

On this self-guided walking tour of Adams Morgan, historic markers lead you to:

- The heart of Washington's Latino community
- Grand Beaux-Arts mansions and embassies
- The church of a Civil Rights martyr
- Former homes of future Presidents Kennedy, Eisenhower, and Taft
- The location of the first Toys 'R' Us



Cultural Tourism  DC BB&T

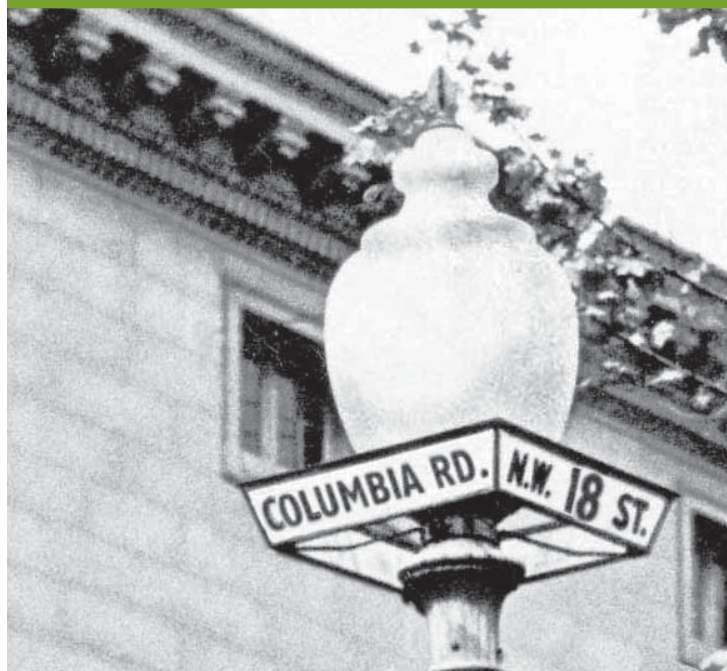


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District Department of Transportation



# Roads to Diversity

## ADAMS MORGAN HERITAGE TRAIL



Adams Morgan bears the legacy of the many groups that have enjoyed its breezy location at an important crossroads for the nation's capital. Follow this trail to discover the roots of the Adams Morgan name, and the traces of the presidents, paupers, natives, immigrants, artists, activists and others who have called Adams Morgan home.



# Welcome.

Visitors to Washington, DC flock to the National Mall, where grand monuments symbolize the nation's highest ideals. This self-guided walking tour is the fifth in a series that invites you to discover what lies beyond the monuments: Washington's historic neighborhoods.

Long appreciated as one of the city's most diverse neighborhoods, the Adams Morgan you're about to explore is no accident. It is the legacy of elite colonial families, Jewish merchants, liberal activists, revolutionaries, African American government clerks, transportation planners, and entrepreneurs from Africa, Central, and South America. This guide uncovers their footprints.

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As you walk this trail, please keep safety  
in mind, just as you would while visiting  
any unfamiliar place.

# • Roads to Diversity

## Adams Morgan Heritage Trail

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# Introduction

The Historical Society of Washington, D.C.



Managassett, above, the Truesdell country estate at Columbia Rd. and Wyoming Ave., 1880s. Left, Margaret Stuyvesant Rutherford White, and husband Henry White, were the first owners of 1624 Crescent Place.



by John Singer Sargent, courtesy Corcoran Gallery of Art

ADAMS MORGAN IS EVER CHANGING. Even its name is new. This area once was known simply as “18th and Columbia,” referring to its major cross-roads and the center point of this Heritage Trail. Back in the 1920s people also spoke of Lanier Heights when describing the streets just north of Columbia Road, and Meridian Hill for those to the south. But in the late 1950s, urban planners and liberal activists came together to promote a new identity: Adams Morgan.

This was no accident. The name change began with the community’s schools. Most of the area’s elementary schools were built before 1910, and by the late 1940s had aged badly. As was the practice in Washington, white children received new school buildings when needed, and “colored” students inherited the old buildings. Consequently the colored schools were in terrible shape. Parents and teachers of both the colored Morgan School (named for city commissioner Thomas P. Morgan) and the white Adams School (named for President John Quincy Adams) began campaigning for better facilities. Families of both races opted to work together to improve education for all.

