

The District of Columbia as twenty-first-century Americans know it did not come into existence until after Congress decided to make it the site of our nation's capital in 1789. The towns and farms that once made up the district can be reconstructed from period plats and cadastral surveys. The Virginia town of Alexandria, formerly known as Hunting Creek Warehouse and Belhaven, was ceded to the district in 1789. The town had been created by act of assembly in 1748 and incorporated in 1779. Alexandria's citizens supported the cession as noted by a broadside issued at that time.¹ Alexandria was retroceded to Virginia in 1846 and became a city in 1852.

Prior to 1789 Alexandria had been "mapped." John West "laid out" land for the town in 1748 and George West prepared a map in 1763 to aid in the selling of lots, as did James McDermott in 1791. The same could not be said for the nation's capital. Once Congress decided to place the new capital along the Potomac River, President George Washington worked to figure out where to build it along the sixty-six-mile stretch of land that was set aside for this task in the Residence Act of 1790. He and other supporters wanted to build it near Georgetown, a Maryland settlement along the Potomac River, and it was at this location that the city of Washington was laid out.

Three commissioners were chosen to oversee the surveying and mapping of the new city, and George Washington hired Revolutionary War veteran Pierre Charles L'Enfant, an artist and architect of great talent, to plan it and oversee the survey of the district. Andrew Ellicott was hired and given the task of conducting the survey.² As L'Enfant developed a working plan he studied other city plans for insight and inspiration, as well as consulting Thomas Jefferson.³ His plan was a "city with a standard grid pattern with radiating avenues connecting distant points with the center of the city; it also worked with the area's topography. It encompassed land between Rock Creek, the Potomac River and the Eastern Branch (Anacostia River), the flat back of Jenkin's Heights, and to the road leading from Georgetown to Bladensburgh, Maryland."⁴ L'Enfant presented his manuscript plan of the city to President Washington in 1791.

Washington and the commissioners were pleased with L'Enfant's plan and they decided that it was time to begin selling lots; a published map was needed to help advertise their sale to the public. The Thackara and Vallance firm of Philadelphia was chosen to engrave and publish the first map of the District of Columbia. L'Enfant did not complete his draft in the time allotted and Andrew Ellicott was assigned the task of completing it—without being able to consult L'Enfant's working plan. Fortunately for Ellicott, he had access to completed surveys and L'Enfant's plans as presented to Washington and Jefferson in 1791. Ellicott completed his draft that had been edited by Thomas Jefferson, and submitted it to President Washington, who sent it to Thackara and Vallance. They engraved it and a reduced-size version was published in the March 1792 issue of *The Universal Asylum and Columbia Magazine*. Washington wanted a larger map and was concerned that Thackara and Vallance would be unable to engrave it in time for planned city lot sales. Thomas Jefferson, who was then secretary of state,

forwarded Ellicott's plan to Samuel Hill of Boston, who was able to engrave and publish a larger version of the plan. A Mr. Scott, of Philadelphia, printed 4,000 copies of Hill's map and it was in circulation when the second sale of lots took place in Washington on October 8, 1792.⁵

The larger Thackara and Vallance map of D.C. was made available for sale in November. Compared to Hill's plan, the Thackara and Vallance engraving was larger, more attractive, and better engraved (on a larger sheet of copper), and it became known as the official map of the district, the "Philadelphia Plate of D.C." Their version included soundings, numbered lots, and a larger, more detailed depiction of Georgetown.

Andrew Ellicott compiled the first topographical map of the District of Columbia, *Territory of Columbia Drawn by Andrew Ellicott*. Engraved by Thackara and Vallance and printed in 1794, it became the most important topographic map of the city published until A. Boschke's map was printed in the 1850s. Other important maps of D.C. that were published in the first half of the nineteenth century include R. T. King's map of Washington (1818), W. J. Stone's map of the district (1839), and the William Ellicott Plan published in the 1822 *Washington Guide* that shows city wards for the first time.

