On this self-guided walking tour of Tenleytown, historical markers lead you to:

- The highest elevation in the District of Columbia
- Grant Road, a winding byway that recalls the area’s rural past
- The site of Reno City, a once-thriving, post-Civil War community of working-class African American and white families
- The site of Fort Reno, one of the city’s strongest Civil War defenses
- Towers that mark Tenleytown as an important communications center
- The studios where Kermit the Frog started his career
- The place where women of the U.S. Navy broke the Japanese code during World War II

Tenleytown’s history dates to the late 1700s, when John Tennally opened a tavern where two roads crossed near the District’s highest point. Follow this trail to visit traces of the village that grew around that intersection, and to experience the neighborhood that played a key role in two world wars and in the development of modern communications.
Tenleytown started as a crossroads village well before George Washington chose the site of the Nation’s Capital. Here you can discover its tales and enjoy a good walk through a great place. This keepsake guide summarizes the 11th of the city’s Official Walking Tours.

Follow *Top of the Town: Tenleytown Heritage Trail* to experience wartime Washington from the Civil War through World War II, as well as such highlights of television history as a Kennedy-Nixon debate and the debut of Kermit the Frog. Enjoy Tenleytown’s many historic homes and churches while you explore its modern Main Street shops and cafes.
As you walk the trail, please be aware that you are traveling through an urban environment. Keep your safety and personal security in mind, just as you would while visiting an unfamiliar place in any city.

On the cover: Water towers at Fort Reno Park, 1928. The Washington Post

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Tenleytown Heritage Trail

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Introduction

Located at Washington, DC’s highest natural elevation, Tenleytown has played a critical role in defense — of the city and the nation — and in communications.

The neighborhood’s story begins with two intersecting Native American footpaths, which European settlers later broadened into roads. In the late 1700s John Tennally opened a tavern at that intersection, today’s Wisconsin Avenue and River Road. Soon a village named Tennallytown surrounded the tavern, with farms and estates beyond. Eventually about a dozen tightly knit families, founders of Tennallytown churches and businesses, and builders of houses, came to dominate daily life.

After the Union defeat in the Battle of Bull Run in July 1861, northern troops seized farmland and built Fort Pennsylvania (later named Fort Reno). They installed a signal tower in order to communicate with troops at nearby defenses in the District of Columbia and Virginia. The southern-leaning villagers, some of whom owned slaves, resented the northern military presence in their midst.

In July 1864 Confederate troops marched into the District from the north. Some headed down the Rockville Road (Wisconsin Avenue). Union and Confederate forces skirmished briefly just north of Fort Reno. However the real battle took place at Fort Stevens, about three miles to the east near Seventh Street Road (Georgia Avenue). There the Union prevailed, and the capital was saved. The Battle of Fort Stevens was the only Civil War battle to take place within the District’s boundaries.

The old farm lane Grant Road became part of a system of military roads linking the 68 forts that encircled and defended Civil War Washington. Today Grant Road remains as a reminder of Tenleytown’s rural past.
After the Civil War, Fort Reno became farmland again until developers carved up most of it into small lots. Formerly enslaved African Americans who had sought refuge at the fort joined working-class white and black families to build a community called Reno City.

However buyers did not respond well until after World War I (1914-1918).

As the neighborhood grew, federal government planners pondered what to do about the aging, racially mixed but predominantly black Reno City. At the same time, newer residents were clamoring for better schools and services. By 1928 the community’s fate was decided. Authorities began removing residents and razing their houses to clear land for additional reservoirs, Fort Reno Park, and two public schools for white children. Alice Deal Junior High School opened in 1931 and Woodrow Wilson High School in 1935, joining nearby Janney Elementary (1925) for whites and Jesse Reno School (1904) for African Americans.

In the 1890s all remaining traces of Fort Reno disappeared when the District government constructed an underground reservoir and red-brick water tower – today the most visible of Tenleytown’s distinctive landmarks. About the same time an electric streetcar line arrived, making downtown DC easily accessible from Tenleytown.

Developers bought large tracts of land and planned subdivisions for middle-class white families. They touted the neighborhood’s modern amenities: police and fire protection, electric lights, and water and sewer service.
steel towers to the landscape. With three TV and four radio studios, Broadcast House was the nation’s first production facility designed for both media. Nearby, on Nebraska Avenue, NBC and its local affiliate WRC moved into new studios in 1958. Kermit the Frog is but one of the nationally known personalities who launched their careers in Tenleytown’s WRC facilities.

Several years later WTOP’s Broadcast House went up adjacent to Tenley Tower, adding several steel towers to the landscape. With the removal of most of its families, Reno School’s enrollment dwindled to six students before it closed in 1950. Now an official DC Historic Site, the school sits next to Deal Junior High as one of the few remnants of Reno City.

