On this self-guided walking tour of Greater H Street, historical markers lead you to:

– Swampoodle, whose residents helped build the Capitol and the White House.

– The route British forces marched on their way to burn the Capitol and White House.

– Gallaudet University, recognized as the center of American Deaf Culture.

– Trinidad rowhouses, built on a former brickyard and baseball field.

– The small brick storefronts where hundreds of immigrant families got their toe-hold in Washington.

– Union Terminal Market, purveyor to the city.

– The arena where the Beatles performed their first U.S. concert and Malcolm X spoke.

– The performing arts center that is spurring the neighborhood’s most recent renewal.

A bustling, working-class neighborhood grew up here alongside the railroad and streetcar. Mom-and-pop businesses served all comers in the city’s leading African American shopping district. Discover how, even after the devastating 1968 civil disturbances, the strong community prevailed to witness H Street’s 21st-century revival.
In 2005 the Atlas Performing Arts Center opened in a renovated Atlas movie theater. Restaurants and clubs followed, and a new chapter began for the long-neglected H Street, NE, commercial corridor.

What stories do these old brick storefronts hold? Follow *Hub, Home, Heart: Greater H Street, NE Heritage Trail* to meet the entrepreneurial families who lived and ran businesses here. Along the way, learn how the neighborhood became an important transportation hub and a bustling, working-class community.

This keepsake guide summarizes the 18 signs of the city’s 13th Official Walking Tour.

Tom Collins, left, grandfather of local TV personality Pat Collins, was an engineer for the Capitol Limited train that ran between Washington and Chicago. *Collection of Pat Collins*
As you walk this trail, please keep safety in mind, just as you would while visiting any unfamiliar place.
The Near Northeast neighborhood is a child of early Washington’s largest transportation hubs. The railroads, streetcars, and major roads brought industrial and distribution facilities to the area, while working-class families, attracted by federal building projects and factory jobs, created a community.

Planners of the Nation’s Capital chose Maryland Avenue as a primary link between the Capitol and Boundary Street (today’s Florida Avenue). At Boundary Street it joined an old farm road leading to Bladensburg, Maryland. During the War of 1812, British forces traveled this route on their mission to burn the seat of U.S. government.

Two decades later, the B&O Railroad laid tracks from Baltimore along I Street, NE, to a terminal near the Capitol. A settlement north of the Capitol provided many of the laborers — mostly Irish immigrants and free African Americans who had helped build the Capitol and the White House. The settlement was known as Swampoodle, thanks to the unruly Tiber Creek and its marshes, located between what are now North Capitol and First Streets, NE. Later Swampoodle residents included Italian immigrant stone carvers and masons whose hands crafted the Library of Congress, Union Station, and the National Cathedral.
During the mid-1800s enduring institutions such as St. Aloysius Roman Catholic Church, Gonzaga College High School, the Little Sisters of the Poor’s Home for the Aged, and the Columbia Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb (later Gallaudet University) opened north and east of the Capitol to serve the community.

In 1871 a horse-drawn streetcar line opened along H Street, running to and from downtown. New housing and commercial buildings soon followed.

Union Station’s arrival in the early 1900s displaced many Swampoodle dwellings, and led to an expanded commercial/industrial corridor. With more jobs but less housing, families found shelter to the east along H Street, where brick rowhouses, stores and churches replaced farms, a brickyard, a brewery, and a ballpark.

Another new streetcar line soon ferried workers south along Eighth Street to the Navy Yard, long Washington’s biggest industrial employer. Two large banks opened at the streetcar transfer point of H and Eighth Streets, lending an air of dignity and permanence to the neighborhood.

Union Terminal Market near the railroad became the city’s largest food wholesaler and farmers’ market in 1931, when Center Market closed downtown to make way for the Federal Triangle. A Dutch immigrant named Uline opened an ice business nearby and later built Uline Arena to present ice hockey, basketball, and other public events.

By the 1930s H Street bustled with shops, restaurants, and professional offices run by Jewish, Italian, Lebanese, Greek, Irish, and African American families. Many of them lived nearby or above their stores. Most businesses served all customers — unlike those in downtown DC where African Americans met discrimination.
H Street’s theaters and nightclubs were an exception, though. The Atlas movie house opened in 1938 for whites only. African Americans traveled elsewhere for movies until the Plymouth opened in 1943 a few doors from the Atlas. The popular Club Kavakos served only whites, and until 1948 Uline Arena admitted black audiences only for certain events. Finally, in 1953 the Supreme Court outlawed segregation in DC’s public accommodations.