When the Supreme Court ruled school segregation unconstitutional in 1954, President Eisenhower ordered DC schools to desegregate immediately as a model for the nation. Because black and white community members were already working together for better

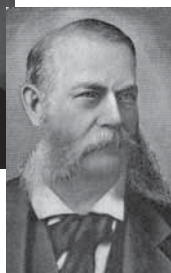
schools, they knew each other, and desegregation went well. In 1955 school officials and residents organized as the Adams Morgan Better Neighborhood Conference — giving the area its new name.

Long before the schools came together, the breezy hilltops here had attracted Native Americans and colonial settlers. Like most areas on this broad ridge, this one remained rural for the city’s first 80 years, with a few sprawling private estates. In fact, Peter C. L’Enfant’s 1791 plan for Washington ended at the foot of a steep rise at Boundary Street, now Florida Avenue. In L’Enfant’s day, when city dwellers walked or relied on horses, climbing steep ridges was very difficult. But once electric streetcars appeared in the late 1880s and hills were easily conquered, city dwellers began to settle on higher ground. One early streetcar line followed 18th Street to Calvert Street and then crossed a bridge spanning Rock Creek to Connecticut Avenue Extended.

The streetcars led to the appearance of the grand apartments and town houses of Kalorama Triangle and Washington Heights. Up-scale businesses followed. From the 1890s until the 1930s, 18th and Columbia was known for its gentility, its furriers and caterers. Nearby Lanier Heights attracted



Library of Congress



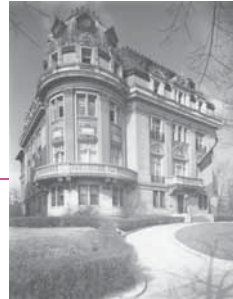
The Historical Society of Washington, D.C.

President John Quincy Adams, far left, and Thomas Morgan, left, builder of Oak Lawn.





Costa Rican float, Hispanic Festival, 1987.



Former Embassy of France at 2460 16th St., designed by George O. Totten.



From *Federico, Gracia y Calor*, by the GALA Company, 1979.

middle-class Jewish merchants moving up both the economic ladder and the city's topography from Southwest or Seventh Street. In the 1880s, the ambitious and persuasive Mary Foote Henderson had bought vast acreage along 16th Street and evicted African Americans who had clustered there since the days of Meridian Hill's Civil War forts. Many moved west across 16th Street to a small area now known as Reed-Cooke. Then Henderson attracted a number of foreign embassies to occupy mansions she built along 16th Street. As many of the embassies represented Spanish-speaking governments, their diplomats and domestic help began settling in the area as early as the 1910s.

Between 1930 and the 1950s, many of Adams Morgan's posh residents moved on to newer and grander accommodations as the city expanded. Their aged former housing became profitable to subdivide and rent. By the 1960s affordable Adams Morgan attracted a younger, more ethnically mixed population, including immigrants from nations in political turmoil. Lanier Place became a hub of anti-establishment politics, where Students for a Democratic Society members shared the block with Black Panthers and anti-Vietnam-War organizers. The small buildings along 18th Street drew artists and musicians.

Active and committed residents of this diverse neighborhood succeeded in defeating two federal initiatives that would have destroyed its unique character. Working with others across the city, residents stopped a freeway alongside Florida Avenue that would have cut Adams Morgan off from Downtown. And in 1965, thanks in part to the efforts of the Adams Morgan Planning

Committee, many merchants and residents sighed with relief when the National Capital Planning Commission rejected an urban renewal plan that would have destroyed buildings and displaced families.

Today 18th and Columbia's international shops, restaurants, and nightlife are once again drawing residents from across the city as well as visitors to the nation's capital. African immigrants are the latest to find a haven here. And the fine old apartments and townhouses, in a cycle of neighborhood change common to inner-city neighborhoods across the country, are once again seen as attractive and welcoming living spaces.



First tenant board, top, Jubilee Housing's Mozart building (1630 Fuller St.) meets, 1976.

"No BP" protest, left, 18th and Columbia, 1974.

# 1

## Mrs. Henderson's Legacy

16TH STREET AND FLORIDA AVENUE NW



Public school students sketch  
Henderson Castle, around 1899.

*Library of Congress*

ONE OF THOSE WHO SAW the potential of bringing city life to the hills of this area was Mary Foote Henderson. A wealthy and powerful figure, she was married to Missouri Senator John B. Henderson, who introduced the 13th Amendment abolishing slavery. Beginning in 1887, Mrs. Henderson created a new community here for her peers. On the corner of 16th and Florida (now the Beekman Place development), she built herself a castle-like mansion. Then she tried unsuccessfully to persuade the U.S. Government to build a new White House or the Lincoln Memorial atop the hill. The government declined, but it did accept land for Meridian Hill Park (also known as Malcolm X Park). Henderson also hired noted architects to design elaborate mansions and lured the French, Spanish, Mexican, Cuban, and Polish embassies to move in. Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes was a neighbor at 2100 16th, and many embassies remain today.