Tenleytown has continued to host important defense facilities. American University lent its campus to train soldiers and sailors during both world wars. And in the early 1940s the U.S. Navy took over Mount Vernon Seminary and established a top-secret, code-breaking center.

Another development during the 1940s gave Tenleytown a new landmark and further ensured its place in the history of communications. Western Union built “Tenley Tower” to transmit telegrams and also to relay newly invented television signals.

After the excitement of World War II, Tenleytown became known as an in-town suburb, with low-density housing, good public and parochial schools, and easy transportation. The arrival of the Metrorail Red Line in 1984 spurred new development, but citizens worked hard to preserve the small-town feel. The western entrance to the Metro station sits one block south of where John Tennally built his tavern — still an important crossroads at the top of the town.
SUBURBAN SHOPPING ARRIVED in Tenleytown when Sears, Roebuck & Co. erected a Moderne style store here in 1941. The sleek façade demonstrated the latest in department store design.

Sears was the second Tenleytown business — after Giant Food — to offer rooftop parking. The aromas of popcorn, half smokes, and doughnuts led customers to Sears’ entrance/penthouse snack bar. Attracting shoppers from the city and nearby Maryland, Sears ushered in Tenleytown’s modern commercial era.

Sears replaced the three-story former Tenleytown Inn, which, beginning in the mid-1800s, was a stopping point for farmers and merchants traveling on the Georgetown-Frederick (Maryland) Pike. When William Achterkirchen ran the inn for owner Christian Heurich in the early 1900s, Tenleytowners arrived with their growlers — tin buckets with lids — to carry out the inn’s popular brew. By 1918 innkeeper Howard Crandall had adapted the inn for his Hilltop Service Station, Tenleytown’s first gas station.

While Tenleytown celebrated the arrival of Metrorail in 1984, it came at a cost. The east station entrance replaced the Burrows-Mostow building, built in 1900 as commercial space with an apartment upstairs. It also replaced Joe’s Variety Shop. Generations of Tenleytown children had flocked to Joe Gould’s narrow store, packed floor to ceiling with toys, games, penny candy, and school supplies.

The William R. Singleton Masonic Lodge has occupied 4431 Wisconsin Avenue since 1909. Its members follow Freemasonry, an ancient fraternal organization rooted in the building trades and dedicated to good works and fellowship.
STEP BACK INTO THE 19TH CENTURY with a walk down Grant Road. This winding byway recalls Tenleytown’s farming past. In fact Grant Road’s undisturbed quality earned it National Historic District and DC Historic District designations.

By the late 1800s, huge linden trees shaded modest, one-room-wide houses here. Cows, mules, horses, and chickens roamed the surrounding fields. Most families were working class, but two generations of Tenleytown physicians, John and Sidney Chappell, lived among the storekeepers, stone masons, and policemen. General Sidney Chappell, who served as the head of psychiatry for the U.S. Army, was a friendly man whose large, elegant house was run by a white-coated butler.

As one of the few roads through the farmlands, Grant Road attracted outsiders. Burrows family members still recount the regular visits to their part of Grant Road (east of Wisconsin Avenue) by President Theodore Roosevelt (1901-1909). Roosevelt had a hunting lodge nearby and enjoyed riding horses through the woods. The president even treated little Edna Burrows of number 4426 to horseback rides.

In earlier days, Grant Road was the southern edge of the Civil War-era Fort Reno, and became part of the “military road” linking the city’s ring of forts (today’s Military Road takes a different route). Perhaps this was the quiet, meandering path poet (and Civil War era-Washingtonian) Walt Whitman took when he walked “on fine moonlit nights over the perfect military roads, hard and smooth.”
Until 1890 Tenleytown was a rural crossroads. Then the electric streetcar arrived, followed by the Permanent Highway Plan. Real estate men promoted new houses at the top of the town: city conveniences, country charm, and great views, with a 25-minute streetcar ride to downtown.

Developers Ernest M. Pease and Colorado Senator Thomas M. Patterson snapped up the promising high ground here between the Wisconsin Avenue and Connecticut Avenue streetcar lines. In 1904 they promoted their subdivision, “Colorado Heights,” to middle-income white workers, promising that homes would cost not less than $2,500. At the same time, the Washington Post predicted, “Never again will land anywhere near Connecticut Avenue be sold so cheaply as this.”

Despite Tenleytown’s modern amenities – police and fire protection, electric lights, water and sewers – growth dragged until after World War I (1914-1918). Then the Warren brothers bought many of Senator Patterson’s lots. They built three blocks of battleship gray, two-bedroom bungalows, many with front porches or sleeping porches. A walk around these blocks is a step back into the 1920s. Note the striking contrast with the upright brick Colonials that came into vogue in the 1940s.