One consequence of the decision, and the end of legal school segregation the following year, was an increase in racial change. This shift had started in the 1940s as the children of H Street’s European immigrants reached adulthood and moved on. Churches found new congregations, and the city switched public schools into the “colored division” to accommodate the increasing black population. By the end of the 1950s, with “white flight” in full gear, Greater H Street was almost completely African American. The business community continued to cater to its neighbors and to commuters.

Then in April 1968 the assassination of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., provoked civil disturbances across the city. More than 100 H Street businesses were destroyed completely, and others moved away for good. The Atlas Theater held on for a few years, then closed. Although the H Street commercial corridor declined for decades, its heart — the surrounding, long-standing residential community — remained strong.

The 21st century has brought big changes as Greater H Street follows the city’s trend toward greater racial and economic diversity. In addition the opening of the Atlas Performing Arts Center in the old Atlas movie theater has signaled a revival, building evocatively on H Street’s strong past. *Hub, Home, Heart* is a bridge to carry you from that past to the present.
When it opened in 1907, Union Station was the world’s largest railroad terminal. Architect Daniel Burnham’s Beaux-Arts masterpiece, with its soaring, elegant, and light-filled interiors, was the first of the series of Classical buildings demonstrating the sophistication and power of the Nation’s Capital.

The station’s name refers to the “union” of two competing railroad depots: the Baltimore & Ohio’s on New Jersey Avenue, NW, and the Pennsylvania’s, which occupied 14 acres of the National Mall. The merger made train travel more convenient. It removed commerce from the Mall and eliminated the danger of tracks crossing city streets.

Union Station and the railroads have employed thousands, many of whom lived nearby. For a white male immigrant of the early 1900s, a railroad job meant security for his family and, often, economic progress. For African American men the job of porter on a Pullman Company luxury rail car was among the best available. In 1925, A. Philip Randolph founded a pioneering black union, International Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. DC’s station porters, or Red Caps, were the nation’s first to organize a local union, the Washington Terminal Brotherhood of Station Porters. Inside the station you can see a memorial to Randolph, also an organizer of the 1963 March on Washington.

The City Post Office, designed to match Union Station, opened next door in 1914. The Post Office (since reborn as the National Postal Museum) replaced Capitol Park (a.k.a. Swampoodle Grounds), where the first baseball team known as the Washington Nationals played beginning in 1886.
With its view of the Capitol and Senate office buildings, and with the Library of Congress and the Supreme Court just a short stroll away, Union Station truly is the gateway to the heart of the nation’s government. The station is also where official Washington mixes with the local city. Before air travel became common in the 1950s, enormous crowds gathered at Union Station to salute arriving presidents, watch protesters, view visiting dignitaries, or shriek at the Beatles disembarking for their first live American concert.

Until the early 1950s, most of downtown Washington’s public accommodations were segregated. Union Station was one of the exceptions. In its dining room, African American and white patrons could sit down and eat side by side.

Traffic at Union Station peaked during World War II (1941-1945). Throngs of military men and women passed through en route to training camps and battlefronts. Civilians, especially young women, arrived to staff the enormous war effort.

With air travel’s expansion, Union Station’s importance declined. When the station underwent major renovations in the 1980s, its grand concourse was reconfigured to hold inviting shops, restaurants, and entertainment.

The 1990s brought the Thurgood Marshall Federal Judiciary Building named for the Howard University-trained lawyer whose strategies helped end this country’s legal segregation. Marshall later became the first African American Supreme Court Justice.
This is the eastern edge of what once was the rough, working-class Swampoodle neighborhood.

In the early days the marshy Tiber Creek ran between what are now North Capitol and First Streets, NE. Legend has it that lingering rain puddles (“poodles”) led to the neighborhood’s nickname.

Swampoodle’s earliest residents, mostly Irish immigrants and free African Americans, helped build this city. Their hands crafted the White House, Capitol, and other buildings. During the Civil War (1861-1865) more once-enslaved people arrived seeking work. In the 1880s Italian stonemasons found affordable lodging here while building the Library of Congress, Union Station, and the National Cathedral.