After Mrs. Henderson's death in 1931, her castle became apartments and later a noisy "after-hours" club. A sleepless neighbor, *Washington Post* publisher Eugene Meyer of 1624 Crescent Place, bought the castle and eventually razed it, but left behind a memento: the brownstone walls lining the Beekman Place development.

Across the street is the Roosevelt, constructed in 1919 as a fine apartment-hotel. Its name honors President Theodore Roosevelt. Mrs. Henderson successfully fought to limit the building's height, so it wouldn't block views of the city from the park.

# 2

## Meridian Hill/ Malcolm X Park

CRESCENT PLACE AND 16TH STREET NW



Meridian Hill Park, 1934.

*The Washington Post*

LONG BEFORE EUROPEANS ARRIVED, Meridian Hill was a sacred space for Native Americans. As recently as 1992, a delegation of Native Americans walked across the continent to this park to mourn the 500th anniversary of Columbus's arrival. They were received by environmentalist Josephine Butler, a champion of park preservation.

Europeans named the hill for Commodore David Porter's grand Meridian Hill house (1815), which straddled the route of the prime meridian (today's 16th Street). Americans used this meridian as a starting point for mapping the continent until 1884, when it was replaced by the Greenwich (England) Prime Meridian. President John Quincy Adams lived in Porter's house in 1829.

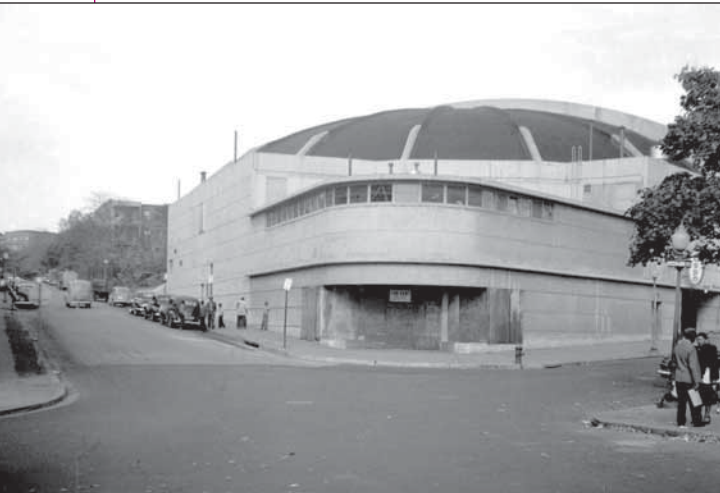
Landowner Mary Foote Henderson persuaded federal officials to build the elaborate, European style, 12-acre Meridian Hill Park across 16th Street from her mansion. Its starlight performances drew audiences until the park began declining in the 1950s. In the 1960s it became a staging ground for political demonstrations, and in 1970 activist Angela Davis unofficially renamed it Malcolm X Park. Neglected by official Washington, the space became a scene of crime and vandalism. Then in the early 1990s, Friends of Meridian Hill and others worked with the National Park Service to evict criminal activity and restore the park as a cultural center.

As you proceed to Sign 3, don't miss three landmarks: the Envoy, at the corner of Crescent Place (once Meridian Mansions, home to congressmen and diplomats), and 1624 and 1630 Crescent Place, both designed by John Russell Pope, architect for the Jefferson Memorial.

# 3

## The Roots of Reed-Cooke

17TH STREET AND KALORAMA ROAD NW



National (later Citadel) Arena  
roller rink, 1949

*The Historical Society of Washington, D.C.*

IN 1947 THE LARGE BUILDING on this corner opened as National Arena, a roller rink and bowling alley. It also hosted professional wrestling, roller derbies, and rock concerts. In 1986 it became the Citadel Motion Picture Center, where portions of *Gardens of Stone* and other movies were filmed. In 1994 MTV recorded its town hall meeting with President Bill Clinton here.

Reed-Cooke's earliest African Americans settlers moved across 16th Street from what is now Meridian Hill/Malcolm X Park. They came in the late 1880s after Mary Foote Henderson evicted them from her property. Reed-Cooke became industrial as well as residential, with warehouses and car dealerships. The Church of the Saviour's missions and King Emmanuel Baptist Church (originally Meridian Hill Church), on Kalorama Road, supported the community's spiritual and social needs.