In Tenleytown the Permanent Highway Plan took its cues from real estate developers, who had laid a grid over the old picturesque, curving streets. Years of changes to the area have erased portions of Grant Road and other country lanes, renamed others, and added Nebraska Avenue (1930s) and extended Brandywine Street (1950s).
The red-brick Alice Deal Junior High School honors the mathematics teacher and union leader who launched Washington’s first junior high school in 1919 at Seventh and O Streets, NW. Architect Albert Harris’s Colonial design for Deal Junior High represented the finest in modern school construction. From its opening in 1931, Deal’s student body included diplomatic children, giving it an international flavor typical of Washington.

On a remnant of old Howard Road behind Alice Deal is the Jesse Reno School, which opened in 1904 to serve the neighborhood’s African American children. Previously they had walked either to a “colored” school at the site of today’s Murch Elementary or to one on Foxhall Road. Between 1928 and the early 1950s, however, the city razed Reno City, home to most of Tenleytown’s African American families, in order to create a water reservoir, Fort Reno Park, and school campuses. As a result, Reno School lost its students and closed. The building survives, however, along with a few fire hydrants amid the lawns of Fort Reno Park and some houses in the 4800 block of 41st Street, as the only visible reminders of Reno City.

Woodrow Wilson High School opened in 1935, honoring our intellectual 28th president, a past president of Princeton University, and the only U.S. president to have earned a PhD. Princeton’s “tiger” came, too, to serve as Wilson’s athletic mascot. A community pool, long promised to the citizens of Tenleytown, was added in 1978 and rebuilt in 2008.
“POINT RENO” is the highest natural point in Washington – 409 feet above sea level, to be exact.

This unsurpassed vantage brought the Civil War (1861-1865) to Tenleytown. After the Union defeat at Bull Run in July 1861, northern troops established Fort Pennsylvania here. The fort, renamed in 1863 to honor Major General Jesse Lee Reno, was one of 68 built to protect the city. In the summer of 1864 Confederate forces knew it was one of the city’s strongest defenses, with long-range cannons and a signal tower visible for miles.

On the morning of July 11, 1864, President Lincoln visited Fort Reno. Later that day, lookouts spied the dust of Confederate troops advancing from the north. Some headed this way on Rockville Road (Wisconsin Avenue), but most took Seventh Street Road (Georgia Avenue), homing in on the apparently weaker Fort Stevens, three miles to the northeast. Luckily, the broiling heat delayed Confederate General Jubal Early’s attack, giving defenders time to reinforce Fort Stevens. Fort Reno cavalry meanwhile engaged the advancing enemy only a few blocks to the north, with both sides suffering casualties. The fort’s cannons shelled the enemy nearly four miles away.

Early’s forces lost the ensuing Battle of Fort Stevens, the only Civil War engagement fought in the District of Columbia.

Some 30 years later the city erased any remnants of the fort when it constructed an underground water reservoir. The reservoir’s red-brick tower – actually a water tank – became a Tenleytown landmark visible from Virginia.
Before the Civil War (1861-65), this land was part of Giles Dyer’s 72-acre farm. As a Southerner, Dyer depended on enslaved people to work his fields.

Because of its elevation, Dyer’s land was taken by the Union Army in 1861 for a fort and observation post. After the war, the Dyer family recovered the property, then sold it to developers. Soon “Reno City” lots sold for $25, with $5 down.

Frederick “Fritz” Bangerter, a young Swiss immigrant, bought several lots to establish a dairy farm, raise a family, and build houses to rent. African Americans who had sought safety and work at Fort Reno during the Civil War also bought lots or rented Reno City houses, as did other whites and free blacks. Many worked nearby as laborers and domestics. By 1900 Reno City was 75 percent African American with three black churches, a black Masonic lodge, and a black school.

In 1902 the U.S. Senate Park Commission suggested preserving the city’s historic ring of Civil War forts, including Reno, as parks. The plan was shelved, but as land around Reno filled in with new housing for whites, federal planners again eyed Reno City as a good spot to create a park, schools, and reservoirs. Doing so would also satisfy those desiring to remove the aging enclave where black and white families lived side by side. Thus, between 1928 and the early 1950s, the federal government bought or condemned Reno City houses and razed them, dispersing the 80-year-old community and its institutions.
“TENLEY TOWER,” on the east side of Wisconsin Avenue, dates from the mid-1940s. Western Union Telegraph Co. built it as part of an experimental system using microwaves to transmit telegrams in the mid-Atlantic region. This new technology helped erase telegraph wires and poles from the landscape. In addition, the tower was designed to relay recently invented television signals, which gave Western Union and its partner RCA a decided head start in the television revolution of the 1950s. During the Cold War era, the 90-foot tower also handled national security communications. In 1996 it became a cellular telephone transmitter.

Beginning in 1953, Broadcast House, located behind the tower, at 40th and Brandywine Streets, took advantage of this high point. With three WTOP TV studios and four WTOP radio studios, Broadcast House was the nation’s first production facility designed for both media. In the 1950s, *Pick Temple's Giant Ranch* was produced here, with local children playing “Giant Rangers” amid the studio's bales of hay. It was also home to Washington’s CBS TV affiliate, until WUSA-9 moved to 4100 Wisconsin Avenue in 1992. In 1993 American University’s public radio station WAMU moved into 4000 Brandywine Street.