In the early 1900s, Congress located Union Station in Swampoodle. Hundreds of homes and businesses disappeared as railroad tracks were laid and the station rose. Many of the displaced moved east, settling today’s H Street corridor.

Swampoodle’s large Irish immigrant Catholic population drew two institutions honoring Jesuit Saint Aloysius Gonzaga: St. Aloysius Catholic Church, dedicated in 1859, and Gonzaga College High School, founded in 1821 and relocated beside the church on North Capitol Street in 1871.

In the early 1950s, Father Horace McKenna revived a shrinking St. Aloysius, refocusing its mission to serving the neediest. Father McKenna founded So Others Might Eat (SOME), Martha’s Table, and other enduring programs providing meals, clothing, child care, and shelter.
Stuart Hobson Middle School, at Fourth and E Streets, NE, was built in 1927 on the site of an old brewery, one of nearly two dozen that operated in DC after the Civil War. Most of the breweries were run by German immigrants who specialized in lager, a light alternative to the English-style ales produced by American brewers.

George Juenemann opened his brewery and beer garden there in 1857, ten years after he came to the United States. For nearly 30 years Juenemann’s Mount Vernon lager, dance pavilion, bowling alley, and dining hall entertained Washington’s German American families. The Juenemanns lived nearby, and some employees lived on the site.

Cincinnati brewer Albert Carry bought the complex after Juenemann’s 1884 death, but sold it a few years later. The Washington Brewery Company, as its new owners renamed it, operated until Congress, with exclusive jurisdiction over DC, closed all city breweries in 1917, two years before Prohibition took hold nationwide. The only remnant of the brewery, the façade of its ice house, still stood at Fourth and I Streets, NE, in 2011.

In 1830, when this area was still considered the country, Concordia (Lutheran Evangelical) Church, of the Foggy Bottom section of Northwest DC, established its cemetery here. Nearly 30 years later, the city passed an ordinance prohibiting burials within its limits (then Boundary Street, today’s Florida Avenue, on the north). So Concordia relocated the graves to Prospect Hill, about two miles away on North Capitol Street.
The elegant Romanesque portion of this condominium complex started life in 1874 as the Little Sisters of the Poor’s Home for the Aged. St. Aloysius Church member Ellen Sherman, wife of Civil War General William Tecumseh Sherman, helped the Sisters secure congressional appropriations to build the facility. The Little Sisters begged for donations on DC streets to support their free care for the elderly, regardless of race or religion.

In 1976 the city built the current overpass carrying H Street above Union Station’s tracks. With a dangerous on-ramp just feet from their front door, the Sisters moved their home to the Catholic University neighborhood. In 1979 the Capital Children’s Museum took over the old convent and moved the entrance to the rear. The museum moved to Maryland in 2004.

Dr. Tom Collins, born in 1905 and raised at 322-324 H Street, was the son of a railroad engineer and descendant of Irish laborers recruited to rebuild Washington after the War of 1812. “Doc” Collins opened a medical practice in his home about 1935 and in the 1940s charged seven dollars for house calls, recalled his son, broadcaster Pat Collins. He treated everyone, from residents of the Little Sisters’ home and Gonzaga High School football players to members of Congress. Archbishop Patrick O’Boyle was a patient, as was a Union Terminal Market butcher who paid Collins in fresh meat. Although devoted to this community, Doc Collins moved away after the 1968 riots left much of it in ruins.
Uline Arena was built in 1941 by Migiel “Mike” Uline to present ice skating, hockey, basketball and tennis. The Dutch immigrant had made a fortune patenting ice production equipment and selling ice from his plant next door. For years Washingtonians rode the streetcar here for sports, worship services, concerts, and cook-offs. Judge Kaye K. Christian recalled that during the 1950s and ’60s her mother Alice Stewart Christian won the Afro-American Newspaper’s cooking competition three times at Uline.

Arnold “Red” Auerbach began his professional career in 1946 coaching the Washington Capitols at Uline Arena. He later coached the Boston Celtics to nine NBA titles.

Mike Uline segregated his audiences. African Americans could attend boxing and wrestling, but not supposedly higher-class attractions: ice hockey, the Ice Capades, and basketball. In response E.B. Henderson, a Harvard-trained health and physical education specialist and civil rights leader, led actions against Uline’s policy. As audiences dwindled, Uline buckled to the economic pressure. In 1948 he opened the facility to all.