The Library of Virginia's collections include early maps of Alexandria and Washington, D.C. Listed in this bibliography are maps of Washington, D.C., published in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; maps of Alexandria are included that were published before the 1846 retrocession. Most of the maps listed in this bibliography have not been scanned and are available for research in the Library's Map Reading Room and Special Collections Reading Room. Maps that are a part of the historical map collection are served in the Map Reading Room. Researchers are required to have a Library of Virginia library card to access and use the map collection. A stack service slip must be completed to retrieve maps served in the Map and Special Collections reading rooms.

MAPS IN GOVERNMENT RECORDS COLLECTIONS

Map of the Town of Alexandria

John West, October 27, 1748, copied by William Payne, George Gilpin, and Thomasin Ellroy, November 30, 1796
In *Alexandria Deed Book H, 1796–1797*
p. 332–333
City of Alexandria microfilm reel #3

Town of Alexandria, Bounded by Gibbon Street, West Street and Great Hunting Creek

Charles Murray
December 7, 1739
Manuscript in pen and ink
Record Group 79, Accession 36121, Legislative Petitions, Fairfax County
Box 321, Folder 12, Digital file no. 16_0488_088.jpg
http://digitool1.lva.lib.va.us:8881/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=519459

Map of Washington and Vicinity

U.S. Geological Survey (1882)
In *Guide to the Flora of Washington and Vicinity*
Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office
1881
SI 3.3:2

Map of the Public Lands under Federal Jurisdiction in the District of Columbia

United States Army Corps of Engineers
Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916
Y 1. ½:Serial 1055

HISTORICAL MAP COLLECTION

A Plan of Alexandria

Colonel George Gilpin

Alexandria, 1795

Manuscript in pen and ink

G3884.A3 1795 .G55, Digital file no. 16_0488_003.jpg

Plan of the Town of Alexandria, in the District of Columbia, 1798

Engraved by T. Clarke, New York

Published by I. V. Thomas, 1798 and 1944

Whatman Paper

Restrike from original copperplate

755.25 1798 1944

Geographical, Statistical, and Historical Map of the District of Columbia

Engraved by George Delleker and James Young (fl. 1817–1866)

Philadelphia: H. C. Carey and I. Lea

1822

Hand-colored engraving

G3850 1822 .H2 Voorhees Collection, Digital file no. Voorhees017_027.tif

Chart of the Head of the Navigation of the Potomac River Shewing the Route of the Alexandria Canal

William James Stone (1798–1865)

Washington, D.C.[?], 1838

755.23 C2 1838, Digital file no. 16_0488_001.jpg

Plan of the Town of Alexandria, D.C. with the Environs Exhibiting the Outlet of the Alexandria Canal, the Shipping Channel, Wharves, Hunting Cre. & c.

Maskell C. Ewing

Philadelphia: T. Sinclair, 79 S. 3d St.

1845

Lithograph

755.25 1845, Digital file no. 16_0488_004.jpg

Chart of the Head of the Navigation of the Potomac River surveyed by order of the Sec. of War for the Corporation of Georgetown D.C. with a view to the improvement of the Georgetown Channel, under the Direction of Capt. I.C. Woodruff, Corps, Top'l Eng'rs. (Ass't. bureau Top'l. Eng'rs) by R.W. Burgess

R. W. Burgess, C.E.

New York: Lith of J. Bien, 60 Fulton St.

1857

Engraved map

G3851.P55 1857 .B8

Plan of the City of Washington, the Capitol of the United States of America

W. H. Gamble (fl. 1867–1887)

Philadelphia: S. Augustus Mitchell Jr.

1860

G3850 1860 .G3, Digital file no. 16_0167_001

Potomac River (in four sheets) Sheet No. 1, From Entrance to Piney Point

Washington, D.C.: Coast and Geodetic Survey

1862

G3792.P6 1862 .U5, Digital file no. LVA00044A-D

Map of N. Eastern Virginia and Vicinity of Washington compiled in Topographical Engineers Office at Division Head Quarters of General Irvin McDowell, Arlington, January 11, 1862, from published and manuscript maps corrected by recent Surveys and Reconnaissances

Joseph Schedler

Washington, D.C.