The building at 4555 Wisconsin Avenue once housed N.M. Cohen and Samuel Lehrman’s third area Giant Food Store. When the first Giant opened in 1936, it helped end an era. In place of the grocer who quoted prices and handed you your order, Giant offered up-to-date marked pricing, self-service, and efficient check-out.
EVEN BEFORE THE NATION’S CAPITAL was sketched out in 1791, the place where River Road met the Georgetown-Frederick Road attracted activity. Here John Tennally opened a tavern and inn. By the early 1800s, a hamlet called Tennallytown was born, named for its main business.

In time wagons hauling produce shared the dirt Georgetown-Frederick (later Rockville) Road with bustling stagecoaches. After the road was paved with crushed rock, travelers paid tolls to maintain it. Between 1829 and 1887 a tollgate keeper extracted pennies from “persons riding, leading, or driving any horses, cattle, hogs, sheep, sulky, chair, chaise, phaeton, coach, etc.”

Over time other businesses joined Tennally’s. By the late 1800s a grand house occupied this hilltop. Alice Underwood Hunt, widow of Governor Alexander Hunt of Colorado, named it for the two Glorias in her life: her mother and daughter. In summertime, city dwellers escaped to her Gloria Point Hotel for Tenleytown’s cool breezes and spectacular views.

A police substation opened across Wisconsin Avenue in 1905. In 1927 its jail cells were removed to create the Tenley Public Library, which operated here for 32 years.

The defense effort in World War II drew dozens of Tenleytowners. The Byrum family of Davenport Street was distinguished for sending five sons to serve, four in the Navy and one in the Army. Their sister Emma recalled the strain of their absence. “My mother was very concerned and prayed many a prayer,” she said. “But they all came back safe. We were very blessed.”
ELDBROOKE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH dates to about 1835, when Methodists gathered at the Loughborough Road home of Philip L. Brooke. Soon they built the simple, wooden Mount Zion Methodist Episcopal Church on land purchased from the Murdock family.

During the Civil War (1861-1865) Union troops used the church as a guard-house, storehouse, hospital, and mess hall. Later two Rhode Island regiments set up Camp Frieze around the church and along River Road westward to Fort Bayard.

Some Union soldiers helped themselves to Tenleytowners’ food and other goods. This irked the wealthy, slaveholding residents who sympathized with the South. Ann Forrest Green of nearby Rosedale wrote of loathing the thousands of Union troops who passed by her home “shouting and shooting” randomly. The church suffered so much war-related damage that it was replaced in 1866.

When parishioners enlarged the new church in 1899, they renamed it to honor church leaders Aquila Eld and Philip L. Brooke. The large Spanish Mission style sanctuary dates from 1926. With a dwindling membership, Eldbrooke church closed in 2005. The City Church took its place in 2008.

On Murdock Mill Road, next to the landmarked church, is the Methodist Cemetery. Behind new iron gates are two centuries of tombstones, many carrying familiar Tenleytown names. This cemetery was open to all. For some years after its last burial in 1989, the grounds were neglected. Then in 2001 Audrey Bates Schwartz spurred the cemetery’s association to restore it to park-like conditions, with help from the Columbian Harmony Society.
Sign 10 marks the west side of Mount Airy, a subdivision spanning Wisconsin Avenue laid out in the late 1890s. Mount Airy evolved into a dense, working-class neighborhood, where policemen and dairymen lived in modest houses.

Among them were the Perna and Porto families, which eventually gave Tenleytown five generations of building tradesmen. Stone mason Frank Perna arrived from Italy during the late 1880s to work on federal construction projects. Twenty years later brother Louis joined him. They formed Perna Brothers in Tenleytown, near both raw materials and the demand for new housing. Their sister Anna Maria married Benjamin Porto, also a stone mason. The Pernas and Portos, and descendants, worked in stone and construction, building entire houses, as well as fireplaces, walls, and foundations.

The families’ handiwork is visible at 4619 and 4621 42nd Street and at 4112-4118 Chesapeake Street. They worked on the Washington Monument, St. Columba’s Episcopal Church, and buildings at Glen Echo. The Portos constructed 4319 Ellicott Street, among other houses.

Although Washington’s small Italian community centered downtown close to building projects on Capitol Hill when Frank Perna arrived, shoemakers Giovanni Errigo and Tony Bredice and barber Frank Errigo also found their opportunities in Tenleytown.

Around 1912 builder, former Marine Bandsman, and second-generation Tenleytowner Frederick W. Parks built a double house for his family at 4115 Chesapeake Street. Three more generations enjoyed the sturdy frame structure until it was razed in 1962.
By 1900, 12 large families — often intermarried — came to dominate the village that was Tennallytown: the Burrows, Chappell, Harry, Hurdle, Paxton, Perna, Poore, Queen, Riley, Robey, Shoemaker, and Walther clans.