In 1959 Uline’s estate sold the arena. The renamed Washington Coliseum presented the Beatle’s first live U.S. concert in 1964. Bob Dylan, the Motown Review, Chuck Brown, and Rare Essence also performed here.

In May 1971 the Coliseum became a holding cell for many of the 12,000 protesters arrested during demonstrations against the Vietnam War. Live concerts ended in 1986. After years of storing trash the arena awaited redevelopment in 2011.
This high ground near the B&O Railroad tracks has been Union Terminal Market since 1931. That year the federal government razed Center Market on Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, to make way for the National Archives. Vendors seeking new locations clustered here.

Before the market, this land was part of the Brentwood estate, and then the World War I-era Camp Meigs, an army training post. In the 1920s the Hechinger lumber yard replaced the camp.

Jewish, Greek, Italian, and African American vendors dominated the original market. In the late 1950s, more arrived as urban renewal closed the Southwest wholesale market. Among them were Fred Kolker’s Kolker Poultry, and Washington Beef Company, belonging to Fred’s uncle Sam. Every week Washington Beef employees unloaded and butchered five rail cars of beef carcasses. And each night a crew cleaned equipment to prepare for the daily federal inspector’s visit. Sam’s sons and grandsons continued the business into the late 1980s.

The next wave of immigrant entrepreneurs, most from China, El Salvador, Jamaica, and Korea, succeeded the European Americans in the 1980s.

Civil rights activist Nadine Winter, concerned about homeless people at the market, created Hospitality House to assist them. In 1962 she opened a family shelter at 507 Florida Avenue. Winter later helped establish a community credit union on H Street, worked for federally supported urban homesteading, and, in 1974, was elected to the first of four terms on the DC City Council, representing Ward 6.
Gallaudet University is world-renowned as the premier institution for higher education for deaf and hard of hearing students. It opened as the Columbia Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb and Blind in 1856 on land donated by former Postmaster General Amos Kendall. In 1864 Congress chartered its collegiate program, which President Abraham Lincoln signed into law. The school's current name honors Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, founder of the first U.S. school for the deaf and father of the university’s first president, Edward Miner Gallaudet.

Gallaudet was designated a university in 1986. Two years later it selected its first deaf president after students, supported by faculty, staff, alumni, the national deaf community, and national leaders, demanded a “Deaf President Now!” Their effort launched a movement leading to important laws expanding access to communications, including the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990. Gallaudet students study in both American Sign Language and English at the university recognized as the center of American Deaf Culture.

“Gallaudet College” is a National Historic Landmark, and the original campus (1866-1878) is in the National Register of Historic Places.

Just east of the Gallaudet campus is the Trinidad neighborhood, named for the former estate of DC banker and philanthropist William Wilson Corcoran (1798-1888). Among Corcoran's legacies to his city are the former Riggs Bank, Oak Hill Cemetery, and the Corcoran Gallery of Art. In 1875 Corcoran donated Trinidad to Columbian College (George Washington University’s predecessor), which sold it to the Washington Brick Machine Company.
Brickyards to Buildings

1000 BLOCK FLORIDA AVENUE NE

The Trinidad neighborhood got its start in the 1890s after the Washington Brick Machine Company used up the clay in the soil here. With Greater H Street filling in with houses and businesses, the company sold its land for housing lots. The rowhouses that arose sold to white families, many of whom walked to work on H Street or at Union Station. Once the brickyard closed, the American Baseball League built a short-lived ballpark here.

Around 1900 John Fisher operated a wholesale candy business in his home at 1008 Florida Avenue. Sons John and Edward Fisher continued the family business until 1941.

The Arthur Nock family owned the large house nearby at 1001 K Street. After hardware salesman Arthur died in 1930, his widow Louise took in boarders. During the Great Depression (1929-1941), hungry drifters, alerted by a previous hobo’s mark on the back door, knew to rap on the door for something to eat.

Between 1945 and 1960, many white Washingtonians left the city. Some wanted newer, suburban-style housing. Others, after 1954, were unwilling to send their children to newly desegregated DC schools. Like many older neighborhoods, Trinidad changed very quickly from white to African American.

