspired Second Empire designs and the middle pair are elaborately bracketed Italianates. The cornice brackets seen on these houses, built in 1868, are the best in the city.

RETURN TO 30TH STREET
AND TURN LEFT.

23. Oak Hill Cemetery
30th and R streets, NW

Oak Hill Cemetery was chartered by Congress in 1849 on land donated by banker William Wilson Corcoran. This sacred ground ranks as one of the finest Victorian garden cemeteries in the nation. At the entrance stands a handsome, three-story brick Italianate Gatekeeper's House in contrasting brick and sandstone by George de la Roche. Once beyond the gates, you'll find striking 19th-century funeral sculpture arranged on a terraced hillside sloping down to the rushing waters of Rock Creek. The graves of many important Washingtonians are here, including the cemetery's founder, Corcoran.

24. Oak Hill Cemetery Chapel
30th and R streets, NW

The Oak Hill Cemetery Chapel is the only known example of James Renwick's Gothic Revival ecclesiastical design in Washington, DC. The one story rectangular chapel, measuring 23 by 41 feet, was built in 1850 and sits on the highest ridge of the Oak Hill Cemetery. The beautifully proportioned chapel is of local Potomac gneiss trimmed in red sandstone. It is an excellent example of Gothic Revival Architecture with a steeply pitched roof, buttresses, and its pointed arched windows with tracery.

WALK DOWN 28TH STREET AND
TURN LEFT ON Q STREET.

25. Dumbarton House
2715 Q Street, NW

Dumbarton House was home to Joseph Nourse, first Register of the U.S. Treasury, until 1813. Nourse bought the home from Samuel Jackson who built on land high above Rock Creek in 1800. Nourse commissioned Benjamin Henry Latrobe, America's first prominent architect, to add balconies, portico and bays. Bought and renamed "Belle Vue" by Charles Carroll, the house would host Dolley Madison on August 24, 1814, during her flight from the White House and British invaders. In 1915 when the Dumbarton ("Q Street") Bridge was built over Rock Creek, the

house was moved 100 feet to its present site, to allow the extension of Q Street into Georgetown.

The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America, headquartered here, purchased the house in 1928, restored it to its early 19th-century Federal character and opened the house to the public in 1932.

RETURN TO 28TH STREET AND TURN LEFT.

26. Benjamin Miller House 1524 28th Street, NW

This rare wooden Federal house from 1840 stands in a sea of Georgetown brick as testament to the skills of its builder, master carpenter Benjamin Miller.

27. John F. Kennedy's 4th Georgetown Home 2808 P Street, NW

This is the penultimate Georgetown abode of then Senator John Kennedy.

TURN RIGHT ON N STREET.

28. 2806 N Street, NW

These side-hall Federal brick townhouses from 1817, are distinguished by elaborate splayed stone lintels with keystones.

29. 2812 N Street, NW

This fine home from the War of 1812-era features a beautifully articulated doorway. Legend says that the widow Decatur moved here from Lafayette Square after husband Stephen was killed in a duel in 1820.

30. Foxall House 2908 N Street, NW

This three-bay home bookended by its looming three-story neighbors belonged to Henry Foxall, who operated a munitions plant on the western fringe of Georgetown when he built this brick dwelling in 1820. Present-day Foxhall was built on his family's farm.

31. Colonial House 1305 30th Street, northeast corner of N Street

Prior to the Civil War this was the haughty finishing school for young women of means, run by Miss Lydia English. After the disastrous (for the North) Battle of Bull Run the building was pressed into service as a Union hospital. The building has since morphed into an apartment house.

32. Laird-Dunlop House 3014 N Street, NW

The brick window arches designed by William Lovering became a sort of trademark of the self-taught amateur architect. This very early example dates to 1799, built for John Laird, who earned his fortune trading tobacco.

33. Riggs-Riley House 3038 N Street, NW

Romulus Riggs, a local businessman, built a fine Federal house of modest size with a side-hall plan. A later owner, Joseph Riley, built an adjacent wing for his medical practice.