This is Harry country, home to five generations of the Harry clan. Sign 11 stands at the edge of what once was “Harry’s Field,” a favorite community playground.

The first Harry in Tenleytown was John O., the U.S. postmaster who died in 1864. His grandson John B. Harry, known as Bernard, was born at 4509 Wisconsin Avenue in 1867. At age 20, he and a partner opened a grocery store in Foggy Bottom. For the next 69 years, Brooke and Harry’s served neighbors and delivered to the local elite, including J. Pierpont Morgan and occupants of the White House. Their Tenleytown-grown strawberries were a favorite of President Franklin Roosevelt. Decades before, that earlier Roosevelt president, Theodore, was known to stop at the Harrys’ apple orchards here. Brooke and Harry also operated an ice company, a bakery, and a car showroom on nearby Wisconsin Avenue.

Bernard built 4301 River Road in 1907, and four of his six children later built homes on his land, their offspring running freely with pals in and out of the family households. During World War II, Bernard lent neighbors more than 50 plots on Harry’s Field for victory gardens.

Bernard’s house and his son John’s house next door came down when Georgetown Day High School purchased Harry’s Field for a new campus.
The Tenleytown Heritage Trail, *Top of the Town*, is an Official Washington, DC Walking Trail. The three-mile route is defined by 19 illustrated historical markers, each capped with an H. Sign 1 is found at the northwest corner of Wisconsin Avenue and Albemarle Street, just outside the west entrance to the Tenleytown station on Metrorail’s M Red line, but you may begin your tour at any sign. The walk offers about two hours of gentle exercise.
Episcopalian first gathered here to worship in 1874, when St. Alban’s Church, located on Wisconsin Avenue at Massachusetts, started a mission for Washington County. In good weather, services took place under a majestic oak tree on land donated by William Murdock. The tree eventually shaded a rough mission chapel, and then two successor churches. In 1904, when the mission received the name St. Columba’s, its parish house contained a stage and circulating library serving more than 200 families.

St. Columba’s became independent of St. Alban’s in 1924, and two years later the current church was built. It showcases the work of Tenleytown stone masons Louis and Frank Perna and their sons.

In 1975 St. Columba’s joined forces with nearby St. Ann’s and Eldbrooke churches to create Iona House, an experiment in comprehensive social services. The name honors an ecumenical social justice movement in Scotland. Iona House operated from St. Columba’s old clapboard rectory until 1990. Its successor, Iona Senior Services, then moved into a new building where Police Precinct No. 8 once stood, at 4125 Albemarle Street.

When Bernard T. Janney School opened in 1925, it brought Tenleytown’s first public library and community playground. Bob Bates, who attended in the 1950s, recalled how civic responsibility was part of Janney’s curriculum. In fact, as part of a lesson in crime prevention delivered by “Officer Friendly,” he and classmates were marched to Precinct No. 8 and locked up in its jail cell for a dramatic five minutes.
To the Rescue

4100 Block of Yuma Street NW

The brick building at 4101 Yuma Street opened in 1928 as the Convent of Bon Secours (literally, “good help”). The convent’s sisters had arrived in Baltimore from France in 1881. In Baltimore they quietly nursed both wealthy and needy patients in their homes. After the sisters moved to Tenleytown in 1905, they aided the community during the frequent typhoid and influenza epidemics. Neighbors remember the exquisite lace and other handwork the sisters created in their spare time.

As people turned to hospitals for nursing care, the sisters sold their building to the Embassy of France. The French International School held classes here in the late 1960s, followed by the all-girls Oakcrest School. In 2010 the Yuma Study Center planned to occupy the old convent, a city historic landmark since 2004.

Hidden from view at the southwest corner of American University’s Tenley campus is Dunblane, one of the last remaining estate houses in Tenleytown. The Greek Revival style country retreat was built in the early 1800s. When fox hunting grew fashionable later that century, the house hosted the elite Dumblane Hunt (the name has two spellings). Eventually the grounds were sold for Immaculata Seminary, and the old mansion was adapted for elementary school classes.

At the circle is St. Ann’s Church, a Tenleytown institution dating to 1866. This building, dedicated in 1948 as the church’s third on this site, is a fine example of the magnificent urban Roman Catholic parish churches built between 1900 and the 1930s.
IN THE 1930S CITY ENGINEERS created Tenley Circle where commuters heading cross-town or downtown changed streetcars. Just northeast of Tenley Circle, a surviving strip of historic Grant Road meets Wisconsin Avenue. In the 1890s, the two-story, stucco structure on that corner was John and Rebecca O’Day’s feed store, stocking everything from hay to kerosene for area farmers. After 1915 it became “Doc” Scholl’s pharmacy, a popular spot for soldiers training nearby at Camp American University during World War I. When “Doc” Gauley took over during the roaring ’20s, the “Tenleytown Special” sundae was a soda fountain favorite. Since the 1940s restaurants on this spot have served everything from corned beef to cannolis. The stucco building remains the oldest commercial structure still standing in Tenleytown.