Construction foreman Charles “Bob” Martin and family moved to Trinidad Avenue in 1948, and railroad dining car steward Joseph Strowder and his wife Korea arrived on Queen Street in 1950. They joined other newcomers to create community, leading DC’s first African American Campfire Girls, a Boy Scout troop, and Mount Olivet Heights Civic Association.

Campfire Girls parade on Trinidad Ave. for voter registration in 1964, the first time Washingtonians could vote in a presidential election since the city’s founding.

Collection of Mrs. Korea Strowder
When the Atlas Performing Arts Center opened in 2005, it gave hope to an area still recovering from the destruction following the assassination of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1968. But when K-B’s Atlas movie house first opened in 1938, this was a bustling commercial strip.

The Atlas originally admitted whites only. African American movie-goers traveled elsewhere until 1943, when the Plymouth Theater opened in an old auto showroom at 1365 H. Then in 1953 the Supreme Court outlawed segregation in DC’s public accommodations.

But H Street’s shops, run by families of many nationalities, had always served all. Most owners, like Meyer Greenbaum of Greenbaum’s Bakery, 1361 H Street, lived above or behind the stores and worked long hours. Carroll Barber Shop opened next to Greenbaum’s in 1931 as one of H Street’s first African American businesses. A few years later Meyer “Mike” Kanter opened I.C. Furniture at 1353 H, selling inexpensive goods. Kanter’s son Ted later opened Theodore’s in upper Georgetown.

Beginning in 1951 Jake Napier ran Ultra-Modern Barbershop at 1338 for nearly 50 years, hiring and training local young men. In the mid-1970s, Marcus Griffith made and sold his patented hair care products at Hairlox, 1315 H Street.

Despite entrepreneurs’ post-riots efforts, progress was slow. Then in 2002, in cooperation with H Street Community Development Corporation and the Linden Neighborhood Association, the nonprofit Atlas Performing Arts Center began renovations and H Street began its latest revival.

Between 1981 and 2009, the northeast corner of 13th and H Streets hosted the Robert L. Christian Library, honoring the former teacher who founded the Northeast Neighborhood House.
Hub, Home, Heart: Greater H Street NE Heritage Trail is an Official Washington, DC Walking Trail. The 3.2-mile route is defined by 18 illustrated historical markers, each capped with an H. Sign 1 is located at First Street and Massachusetts Avenue near the entrance to Metro’s Union Station stop on the Red line, but you may begin your tour at any sign. The walk offers about two hours of gentle exercise.
The Starburst Intersection of five major roads marks this spot as a transportation hub for the neighborhood and the region.

Shortly after Congress arrived in Washington in 1800, city leaders turned an old farm road into a private turnpike to Bladensburg and points northeast. Its toll booth once sat at this crossroads. During the War of 1812, British forces used the turnpike to reach the new capital city, where they burned the Capitol, White House, and other key buildings.

In 1871 the turnpike became a city street. A horse-drawn streetcar line opened, linking this spot to downtown via H Street. Then the streetcar line pushed farther east along Benning Road, spurring real estate development. A new rail line took commuters from here to Baltimore or Annapolis. With so much traffic, this starburst hub soon anchored a busy commercial area.

In the early 1900s, developers invited traveling circuses to use their vacant parcels so that audiences would see the area and consider buying here. A tradition was born: crowds of all ages lined H Street to watch thrilling circus parades with camels and clowns and elephants lumbering by. Circuses later set up near Union Terminal Market, in Uline Arena, and along Benning Road.

In 1930 Sidney Hechinger opened a salvage and hardware store on Benning Road. Hechinger’s soon became a Washington institution. After the 1968 riots many businesses abandoned the area. But in 1981 Sidney’s son, John W., Sr., showed his commitment to the city by building Hechinger Mall on Benning Road, anchored by his modern hardware store.
Maryland and Avenue in the 1930s was home to immigrants from around the Mediterranean. Evelyn Kogok Hier, who grew up at 1328 Maryland Avenue, remembered her next-door neighbor, Reverend Ayoub (Job) Salloom, hosting after-church gatherings where men shared a hookah, the ancient water pipe. Rev. Salloom ministered to the neighborhood’s tight-knit “Little Lebanon” community.