34. Wheatley Houses 3041-3043 N Street, NW

The cast-iron window heads and prominent cornice stamp this pair as Victorian variations on the standard Georgetown Federal brick townhouse.

TURN LEFT ON 31ST STREET.

35. Custom House & Post Office 1221 31st Street, NW

Georgetown was established as a port of entry to the United States by an act of Congress approved March 22, 1779. By 1856 the problem arose of where to build a permanent custom house for the District. Congress appropriated money to build a Custom House in Georgetown. The Italianate custom house of granite ashlar was one of many federal buildings designed by Ammi B. Young, the Supervising Architect of the Treas-

sury from 1852 to 1862. Completed in 1858, the building housed a post office on its first floor and custom house and Georgetown city offices on its second floor. The basement was used for storage of goods awaiting inspection. In 1967, the Custom House moved out of its second floor space. The post office still occupies the first floor.

TURN LEFT ON M STREET.

36. Old Stone House
3051 M Street, NW

The Old Stone House was built in 1765, making it the oldest one built in Washington still standing. The exterior of the house is constructed of locally quarried blue granite. The house was built by Christopher Layman, a cabinetmaker by trade, as both a residence and a shop. Layman died shortly after constructing the house. It was sold to Cassandra Chew who added a wing to the rear of the house in 1767. The street (then called Bridge Street) was a main thoroughfare for road traffic from the Western frontier and paralleled the canal into Georgetown. The house has been used throughout its history as a residence or residence/shop, until it was purchased in 1953 by the U.S. Government. Although there have been attempts to prove that the Old Stone House was either George Washington's Engineering Headquarters and/or Suters Tavern, neither theory has been substantiated. The house is a good surviving example of pre-Revolutionary American vernacular architecture.

TURN AROUND AND WALK WEST ON M STREET. TURN LEFT ON 31ST STREET. TURN RIGHT N BLUES ALLEY.

37. Blues Alley

The Blues Alley Jazz Society (BAJS) was founded in 1985 by then internationally-renowned jazz trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie and its corresponding nightclub namesake located in the nation's capital. The Blues Alley Jazz Society is dedicated to the musical philosophy of youth, jazz, and education. Jazz acts are booked here 360 nights a year.

TURN LEFT ON WISCONSIN AVENUE.

38. Chesapeake & Ohio Canal

George Washington was one of the early American speculators who dreamed of the riches an inland American waterway could bring that would float goods from the West to Washington down the Potomac River. A canal that could connect the Potomac River to the Ohio River in Pittsburgh would provide a continuous water link from New Orleans to the Chesapeake Bay.

The canal, dubbed the "Great National Project" by President John Quincy Adams, was finally started on July 4, 1828. It would take 22 years to complete - actually construction just stopped since the canal route never made it out of Maryland with only 184.5 of the planned 460 miles dug - and was obsolete before it opened. Battling the young and ever-improving railroads, the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal lasted for 75 years floating cargo from Cumberland, Maryland to Georgetown. The ditch survived filling in through the efforts of Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas who championed the canal as "a long stretch of quiet and piece."

39. Grace Church
1041 Wisconsin Avenue, NW

Grace Episcopal Church was founded to serve the laborers, craftsmen, shopkeepers, and watermen of the Georgetown waterfront. By 1857 regular services were being held in a wooden chapel that stood in the southwest corner of the churchyard, where the World War I memorial cross now stands. In this poor district congregants pooled their talents to erect this humble granite Gothic revival church in 1866. Even today it is still the only religious institution in lower Georgetown.

CROSS WISCONSIN AVENUE AND WALK DOWN GRACE STREET TO POTOMAC STREET.

40. Chesapeake & Ohio Canal Warehouses

At the terminus of the waterway warehouses and mills sprung up in the first half of the 19th century. Mills for flour and cotton were especially abundant. Most have long ago disappeared but a few buildings have survived to be adapted to modern use.