1862

G3881.S5 1862 .U5, Digital file no. LVA00020.

Topographical Map of the Original District of Columbia and Environs: Showing the Fortifications around the City of Washington

E. G. Arnold

New York: G. Woolworth Colton, 18 Beckman St.

G3851.S5 1862 .A7 Flagg Collection, Digital file no. 12_0578_01 1862 Washington DC.tif

Maryland, Delaware, and the District of Columbia

Frank A. Gray

Philadelphia: O. W. Gray

1876

G3840 1876 .G7

New Railroad Map of the States of Maryland, Delaware, and the District of Columbia

Philadelphia: O. W. Gray and Son

1877

G3841 .P3 1877 .G7

Washington and Environs

John C. Lang

Washington, D.C.: Thos. E. Waggaman

1885

G3851.G46 1885 .L3, Digital file no. 16_0167_002

Potomac River at Washington D.C. / Map Showing Progress of Work, June 30, 1885

Peter C. Hains

Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office

1885

G3851.P55 1885 .H35

The King Plats of the City of Washington in the District of Columbia 1803

King, N. (Nicholas)

Washington, D.C.: N. Peters, Photo-Lithographer

1888

G1275 .K5 1888

Washington and Vicinity: Maryland–District of Columbia–Virginia

Washington, D.C.: U.S. Geological Survey

1898

USGS Topos Washington Maryland–District of Columbia–Virginia

Plat of Proposed Reservation at Fort Stevens near Brightwood, D.C.

Henry B. Looker

Washington, D.C.: The Office

1900

G3852.F6G45 1900 .D5

Map of the District of Columbia Showing Public Reservations and Possessions, And the Permanent System of Highways, Compiled in the Office of the Commission on the Improvement of the Park System. From Plans and Data furnished by the Engineer Commission

J. G. Langdon

Baltimore: A. Hoen and Company

May 1901

G3851.G45 1901 .L3

Pictorial Map of Washington, D.C.

Arch B. Williams

Washington, D.C.: *Evening Star*

March 4, 1917

G3851.E635 1917 .W5

The Mall and Vicinity, Washington, 1917

The Public Buildings Commission

Washington, D.C.: The Norris Peters Co., Litho

1917

G3852.M3G45 1917 .U5

Greeters Guide Map to Washington, D.C.

Charters 31, Greeters of America

Washington, D.C.: Chapter 31, Greeters of America

1928

753 1928

Map of Capital and Environs Showing Points of Interest

American Automobile Association

Washington, D.C.: *The Washington Times*

June 10, 1935

G3851.E635 1935 .A44, Digital file no. 16_0488_002.jpg

Pattern of Route Zones Developed by Washington Regional Committee of Defense Transportation Administration / Map of the District of Columbia and Adjacent Area of Maryland and Virginia Prepared by the District of Columbia Department of Highways Planning Survey in Cooperation with the Public Roads Administration Federal Works Agency Army Map Service

Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army

1943

G3851.R5 1943 .W3

*Map of the Permanent System of Highways District of Columbia 1943 Prepared in the Office of the Surveyor, D.C.
By Direction of the Engineer Commissioner, D.C.*

W. B. Gleason

Washington, D.C.: The Columbia Planographic Co.

1943

G3850 1943 .D52

Hearne Brothers Present Polyconic Projection Map of Washington, D.C.

Hearne Brothers Cartographic Productions

Detroit, Michigan: Hearne Brothers

1945

753 1945

Visitor's Map of Washington, D.C. Published and Copyrighted by American Automobile Association

American Automobile Association

Washington, D.C.: American Automobile Association

1950

753 1950

Visitor's Map of Washington, D.C. Published and Copyrighted by American Automobile Association

American Automobile Association

Washington, D.C.: Greater National Capital Committee

1951

753 1951

Street Map of Washington and Suburban Maryland

American Automobile Association

Washington, D.C.: American Automobile Association

1951

753 1951(1)