Just east of the circle is Wisconsin Avenue Baptist Church. Founded as Mount Tabor Baptist Church in 1880, it first occupied land donated by parishioner Mary Burrows at 4620 Wisconsin Avenue. When the city widened the avenue in 1924, nearly erasing its lot, the church moved. This building is its third home.

The handsome stone structure on the west side of the circle was the Seminary of Our Lady Immaculate, established in 1905 by the Sisters of Providence. Immaculata offered a first-rate education to a “select” female student body. After 80 years, as girls increasingly rejected religious single-sex education, the sisters announced the school’s closing. Immaculata sold this campus to nearby American University in 1987.
From 1927 until the late 1950s, the landscaped grounds on the south side of Nebraska Avenue were the Hillcrest Children’s Center. It was founded downtown in 1814 as the Washington City Orphan Asylum by Marcia Burnes Van Ness and President Madison’s wife Dolley. The center’s Tudor style stone cottages created a village environment. In the 1960s changing social conditions led Hillcrest to move back downtown, this time in service to disabled children and their families.

The National Presbyterian Church and School, which occupy Hillcrest’s former site, trace their origins to four in-town congregations. The church dates from 1795, when stone masons working at the White House gathered for services in a carpenters’ shed on the grounds. Most presidents since James Madison – and notables including Queen Elizabeth and Mother Teresa – have worshipped with the congregation.

President Lyndon Johnson’s message for National Presbyterian’s 1966 groundbreaking praised the church for forging “bonds which draw us together and which crumble the barriers that stand between us.” In 1970 Duke Ellington told a reporter that he performed here to “praise God with music” and to raise money for the church’s Eisenhower Memorial Arts Fund to foster harmony between religion and the arts. Along with its soaring carillon tower, the church boasts a main sanctuary that seats 1,260, and dramatic walks and gardens. Designated the national church for its denomination in 1947, it is the third largest religious center in Washington, after the Washington Cathedral and the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.
THE U.S. NAVY ARRIVED at 3801 Nebraska Avenue during World War II, taking the Colonial style red-brick campus of Mount Vernon Seminary for secret “essential wartime activities.” Soon more than 5,000 workers occupied the campus. Among them were WAVES (Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service) responding to President Roosevelt’s call for women to tackle non-combat duties.

Most WAVES at this site operated cryptoanalytic equipment designed to break German and Japanese communications codes. Discussing the top-secret work with outsiders was considered an act of treason, so WAVE Elizabeth Butler could only write her family that her work was “very secret, one of the most in the Navy.” Jennifer Wilcox later said that “Breaking the Japanese code was our finest hour.”

Meanwhile Mount Vernon Seminary held classes nearby at Garfinckel’s department store on Massachusetts Avenue, and students boarded with local families. After the war ended, the Navy retained the facility, so the seminary moved to Foxhall Road. In 1999 it became a campus of George Washington University.

Before the seminary arrived in 1917, this was Nathan Loughborough’s 250-acre estate, Grassland. In 1820 Loughborough, then comptroller of the U.S. Treasury, brought a lawsuit arguing “no taxation without representation.” Like most of his neighbors of means, Loughborough owned slaves. Thus it is ironic that in 1946, Georgetown Day School, the first consciously integrated private school in Washington, rented Grassland for its second location. The Grassland house was razed for NBC’s studios in 1956.
American University's ties to the Nation's Capital are not just geographic. During both world wars, the U.S. military used the campus as training grounds, with soldiers and sailors adding new energy to daily life in Tenleytown. And President John F. Kennedy chose his American University commencement speech in 1963 as the moment to call on the Soviet Union to craft a historic nuclear test ban treaty.

American University occupies grounds once owned by Tenleytown's largest landowners, the descendants of the Addison-Murdock families. In the early 1800s, John Murdock's hospitality attracted distinguished guests – including George Washington – to his country estate, “Friendship.” During the Civil War (1861-1865), Murdock's tract, incorporating today's Ward Circle and Katzen Arts Center, became Fort Gaines, headquarters of the dashing 55th New York Volunteer “Zouave” regiment. When Abraham Lincoln and his wife Mary dined with Colonel de Troibriand on the camp's French cuisine, Lincoln declared it “the best meal he had had in Washington,” and announced, “if their men could fight as well as they could cook, the regiment would do very well indeed.”
When NBC radio and television and its local affiliate, WRC, moved to new headquarters on Nebraska Avenue in 1958, the average TV screen measured 12 inches. The facility opened with six studios – three TV and three radio. Soon history happened here.