Like much of this area, Reed-Cooke experienced decline in the 1950s and 1960s. The Adams Morgan Planning Committee called its small industrial section a "deteriorating influence," and wanted to demolish or adapt it along with nearby houses. But residents worked to fend off urban renewal, and the Adams Morgan Organization, Jubilee Housing, Adams Morgan Community Development Corporation, King Emmanuel Baptist Church, and many others mustered funding to preserve buildings and create affordable apartments.

In 1981 ANC Commissioner Edward G. Jackson, Sr., coined "Reed-Cooke" for the area between 16th and 18th streets, and led a community effort to make it official. The name, like Adams Morgan's, recognizes two schools: the Marie H. Reed Community Learning Center (Champlain Street), and the H. D. Cooke Elementary School (17th and Euclid).



# 4

## Life on the Park

16TH AND EUCLID STREETS NW



Wayland Seminary, 15th and  
Euclid sts.

*Washingtoniana Division, D.C. Public Library*

DURING THE CIVIL WAR (1861-1865), Union Army hospitals and camps occupied Meridian Hill. The facilities attracted African American freedom seekers looking for protection and employment. By war's end, a black community had put down roots. Soon Wayland Seminary opened to train African American clergy and teachers. (The seminary later moved to Richmond.) In the late 1880s, Mary Foote Henderson purchased most of this land and evicted residents. Many settled in today's Reed-Cooke neighborhood.

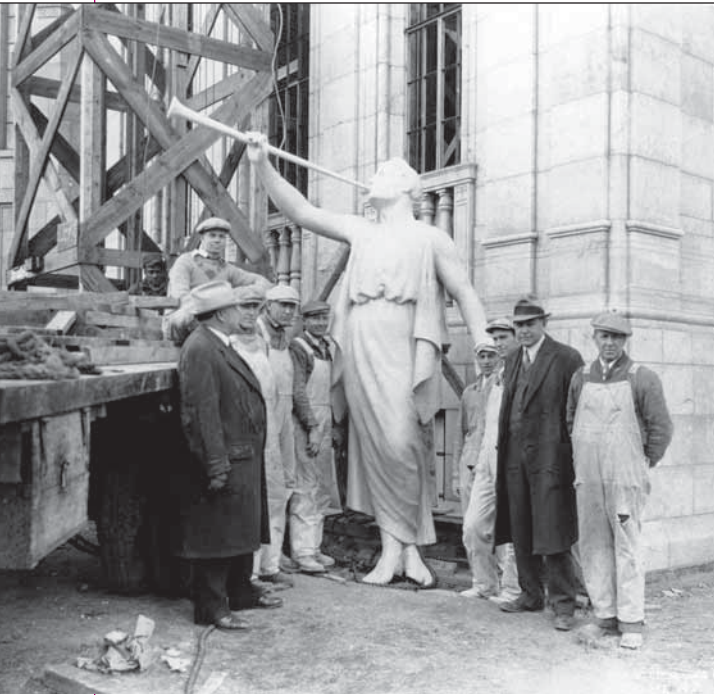
The building at 2600 16th Street once was painted pink and called the Pink Palace. Mrs. Henderson commissioned it as she began creating her elite enclave. It was designed by her favorite architect, George O. Totten, Jr. An early owner, Delia Field, widow of Chicago department store mogul Marshall Field, entertained the Prince of Wales here in 1919. Architect Totten lived at 2633 16th Street, later home of the Antioch Law School. Totten would design 11 grand houses, including the elegant 2460 16th, first occupied by the French Embassy. Mrs. Henderson originally offered Totten's 2801 16th Street to the U.S. government for a vice president's residence. The government declined, so Spain took it for its embassy.

At 2480 16th Street is Dorchester House, briefly the residence of John F. Kennedy and his sister Kathleen in 1941. Across 16th Street is Meridian Hill Hall, Howard University's first co-ed dormitory. It opened in 1942 as apartments for women war workers at a time of severe housing shortages.

# 5

## Ambassadors of Faith

16TH STREET BETWEEN FULLER AND  
HARVARD STREETS NW



Ready to place the angel Moroni  
statue atop the Mormon Chapel, 1933.

*Brigham Young University*

THREE DRAMATIC RELIGIOUS STRUCTURES dominate this corner. They are among some 40 religious institutions lining 16th Street between the White House and the Maryland state line. Some serve as unofficial “embassies” representing the interests of their faiths before the U.S. Government.