Many of the neighborhood’s Greek immigrants started up the economic ladder selling produce from huckster wagons, then renting stalls at the wholesale markets before opening their own, often food-related, businesses. In the 1940s the Pappas and Callas families operated produce stands at Union Market on Florida Avenue. The Cokinos family had been running the nearby Goody Shop confectionery since around 1910. Greeks owned the Rendezvous Club and the Paramount, Kavakos, Chaconas, and Bacchus grills on H Street.

Although African American families had long lived here, deeds originally restricted some blocks, including this one, to whites. African American educators James L. and Gustava Eubanks operated a music school at 12th and G before moving it to 1225 Maryland Avenue in 1947.

Just across Maryland Avenue is Linden Court, where in 1897 more than 100 African American families lived in tiny, flat-fronted rowhouses alongside stables and workshops. The houses on the north side of the alley were demolished in 1937 to make way for the Atlas Theater, but enough remain to give the flavor of the old community.

Noted African American architect Lewis Giles, Sr. (1893-1974) grew up nearby at 1200 Linden Place.
The small scale and low rents of H Street’s oldest buildings have lured waves of immigrant entrepreneurs since the buildings were new in the 1880s. By 1930, alongside Greek, Italian, Irish, and other immigrant-owned shops, at least 75 Jewish-owned businesses operated on H Street.

Abe and Anna Shulman ran a dry goods store and lived at 1227 H, with a kitchen in back and living quarters upstairs. Two of their five children remained on H Street as adults: Israel, a dentist, and Fred, who sold baby furniture and toys. Known as the “Queen of H Street,” Anna founded the Hebrew Sheltering Society to house recent immigrants, and led the Sisterhood, a women’s aid society, for Ezras Israel Synagogue at Eighth and I Streets. The Shulmans and most of their Jewish neighbors had emigrated from Russia around 1900.

In the 1950s former boxer Eddie Leonard brought his sandwich shop to H Street. In the 1960s Chuck Brown, the future “Godfather of Go-Go,” purchased his first guitar at Chuck and Marge Levin’s music store at 1227 H Street. In 1968, after looters destroyed their store, the Levins relocated their business to Wheaton, Maryland.

At 1238 H is the former office of Granville Moore, M.D., a native Washingtonian, World War II veteran (Buffalo Soldier), Howard University faculty member, and civil rights activist who practiced here for more than 50 years. Dr. Moore (1916-2003) is also remembered for making house calls and for treating patients free of charge two days a week.
The handsome church on this corner is the second to occupy this spot. The first was a small brick chapel built by John A. Douglas in 1878 for the new Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church. Soon after, it was renamed to honor its builder and his wife Sidney, who donated the land. The current building replaced it in 1898 as the block filled with brick houses and stores.

Douglas Memorial Church served a white congregation, but beginning in the 1940s, its members moved away. In 1958 the governing Baltimore Conference assigned a young African American pastor, Forrest C. Stith, to rebuild the congregation. By knocking on doors and reaching out to youth, Stith increased the church’s membership from nearly zero to 200 in three years. On 11th Street between I and K, Holy Name Catholic Church experienced the same racial makeover.

As these church histories show, well before “white flight” transformed American cities in the 1950s, the face of H Street was changing. Descendants of European immigrant families moved into better-paying professions and newer neighborhoods. African Americans had become a majority in Greater H Street by 1950. In response the DC School Board switched the white neighborhood schools to the “colored” division. The Supreme Court’s 1954 desegregation of the nation’s schools accelerated white flight to exclusive suburbs. For decades, in a very divided city, Greater H Street was almost entirely African American. As the 21st century opened, though, it followed the city’s trend towards a more racially and economically diverse population.
One year before Congress and the president finally arrived in their new capital city in 1800, Washington’s Navy Yard opened at the foot of Eighth Street. It soon became the city’s biggest employer. In 1908 streetcars began connecting H Street to the Navy Yard via Eighth Street, allowing workers to commute. As the transfer point between the Eighth Street line and the H Street line to downtown, this busy spot attracted the Home Savings Bank’s Northeast Branch and the Northeast Savings Bank, founded by H Street merchants, across Eighth Street from each other.