On October 7, 1960, some 70 million viewers watched as NBC broadcast the second televised presidential debate, with candidates Richard M. Nixon and John F. Kennedy facing four reporters. It was widely reported that Vice President Nixon used makeup to cover his five o’clock shadow, better to compete with the tanned and telegenic young Senator Kennedy.

Also in these TV studios, former University of Maryland student Jim Henson and his wife Jane introduced a green “muppet” named Kermit to the world, leading to a regular show on WRC called *Sam and Friends*.

The list of innovative programming by NBC and WRC is long. Since 1960, high school whiz kids have competed to answer Mac McGarry’s questions on WRC’s *It’s Academic*. Here the much-imitated *Meet the Press* got its start. And the WRC radio studios launched “the Joy Boys”: former American University students Ed Walker and Willard Scott. Their theme song, “We are the Joy Boys of radio, we chase electrons to and fro . . .”, opened a half-hour comedy show beamed regionally and to armed forces stationed around the world.
Security and style came to Tenleytown in 1900, when Engine House No. 20 opened here. No longer would fire fighters have to come all the way from Georgetown to extinguish blazes in Tenleytown’s wood-frame houses. Opened with horse-drawn equipment, Engine House 20 became the District’s second to motorize. The modern facility reassured builders and buyers that Tenleytown was a good investment.

Recent improvements to the fire house harmonize with its original Italianate design by Leon Dessez. The Art Deco C&P Telephone Building next door was erected in 1907. Its architects, Eidlitz and McKenzie, are better known for No. 1 Times Square, where each December 31 a lighted crystal ball drops to mark the New Year.

The first enterprise to occupy the block to the south was Raymond T. Johnson, Sr.’s Wisconsin Avenue Market. Shortly after he opened in 1932, Johnson agreed to sell a few of his neighbor’s geraniums. From these humble beginnings grew Johnson’s Flower Center.

The Friendship Building, at 4321 Wisconsin Avenue, was Tenleytown’s first office building. Its second floor dance studio was the 1944 birthplace of Mary Day’s Washington School of Ballet.

Nearby at 39th Street and Windom Place is “the Rest,” Tenleytown’s oldest surviving house, dating to the early 1800s. It is the centerpiece of Armesleigh Park, part of a post-World War I building boom. Step off the trail onto Armesleigh Park’s quiet blocks to see the variety of houses with rough stone chimneys and generous porches designed by prolific local architects George Santmyers or Alexander Sonnemann.
Sources

THE PROCESS OF CREATING a Neighborhood Heritage Trail begins with the community, extends through story-sharing and oral history gathering, and ends in formal scholarly research. For more on this neighborhood, please consult the Kiplinger Library/The Historical Society of Washington, D.C., and the Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library. In addition, see the following selected works:

DC Historic Preservation Office, Building Permits Database, 2009, Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library.


1 **Roads to Diversity: Adams Morgan**
Explore Adams Morgan’s grand mansions and apartments, the location of the first Toys ‘R’ Us, and commerce from around the globe.

Woodley Park-Zoo/Adams Morgan. Ride Circulator to Calvert St. and Adams Mill Rd. Sign 9 is across Adams Mill Rd.

2 **Tour of Duty: Barracks Row**
Capitol Hill’s Navy Yard and Marine Barracks district is one of the city’s oldest. Hear the Marine Band rehearsing and explore historic Eastern Market.

Eastern Market to Sign 1.

3 **Battleground to Community: Brightwood**
Here, along the city’s first farm-to-market road, is where Union and Confederate troops met in the only Civil War battle to be fought in the District.

Georgia Ave-Petworth, 70-series Metrobuses north to Sign 2 at Madison St. and Georgia Ave., or Columbia Heights, 50-series Metrobuses north to Sign 1 at Colorado Ave., 14th and Jefferson Sts.

4 **Cultural Convergence: Columbia Heights**
Meet the old and new Columbia Heights and the people who changed our world with new technology, ideas, literature, laws, and leadership.

Columbia Heights to Sign 1.

5 **A Self-Reliant People: Greater Deanwood**
Wood-frame houses evoke this traditionally African American neighborhood’s rural past. See where Nannie Helen Burroughs and Marvin Gaye made their names.

Minnesota Ave. to Metrobus U8 (Capitol Heights) to Sign 1 at Division Ave. south of Nannie Helen Burroughs Ave.

6 **Civil War to Civil Rights: Downtown**
Follow the footsteps of Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Walt Whitman, and the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., whose lives intertwined with the history of the nation. Download the free audio tour from CulturalTourismDC.org.

Archives-Navy Mem’l-Penn Quarter. Sign 1 on Seventh St. across Pennsylvania Ave.

7 **Village in the City: Mount Pleasant**
Trace the path from country village to fashionable streetcar suburb, working-class neighborhood, Latino barrio, and hub of arts and activism.