The neo-Baroque National Baptist Memorial Church is a memorial to Roger Williams, founder of Rhode Island and champion of religious liberty. Its congregation has long worked for social justice and community betterment. The Carlos Rosario Public Charter School (1970) and the Academy of Hope (1985), both schools for immigrant and low-income populations, have met here.

The Peace King Center of the Unification Church, home to the followers of the Reverend Sun Myung Moon since 1977, was originally the Washington Chapel, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Completed in 1933 with some 16,000 blocks of marble brought from Utah, it drew from the modern style of the Mormon temple in Salt Lake City. The church moved to Kensington, Maryland, in the 1970s.

All Souls Church dates from 1821, and its current neo-Georgian building was dedicated in 1924. Among its many famous congregants were President William Howard Taft and Senator Adlai Stevenson. In March 1965 its pastor, Rev. James Reeb, demonstrated the church’s commitment to social justice by joining an integrated voting rights march in Selma, Alabama. There he was murdered by white opponents. Reeb’s death contributed to the national outcry against racism that helped pass President Lyndon Johnson’s Voting Rights Act just a few days later.

# 6

## Latino Community

COLUMBIA ROAD BETWEEN QUARRY ROAD  
AND 17TH STREET NW



Long-time Hispanic leader Carlos  
Rosario heads the Festival Parade, 1983.

*Photograph by Nancy Shia*

THIS IS THE HEART of Washington's Latino community. Once centered here and in nearby Mount Pleasant and Columbia Heights, the community now extends throughout the region.

As early as the 1910s, the Mexican, Ecuadoran, Cuban, and Spanish embassies clustered nearby on 16th Street. Spanish-speaking diplomats and staff called this area home and often remained after their tours of duty ended. In the 1950s political turmoil and economic hardship brought Puerto Ricans and Cubans, followed later by South and Central Americans — particularly Salvadorans and Nicaraguans.

Latinos built dynamic cultural and business communities held together by bonds of food and language. By the 1970s, the Ontario Theater showed Spanish-language films (later the rock band U2 played there) and Manuel's Latino disco was a hot night spot. The Omega restaurant thrived, and small groceries including La Sevillana and El Gavilan offered familiar foods and gossip.

With growth came leaders such as the Puerto Rican Carlos Rosario, who lobbied for city services and recognition. In 1970 Latinos organized the Hispanic Heritage Festival, which attracted thousands, serving notice that Latinos had arrived. The city responded in 1976 by opening the Office of Latino Affairs. Needing more space, the popular Hispanic Festival moved to the National Mall in 1989.

Along this block are numerous social service organizations. These were seeded in 1960, when the ecumenical Church of the Saviour opened Potter's House, a pioneering coffeehouse and religious center. Since then the church's ministries have grown: Jubilee Housing, Servant Leadership School, Columbia Road Health Services, Family Place, Jubilee Jobs, Joseph's House, the Patricia M. Sitar Center for the Arts, and others.





Firefighters pose in front of Engine Company 21 and Truck Company 9.

*Collection of Jack Gerhart*

BANKER ARCHIBALD MCLACHLEN and Smithsonian Institution naturalist George Brown Goode developed Lanier Heights in the early 1900s. Goode laid out streets and encouraged Smithsonian colleagues to purchase lots. McLachlen built the elegant Ontario apartments on then-rural Ontario Road. More apartments and rowhouses followed. By 1935 Lanier Heights was considered a close-in city neighborhood.

In 1908 the city built the Mission style firehouse at 1763 Lanier Place. Generations of neighborhood children played in front of it, considering the fire fighters their personal guardians. The community saved the deteriorated facility from demolition in 1975.

During the 1920s, most residents of these blocks were German Jews. Many came up the economic ladder and up the hill from Old Southwest, including Rabbi Moses Yoelson, father of entertainer Al Jolson (1787 Lanier Place). Like much of the area, Lanier Place eventually grew less affluent as families of means left for newer, suburban housing.

In the 1960s Adams Morgan's affordable housing attracted a younger, more mixed population, giving the area a reputation as organized and community conscious. Lanier Place became a hub of anti-establishment politics. Members of Students for a Democratic Society lived at 1779 Lanier Place. Black Panthers, American Indian Movement workers, and the Berrigan brothers (Catholic priests and anti-war leaders) all passed through. The Mayday Tribe, anti-Vietnam-War organizers, created a commune at 1747. After a bombing at the U.S. Capitol in 1971, FBI agents staked out 1747 in search of witness Leslie Bacon. She was chased along the rooftops of these houses and apprehended.