Before Prohibition closed DC’s many saloons in 1917, number 727 H Street housed the German-owned Beuchert Tavern. Louis Kavakos bought the place in 1929 and ran it as a lunch counter/confectionery. After Prohibition ended four years later, Kavakos and his sons William, George, and John replaced the luncheonette with Club Kavakos, a bar and grill with live music, dancing, vaudeville, and strippers. Like many DC night spots, the club thrived during World War II. After the war patrons enjoyed evenings hosted by WMAL radio DJ Willis Conover. Jazz greats Charlie Parker, Charles Mingus, and Dizzy Gillespie all recorded live albums here.

In 1914 Ezras Israel Orthodox congregation moved from its space above an H Street grocery into the former Centennial Baptist Church at Eighth and I Streets, one block north. Fifty years later it closed as most of H Street’s Jewish population moved north, and eventually re-opened in Rockville, Maryland.
On Friday, April 5, 1968, the 600 block of H Street went up in flames. The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., had been assassinated a day earlier, and grief-stricken, angry men and women had taken to the streets across the city, looting and burning.

According to a fireman, the alley behind Morton’s Department Store became “a freeway for looters” carrying “television sets, clothes, everything.” Yet other people brought firefighters chairs and coffee.

When Morton’s first opened downtown in 1933, it was among the few white-owned department stores that did not discriminate in hiring or sales. In fact owner Mortimer Lebowitz was a former Urban League president who had marched with Dr. King. Nevertheless, looters ransacked and torched his store here.

“The riots did not happen in a vacuum,” recalled Sam Smith of the Capitol East Gazette. In 1968, “24 percent of the [area’s] labor force was unemployed or underemployed.” After the smoke cleared, 90 buildings, containing 51 residences and 103 businesses, were gone. Most stores that weren’t destroyed closed, never to reopen.

While the city cleared land for sale, it didn’t pay to repair existing businesses or develop new ones. In 1984 the H Street Community Development Corporation formed to attract development. The corporation and other nonprofits built housing and commercial buildings, but H Street suffered from relentless suburban competition. It took the rehabilitation of the Atlas Theater, starting in 2002, and a new appreciation for the charms of the neighborhood’s close-in, 19th-century buildings for H Street’s revival to take hold.
Get Behind the Wheel

600 block H Street

Ourisman Chevrolet, once occupied almost the entire north side of this block. In 1921, after two years as a top-performing Chevy salesman on Connecticut Avenue, and with a $2,000 loan from his widowed mother, Benjamin Ourisman opened his own dealership here. By 1940, when he built the five-story building at 624 H, his was the country’s highest-selling dealership. Automobile production stopped during World War II (1941-1945), but afterwards demand was so high that Ourisman hired 67 salesmen. The business moved to Maryland in 1962.

Across from Ourisman’s, at 619 H Street, Pietro Borghese ran Pete’s Barbershop for nearly 50 years. Borghese emigrated from Italy in 1920 and opened his business near the homes of many Italian workers and craftsmen. The family got along well with its African American neighbors, recalled his son Carmelo. During the 1968 riots, when Pete’s was one of only two white-owned businesses on the block, the barber shop was untouched.

Sanitary Grocery, the forerunner of Safeway, first appeared on H Street in 1909. In the early 1960s, Safeway opened at 600 H, but moved in 1983 to the new Hechinger Mall on Benning Road, leaving the neighborhood without a major grocery. Five years later the independent, black-owned Mega Foods opened across the street but lasted only two years. Murry’s, which took over the Safeway building, is part of a local chain founded in 1948 by Alfred Mendelson and named for his son. Murry’s two-ounce frozen steaks offered consumers conveniently small portions of meat for the first time.
Calvary Episcopal Church, at 820 Sixth Street, has been a community anchor since 1901. For most of its early years, the congregation, led by founding rector Reverend Franklin I.A. Bennett, met at 11th and G. In 1941 it welcomed the Reverend Dr. James O. West as rector. The dynamic Rev. West drew so many new members that soon the parish needed a larger sanctuary. Eight years later Calvary moved to its current home, the former Church of the Good Shepherd. West is remembered for co-founding the family social services center Hospitality House, sheltering and feeding the homeless in his rectory, and counseling troubled Vietnam veterans. “The city looked to him as a community leader,” Judge Kaye K. Christian recalled.