Map of Greater Washington Including Extensive Areas of Maryland and Virginia

Harold C. Jackson

Falls Church, VA: Columbia Map Company

753 1952

Authorized Basic Rapid Transit System, December 1967

Washington, D.C.: Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
December 1967
G3851.P33 1967 .W32

Metro Rail System, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Joseph W. Wiedel
College Park, MD: J. W. Wiedel
1988
G3851.P33 1988 .W4 Wiedel Collection

Capitol Hill and the Mall

Joseph W. Wiedel
College Park, MD: University of Maryland
1988
G3852.C32A7 1988 .W5 Wiedel Collection

Washington, D.C. Area, 1:50,000 Scale Satellite Image Map, 1987

U.S. Geological Survey
Reston, VA: Interior-Geological Survey
1988
G3851.A4 1987 .G5

MAPS IN ATLASES

City of Washington

In *A New Universal Atlas*

Philadelphia: S. A. Mitchell

1848

Plate 16

G1019 .M64 1848, Digital file no. 16_0488_005.jpg

Map of Washington Established as the Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States Engraved and Published by D. M. Clelland, Washington

D. M. Clelland

In *The Seat of Government of the United States*

Joseph Varnum Jr.

New York: Press of Hunt's Merchant Magazine

1848

F200 .V31, Digital file no. 16_0488_007.jpg

Johnson's Georgetown and the City of Washington, the Capital of the United States of America

In *Johnson's New Illustrated Family Atlas*

Richmond, VA: Johnson and Browning

1861

G1019 .J66, Digital file no. 16_0488_006.jpg

Maryland, Delaware, and the District of Columbia

Frank Gray

In *National Atlas, Containing Elaborate Topographical Maps of the United States*

Philadelphia: Stedman and Brown

1886

G1200 .G68 1886 Closed Stacks

District of Columbia [Inset]

Rand, McNally and Company (fl. from 1858)

In *Rand, McNally & Co.'s Indexed Atlas of the World...*

Chicago: Rand, McNally and Company: Continental Publishing Co.

1886

G1019 .R35 1886

Rand, McNally & Co.'s Atlas of the World Map of Washington, D.C.

Rand, McNally and Company (fl. from 1858)

1893

In *Rand, McNally & Co.'s Indexed Atlas of the World...*

Vol. 2

Chicago: Rand, McNally and Company

1897

G1019 .R35 1897

Map of Washington

George F. Cram (1842–1928)

In *Cram's Imperial Office Directory and Reference Atlas of the United States*

Chicago: Cram Directory and Atlas Co.

1889

G1200 .C67 1889

Map of Washington

George Cram (1842–1928)

In *Cram's Standard American Railway System Atlas of the World*

Chicago: G. F. Cram

1891

G3201.P3 C7 1891

Map of Washington

George F. Cram (1842–1928)

In *Universal Atlas, Geographical, Astronomical, Historical : Containing a Complete Series of Maps of Modern Geography, Exhibiting the World and its Various Political Divisions as they are To-day : also an Elaborate Series of Authentic Historical Maps Showing the World's Progress and Development from the Earliest Times to the Present, to Which is Added a Brief History of Astronomy and a Description of the Geography of the Heavens : Illustrated by Numerous Views and Charts; the Whole Supplemented with Valuable Statistics, Diagrams, and a Complete Gazetteer of the United States.*

New York: G. F. Cram

1893

G1019 .G4763 1893

MAPS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Washington, District of Columbia and Its Principal Suburbs

In *Cram's Standard American Railway System Atlas of the World*

Chicago: G. F. Cram

1902

G3201.P3 C7 1903

Washington, District of Columbia and Its Principal Suburbs. Published by George F. Cram, Chicago, Ill.