# 8

## Serving the Neighborhood

COLUMBIA ROAD AND CHAMPLAIN STREET NW



Avignon Freres owner Pietro Orcino amid the pastries, 1963.

*Washingtoniana Division, D.C. Public Library*

FURS BY GARTENHAUS and truffles by Avignon Freres. Hand-cranked ice cream from Budd's. Beginning in the 1910s, such neighborhood favorites occupied the commercial buildings along Columbia Road developed by Sanner and Barr. These fashionable shops catered to the 18th and Columbia neighborhood and drew Washingtonians from all over. Even Presidents Harry S Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower enjoyed French pastries in Avignon Freres's first garden tea room, 2429 18th Street. In 1940, when Isidore Gartenhaus opened a fur shop at 1789 Columbia Road, 18th Street was still "a little Park Avenue," recalled his son Stanley. The thriving business eventually moved to the former Riggs Bank at 1801 Adams Mill Road.

After World War II (1941–1945), businesses began changing as people of means moved to more suburban locations. Residential buildings had aged, leading to lower rents and more diversity. Yet Gartenhaus Furs remained until after the riots that followed the 1968 assassination of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Then the furrier moved to Bethesda, Maryland. Avignon Freres remained in the Orcino family until 1986. By the mid-1970s, new Latino enterprises catered to immigrants while a few hip shops drew cosmopolitan shoppers.

First Church of Christ, Scientist opened in 1912, 30 years after church founder Mary Baker Eddy first lectured in Washington. The church donated the land for Unity Park to the community. It also served as an aid station for the victims of the tragic Knickerbocker Theater roof collapse in 1922.



# 9

## Tragedy at 18th and Columbia

18TH STREET AND COLUMBIA ROAD NW



Rescue workers remove casualties of the Knickerbocker Theater disaster.

*The Washington Post*

BEFORE THERE WAS “ADAMS MORGAN,” this crossroads lent the neighborhood its name: “18th and Columbia.” Here you could catch a streetcar to just about anywhere and buy nearly anything.

But back in 1922, a tragedy unfolded at 18th and Columbia. On January 28 the roof of Harry Crandall’s Knickerbocker Theater, on its southwest corner, collapsed under the weight of a 28-inch snowfall, killing 98 and injuring hundreds more. Soon after, the city passed new building codes.

Crandall then built the Ambassador Theater on the same spot. Once that theater lost audiences to television, it was sold for redevelopment. It briefly hosted rock concerts. The night before the October 1967 March on the Pentagon, an anti-war rally took place with poet Robert Lowell, novelist Norman Mailer, and others.

When the Ambassador was razed in 1970, a battle ensued over its lot. Drawing on a 20-year tradition of community organizing, residents defeated plans for a gas station. In 1978 Perpetual Savings and Loan won the spot, agreeing to hire a bilingual staff, offer special loans to area residents, and create a plaza for a farmers’ market.

The business district that began developing in the 1910s included an early Peoples Drug Store where McDonald’s is in 2005. In 1948 Charles Lazarus opened what would be the first Toys ‘R’ Us in his father’s bike shop at 2461 18th Street. Herbert Haft founded Dart Drug at 1801 Columbia Road in 1954. Lazarus and Haft, pioneers of high-volume discounting, oversaw phenomenal business expansion through the 1990s.

# 10

## “Suburban” Development

ADAMS MILL ROAD AND LANIER PLACE NW



At work on “Un Pueblo sin Murales  
es un Pueblo Desmuralizado,” 1977.

*Photograph by Nancy Shia*

BY THE 1890s the Rock Creek Railway Company’s new electric streetcars made it easy to commute across town. The “country” settlements of this area became “suburban.” One streetcar line followed 18th to Calvert Street, passed here, and then crossed a bridge spanning Rock Creek to the newly extended Connecticut Avenue. Next came new housing in Woodley Park and Cleveland Park, and their residents shopped at 18th and Columbia.

Thanks to streetcars, by 1900 dozens of houses and apartments occupied this hilltop. Franklin T. Sanner built his family home where the curving L’Aiglon building sits across 18th Street. The elegant house is still there, hidden behind a façade built later for a nightclub and shops. Sanner developed numerous apartments, including the luxurious Beacon (1910), at 1801 Calvert Street, and recruited small businesses.