Columbia Heights. Two blocks west to Sign 1 at 16th and Harvard Sts.

8 **Midcity at the Crossroads: Shaw**
Immigrants and old-timers, the powerful and the poor have mingled in Shaw since DC’s earliest days.

Mt. Vernon Square/7th St–Convention Center to Sign 12.

9 **River Farms to Urban Towers: Southwest**
Visualize historic, ethnic Southwest amid today’s now-classic Modernist architecture, the result of mid-20th-century urban renewal.

Waterfront-SEU to Sign 1.

10 **City Within a City: Greater U Street**
Discover the historic center of African American DC, where Duke Ellington got his inspiration, Madame Evanti composed, and Thurgood Marshall strategized.

U St/African-Amer Civil War Memorial / Cardozo. Sign 1 is at 13th St. exit.
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Cultural Tourism DC presents two Neighborhood Heritage Trail Audio Journeys

City Within a City Audio Tour
Explore the Jazz beats, the voices, and the inspiration of the individuals that lived along the Greater U Street Heritage Trail.

City War to Civil Rights Audio Tour
Listen to the stories of the people who shaped the history of a nation as you walk in their footsteps along the Downtown Heritage Trail.

Download the free, award-winning Downtown Heritage Trail Audio Tours at www.CulturalTourismDC.org

Walk It. Hear It.
Let the voices, music, and sounds of the past guide your journey through two of DC’s most exciting neighborhoods.
Another Good Walk: Art on Call

Art on Call re-uses obsolete police and fire call boxes as mini-showcases for community art and history. Go to CulturalTourismDC.org for call box locations in these neighborhoods:

1. **Capitol Hill**
   Boxes in various media evoke icons of times past, including the “March King,” John Philip Sousa.

2. **Cathedral Heights**
   Four artists reveal key moments including U.S. Navy women in World War II and origins of the Washington National Cathedral.

3. **Cleveland Park**
   Distinguished residential architecture and favorite neighborhood spots

4. **Dupont Circle**
   Twenty-two artists’ clever interpretations of the Dupont Circle fountain plus history and firefighting tales.

5. **Forest Hills**
   Four artists present neighborhood lore on restored Peirce Mill, Soapstone Valley, and more.

6. **Georgetown**
   The fabled community’s history and recent past, complete with quips, Kennedys, and colleges.

7. **Glover Park**
   Six artists consider the story of Charles Carroll Glover, wartime “victory gardens,” punk music roots, and more.

8. **Golden Triangle**
   An array of artistic styles evoke the lively spirit of this downtown area in the shadow of the White House.

9. **McLean Gardens**
   The fabulous Evalyn Walsh McLean, her Hope Diamond, and her Friendship Estate.

10. **Mount Pleasant**
    Compelling, original bronze sculptures by Michael K. Ross envision historic events.

11. **Sheridan/Kalorama**
    Gilt-edged boxes offer artwork honoring the neighborhood’s diplomatic and cultural pasts.

12. **Southwest**
    The National Cherry Blossom Festival inspired art by six artists.

13. **Tenleytown**
    Artist Lena Frumin celebrates the Hot Shoppes, 1903 firehouse, schools, and Fort Reno.

14. **Woodley Park**
    Artist Nancy McGill highlights Taft Bridge, the Wardman Park, and Woodley mansion (Maret School), and other landmarks.
TENLEYTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Celebrate Tenleytown’s history! Walk the Tenleytown Heritage Trail.

Join us in the architectural, cultural, and historic preservation of Tenleytown and its environs.

www.tenleytownhistoricalsociety.org
Susan Jaquet has specialized for 22 years in helping buyers and sellers in the Northwest DC community where she grew up, raised a family, and still resides!

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Cultural Tourism DC is an independent, nonprofit coalition of more than 230 culture, heritage, and community organizations throughout the Nation's Capital. We help metro-area residents and visitors experience Washington's authentic culture and heritage.

Neighborhood Heritage Trails are the Official Walking Trails of the District of Columbia.

The Tenleytown Heritage Trail Working Group is an ad-hoc, diverse coalition of neighborhood residents, business owners, activists, artists, scholars, and others organized to develop the Tenleytown Heritage Trail in cooperation with Cultural Tourism DC.

Founded in 1988, the nonprofit Tenleytown Historical Society encourages architectural, cultural and historic preservation and educates members of the community about the value of protecting and preserving DC history. THS works with other like-minded organizations, individuals, and public entities to ensure that the city of Washington, particularly the area in and around Tenleytown (including Friendship Heights, American University Park, Armiesleigh Park, Wakefield, Mount Airy, North Cleveland Park) retains its historic fabric. Membership in THS is open to anyone who supports its stated mission.

The Tenleytown Neighbors Association is a nonprofit organization established in 1999 to serve the Tenleytown D.C. community. The Association sponsors programs and projects to educate the public on local culture, history, environment and development matters.

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