George F. Cram Company

In *Cram's Modern New Census Atlas of the United States and World...*

New York: George F. Cram Company

1911

G1019 .G39 1911

MAPS IN SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Territory of Columbia

Drawn by Andrew Ellicott and engraved by P. A. F. Tardieu
1815

In *A Chronological and Statistical Description of the District of Columbia*
F198.W26 1816, Digital file no. 16_0488_009.jpg

Washington City

G. Kramm

In *The Washington Guide*

F198.E462 1837 Special Collections, Digital file no. 16_0488_010.jpg

Washington from the President's House

In *American Scenery from Drawings*

W. H. Bartlett

Volume 2, p. 49

London: G. Virtue

E165 .W73 Special Collections, Digital file no. 16_0488_011.jpg

Map of the City of Washington in the District of Columbia Established as the Permanent Seat of Government of the United States of America

W. J. Stone

In *Maps of the District of Columbia and City of Washington and Plats of the Squares and Lots of the City of Washington. Printed in Persuance of a Resolution of the Senate of the United States.*

Washington, D.C.: A. B. Hamilton, 1852

G1275 .M36 1852 Special Collections, Digital file no. 16_0219_003

Plan of the City of Washington, in the territory of Columbia, ceded by the states of Maryland and Virginia, etc. 1800

In *Maps of the District of Columbia and City of Washington and Plats of the Squares and Lots of the City of Washington. Printed in Persuance of a Resolution of the Senate of the United States.*

Washington, D.C.: A. B. Hamilton, 1852

G1275 .M36 1852 Special Collections, Digital file no. 16_0219_002

Territory of Columbia

Andrew Ellicott

In *Maps of the District of Columbia and City of Washington and Plats of the Squares and Lots of the City of Washington. Printed in Persuance of a Resolution of the Senate of the United States.*

Washington, D.C.: A. B. Hamilton, 1852

G1275 .M36 1852 Special Collections, Digital file no. 16_0219_001

Map of the City of Washington Established as the Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States of America 1864

In *Bohn's Handbook of Washington Illustrated with Engravings of the Public Buildings and the Government Statuary*

Philadelphia: Casimer Bohn

Fourth Edition

F197 B677 Special Collections, Digital file no. 16_0488_012.jpg

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Phillips, P. Lee. *The Beginnings of Washington as Described in Books, Maps and Views*. Washington, D.C.: Press of W. F. Roberts Co., 1917.
- Stephenson, Richard. *A Plan Wholly New: Pierre Charles L'Enfant's Plan of the City of Washington*. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1993.
- Stephenson, Richard. *The Cartography of Northern Virginia*. Fairfax County, VA: History and Archaeology Section, Office of Comprehensive Planning, 1981.
- Goode, James M., Laura Bird Schiavo, and Albert H. Small, eds. *Washington Images: Rare Maps and Prints from the Albert H. Small Collection*. Washington, D.C.: Historical Society of Washington, 2004.
- Goff, Frederick R. "The Federal City in 1793," in *A La Carte*, Walter Ristow, ed., Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress [for sale by the Supt. of Docs., U.S. Government Printing Office], 1972.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Stephenson, Richard, *A Plan Wholly New: Pierre Charles L'Enfant's Plan of the City of Washington*, Washington: Library of Congress, 1993, p. 1–2 and Nelson Burr, "The Federal City Depicted: 1612–1801" in *A La Carte*, ed. by Walter Ristow, 1972, p. 129. Hunting Creek Warehouse had been constructed on land owned by John Alexander. The settlement of Belhaven grew from this. Stephenson, Richard, *The Cartography of Northern Virginia*. Fairfax County, VA: History and Archaeology Section, Office of Comprehensive Planning, 1981, p. 2.
- ² Stephenson, *A Plan Wholly New: Pierre Charles L'Enfant's Plan of the City of Washington*, p. 13.
- ³ According to Philip Lee Phillips in *The Beginnings of Washington*, 1917, Jefferson loaned to L'Enfant city plans from his collection. City plans consulted include Frankfurt, Carlsruhe, Amsterdam, Strasburg, Paris, Orleans, Bordeaux, Lyons, Montpellier, Marseilles, Turin, and Milan. It is unclear which of these come from Jefferson's library.
- ⁴ Stephenson, *A Plan Wholly New: Pierre Charles L'Enfant's Plan of the City of Washington*, p. 26.
- ⁵ Stephenson, *A Plan Wholly New*, p. 39.



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