When the Rock Creek bridge needed to be replaced in 1934, it was too important to close for long. So in a feat of engineering, 40 men and 5 horses detached it and rolled it along rails to new temporary foundations 80 feet downstream. Today’s Duke Ellington Bridge, a short walk along Calvert Street, soon replaced the old one. Just before the bridge is the old streetcar turnaround, used until 1962 to send some streetcars back downtown.

The mural on Adams Mill Road was painted by Chilean émigrés Carlos Salazar and Felipe Martinez. The title translates: “a people without murals are a de-muralized people.” It is one of many such markers of the Latino presence that have brightened the area since the 1960s.



# 11

## Walter Pierce Park

ADAMS MILL ROAD AND ONTARIO PLACE NW



Clean-up Day in Community Park  
West, 1978

*The Washington Post*

WALTER PIERCE PARK sits at the edge of the Rock Creek Valley. Once home to Native Americans, it had attracted European settlers by 1703. Before John Quincy Adams became president in 1825, he purchased Adams Mills on Rock Creek from his cousin. The mills, just down the hill, processed flour and plaster. While other millers here relied on slave labor, the anti-slavery Adams refused to do so.

The park was once part of a pair of cemeteries, African American and Quaker, established back when this hilltop lay beyond the city limits. After the Smithsonian began building the National Zoo in 1889, the cemetery associations moved remains nearest the zoo to other locations, including Woodlawn Cemetery in Northeast Washington.

In 1941 excavations began for new apartments where the park is today. But more graves were uncovered, so work stopped. In 1981 residents succeeded in creating Community Park West on the empty site. In 1991 the park was renamed for the late Walter Pierce, a high-profile member of the coalition that created it. That coalition included Washington's Society of Friends (Quakers) and Charlotte Filmore, founder of the Filmore Early Learning Center. Filmore was born in 1898 and experienced three centuries before dying in 2002 at age 104. Her center provided low-cost and free day care to more than 500 African American children. The center's last location was 1811 Ontario Place.

During winter you can see a mansion on the Zoo grounds. It is Holt House, purchased in 1844 by Dr. Henry Holt, who farmed the area.



Charles Codman painted the Barlow home "Kalorama."

*U.S. Department of State (Diplomatic Reception Rooms)*

THIS SIGN IS ON THE EDGE OF the Kalorama Triangle Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1987. Most of its elaborate houses were built between 1888 and 1930 in the "Washington Heights" subdivision. They survive as a fine collection of Washington row-house styles.

The word Kalorama (from the Greek for "beautiful view") comes from the 30-acre estate here above Rock Creek named by poet and diplomat Joel Barlow. He purchased Kalorama in 1807 upon President Thomas Jefferson's urging. Jefferson called the estate "a most lovely seat" with "superb house and gardens."

Kalorama was among a handful of such country estates here through the 1880s. Then electric streetcars arrived. In 1891 the Rock Creek gorge was bridged at the site of today's Duke Ellington Bridge and in 1897 the Columbia Road streetcar line opened. Like today, new transportation led to development. Around 1915 Colonel George Truesdell divided his Managassett estate to build the elegant Mendota (1901) and Altamont (1915) apartments nearby on 20th Street and Wyoming Avenue. The Woodward family of Woodward & Lothrop department stores razed their mansion to build 2101 Connecticut Avenue. Kalorama Park, near this sign, was once the estate of John Little, whose house survived until the 1920s.

Between 1902 and 1905 alone, builders constructed more than 100 handsome rowhouses in Kalorama Triangle. Architect B. Stanley Simmons and developer Franklin Sanner collaborated on the Romanesque houses on Mintwood Place, considered one of Kalorama's most picturesque streets. Favorite architectural styles included Tudor Revival (1850 Mintwood), Colonial Revival (1848 Biltmore), Spanish Revival (1852 Biltmore), and Romanesque Revival (1853 Mintwood).



The grand Altamont lobby, seen with its original 1916 furnishings.

Photograph by James Stafford Phillips,  
National Gallery of Art

DUBBED “BEST ADDRESSES” by historian James Goode, the grand apartments of the Kalorama Triangle are among the city’s earliest. The Mendota (1901), located at 2220 20th, is the city’s oldest intact luxury apartment house. The Wyoming, completed in 1911 at 2022 Columbia Road, and the Altamont built in 1915 at 1901 Wyoming, offered elaborate façades, elegant lobbies, and spacious units of more than 2,000 square feet. Many buildings boasted swimming pools, beauty parlors, servants’ quarters, sleeping porches, and rare early elevators, dishwashers, and air conditioners.