RETURN TO WISCONSIN AVENUE AND TURN LEFT. CROSS M STREET.

41. Martin's Tavern

1264 Wisconsin Avenue, NW

A Georgetown institution since 1933 when it opened the day after Prohibition was repealed. Martin's was John Kennedy's hangout. Booth number one, known as "the rumble seat," was Kennedy's usual seat when he was a bachelor; number three is supposed to be where he asked Jackie to marry him. Booth number two was the favorite of JFK's 1960 presidential opponent - Richard Nixon.

TURN AROUND AND RETURN TO M STREET. TURN RIGHT.

42. City Tavern

3206 M Street, NW

In Colonial days every other building along this busy post road was a tavern. Most are gone but this one, from 1796, lives on. Much was replaced during a painstaking restoration but the top floors are probably original. Today it is a private club.

43. Georgetown Park

3222 M Street, NW

This urban shopping center from 1982 is located in buildings erected for the Georgetown and Washington Railway Company, a horse-drawn streetcar company, and later by Capitol Traction. During the excavation, archaeologists unearthed thousands of artifacts, some of which can be viewed as a permanent display in the Georgetown Park Museum, which is open daily.

44. Georgetown Park

3222 M Street, NW

Public markets have existed on this site since before the American Revolution. In 1795 the ground was deeded to the town "for the use of the market aforesaid, and for no other use, interest or purpose whatsoever." The Italianate building with round-arched windows and central parapet, splendidly restored, dates to 1866.

45. Forrest-Marbury House

3350 M Street, NW

In March 1791 Georgetown mayor Uriah Forrest, at the urging of a weary George Washington, hosted a dinner party at his home here to hammer out an agreement to produce the nation's new capital city of the District of Columbia. Forrest wanted little to do with the brave new world and sold the house in 1800 to Baltimore attorney William Marbury to reside at Rosedale, his farm that is now Cleveland Park. Marbury landed in the history books as the plaintiff in the case of Marbury vs. Madison that established the principle of judicial review. Marbury added a third story to the original house and built a two-story addition to the east.

TURN RIGHT ON 34TH STREET. TURN LEFT ON PROSPECT AVENUE.

46. Prospect House

3508 Prospect Street, NW

It's the fabulous view of the Potomac that gives this handsome, Federal townhouse its name. Note the craftsmanship of the brickwork and doorways of this home built for 18th century tobacco merchant, James Lingan. It's believed that Lingan designed his own residence, using one of the architectural pattern books popular with scholarly American builders of the period.

47. Benjamin Stoddert House
3400 Prospect Avenue, NW

This house was built for Benjamin Stoddert, the first Secretary of the Navy, in 1787. Stoddert wanted the house to look like the elegant houses he saw in the capital city of Philadelphia. The Secretary would likely not recognize his house today as it was much enlarged and altered during 40 years of bizarre ownership by Albert Adsit Clemons. Clemons lived, it was reported, on money provided by his wife to stay away from her. He built an amusement park of hallways, stairs and rooms inside - most of which were never used.

48. Quality Hill
3425 Prospect Street NW

This fine Federal home was built for attorney John Thomson Mason, a grandchild of Martha Washington, in 1798. Dr. Charles Worthington purchased the mansion in 1810 and named it Quality Hill, presumably for its fabulous interior woodwork.

49. Exorcist Steps
Prospect and 36th streets, NW

These steep steps next to the Victorian D.C. Transit car barn were used in the seminal horror movie *The Exorcist* to film the scene where Father Damien takes a fatal head-first plunge down the 97 stairs.

TURN RIGHT ON 36TH STREET.
TURN RIGHT ON N STREET.

50. Old Holy Trinity Church
3515 N Street, NW

A small brick church built here in 1794 was the first place for Catholics to worship in Washington, DC. This Greco-Roman church replaced it in 1849.

TURN AROUND ON N STREET
AND WALK TWO BLOCKS WEST
BACK TO THE TOUR STARTING
POINT.