Mount Olive Baptist Church at 1140 Sixth Street was founded in 1873 as a branch of Second Baptist Church of Northwest DC. The current church rests on the site of its first meeting place, the home of Robert and Martha Terrell. Mount Olive has focused on serving needy members of the community with free food and clothing, holding outdoor evangelistic services, and mentoring teenaged boys.

Radio station WOL operated from Fourth and H Streets during the 1980s and ’90s. Neighbors remember the station’s studio overlooking the street, where large windows revealed on-air guests and dynamic host Cathy Hughes.
Walk It. Hear It.

Let the voices, music, and sounds of the past guide your journey through two of DC’s most exciting neighborhoods.

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
Neighborhood Heritage Trail creation begins with a community, extends through story-sharing and oral history-gathering, and ends in formal scholarly research. For more information, please consult the Kiplinger Library, Historical Society of Washington, D.C., and the Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library. Also these selected works:


Sources

This innovative “Porta Branch” library at 13th and H Sts. honored Robert L. Christian (1921-1969).
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.

**M** Woodley Park-Zoo/Adams Morgan. Ride Circulator to first stop: 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.

**M** 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.

**M** Georgia Ave-Petworth, 70-series Metrobuses north to Sign 2 at Madison St. and Georgia Ave., or

**M** 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.

**M** Columbia Heights to Sign 1.

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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.

**M** 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.

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

7. **Lift Every Voice: Georgia Ave./Pleasant Plains**

The neighborhoods along Seventh Street and Georgia Avenue – at the same time linked to official Washington and a world away from it – have witnessed human endeavor at its most earthy and its most exalted.

**M** Shaw/Howard University to Sign 1.

8. **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.

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

9. **Midcity at the Crossroads: Shaw**

Immigrants and old-timers, the powerful and the poor have mingled in Shaw since DC’s earliest days.

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

10. **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.

**M** Waterfront-SEU to Sign 1.

11. **Top of the Town: Tenleytown**

Visit traces of the village that grew up around John Tennally’s 18th-century tavern, and experience the neighborhood that played a key role in two world wars and in the development of modern communications.

**M** Tenleytown to Sign 1.

12. **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.

**M** U St/African-Amer Civil War Memorial/Cardozo. Sign 1 is at 13th St. exit.
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 an old movie theater and 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**
An engaging tour of distinguished residential architecture and notes on the Washington Ballet, the late, lamented Roma Restaurant, and more.

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

5 **Forest Hills**
Four artists present neighborhood lore on restored Peirce Mill, Native Americans who lived in 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 explore the story of Charles Carroll Glover, the community’s 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 (replaced during World War II by McLean Gardens).

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.
Live NoMa.
Live Connected.

If you enjoyed walking *Hub, Home Heart: Greater H Street, NE Heritage Trail*, you’ll want to explore these other District of Columbia Neighborhood Heritage Trails!

- Roads to Diversity: Adams Morgan Heritage Trail
- Tour of Duty: Barracks Row Heritage Trail
- Battleground to Community: Brightwood Heritage Trail
- Cultural Convergence: Columbia Heights Heritage Trail
- Civil War to Civil Rights: Downtown Heritage Trail
- A Self-Reliant People: Greater Deanwood Heritage Trail
- Lift Every Voice: Georgia Avenue/Pleasant Plains Heritage Trail
- City Within a City: Greater U Street Heritage Trail
- Village in the City: Mount Pleasant Heritage Trail
- Midcity at the Crossroads: Shaw Heritage Trail
- River Farms to Urban Towers: Southwest Heritage Trail
- Top of the Town: Tenleytown Heritage Trail

Details at [www.CulturalTourismDC.org](http://www.CulturalTourismDC.org)

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**Warmest Wishes**

from

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PASSPORT DC

A month’s worth of international art and culture every May. Embassies and international culture centers open their doors and showcase their music, dance, crafts, food, and more!

Be a DC Insider with Cultural Tourism DC’s Events Update!

Stay on top of what’s happening in DC by signing up for the weekly Events Update.
Enjoy a week’s worth of art, music, film, exhibits and more delivered straight to your inbox every Wednesday.
It’s quick, it’s easy, and it’s free.

Walking Town-DC
Biking Town-DC

Explore the city and discover a new neighborhood or reacquaint yourself with an old one. Each fall, Cultural Tourism DC offers dozens of walking and biking tours throughout all the wards of the city.

Cultural Tourism DC.org

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

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