These elaborate buildings filled quickly. Thirty Mendota residents appeared in the 1910 *Elite List*, Washington’s social register. By 1918, there were 48. Not all who lived here were wealthy, of course, but many were notable. A man who would be president, Dwight Eisenhower, once lived at the Wyoming, and a former president, William Howard Taft, as well as General John J. Pershing and entertainer Lena Horne, resided at 2029 Connecticut Avenue.

Shortly after these buildings opened, some tenants became concerned about rising rents and the question of who would live next door. So they established co-operative ownership. In Adams Morgan, the Netherlands (1860 Columbia Road) was the first to convert in 1920. During World War II, DC rents topped all other American cities, leading to more conversions. The Altamont went co-op in 1949, followed by the Mendota in 1952, and 2029 Connecticut Avenue in 1977. The Wyoming, converted in 1982, was designated a historic landmark after community groups prevented its demolition for a proposed expansion of the Washington Hilton.



Frank Lloyd Wright presents plans  
for Crystal Heights.

*National Gallery of Art*

THE COLUMBIA ROAD HILL, with its sweeping views of Washington and the Potomac, has tantalized visionaries since the 1800s. But few of their plans have been realized.

In 1873 businessman and city commissioner Thomas P. Morgan (whose name survives as part of Adams Morgan) created Oak Lawn, a four-story, Second Empire mansion where the upper edge of the Washington Hilton sits today. Oak Lawn honored the property's 400-year-old "Treaty Oak," said to be the site of treaty negotiations between English settlers and Native Americans. Over time the property appealed to George Washington University, the Grand Lodge of Masons, and even controversial modern architect Frank Lloyd Wright. But the university and the Masons couldn't raise needed funds, and Wright's elaborate scheme for "Crystal Heights"—21 glass towers with apartments, hotel rooms, theater, restaurants, stores, 1,500 parking spaces, and rooftop gardens cascading down the hill—was rejected by city officials.

Morgan's house remained until 1952, when it was razed. The Treaty Oak was thoughtlessly cut down a year later. Finally, in 1965 the Washington Hilton opened here. It became a noted Washington venue for conventions, inaugural balls, and political speeches. On March 30, 1981, the T Street entrance was the location of John Hinckley, Jr.'s attempt to assassinate President Ronald Reagan.

Across T Street is the former site of Gunston Hall School, which educated young women from 1906 until 1942. Margaret Truman, daughter of President Harry S Truman, was a graduate.





Nigerian vendor Onuoha Nwokoro,  
Adams Morgan International Day, 1992.

*The Washington Post*

ADAMS SCHOOL WAS BUILT at 1816 19th Street in 1930 for white students when the DC Public Schools were segregated. An Americanization School taught immigrant adults and children the English language and American culture here from 1949 to 1967, when it moved to Georgetown.

As early as the 1920s Adams Morgan was a destination for European immigrants attracted to its boarding houses, accessible employment, and, eventually, the presence of family and friends. In addition to the many Latinos who came between the 1950s and 1980s, Southeast Asians came during the Vietnam War, and subsequent unrest in Ethiopia and Eritrea brought more immigrants from those nations.

It has become common for signs to advertise products or church services in multiple languages. In the early 1970s, the grassroots Adams Morgan Organization, a homegrown precursor of the city's Advisory Neighborhood Commission system, adopted the motto "Unity in Diversity," recognizing some 40 ethnic groups. Residents may disagree on how unified the neighborhood actually is, but many take pride in its long history of tolerance and diversity.

The mansion at 2001 19th Street (now condominiums) was built in 1903 as the Royal Chinese Embassy. When it opened, the press hailed the building as the "finest and most costly" diplomatic residence in the city.

City Council Chairman David Clarke (1944–1997), known for his concern for civil rights, the poor, and affordable housing, once lived at 1909 19th Street. He was first elected to represent Ward 1 in the City Council in 1974.

# 16

## Building a Better Neighborhood

18TH AND CALIFORNIA STREETS NW



Morgan Community School Principal  
Haskins talks to students, 1969.

*Wide World*

MARIE H. REED COMMUNITY Learning Center opened in 1977 on the former sites of the Morgan Community School and Happy Hollow Playground.

When both the Adams and Morgan elementary schools became “community schools” in the 1960s, their curricula and policies were controlled by locally elected residents with the cooperation of the D.C. School Board. The schools also provided important social services. The new Reed School followed suit with a public health clinic, child care center, adult education, and a swimming pool. Its name honors Bishop Marie H. Reed (1915–1969), founder of Sacred Heart Spiritual Center and a community school movement leader.

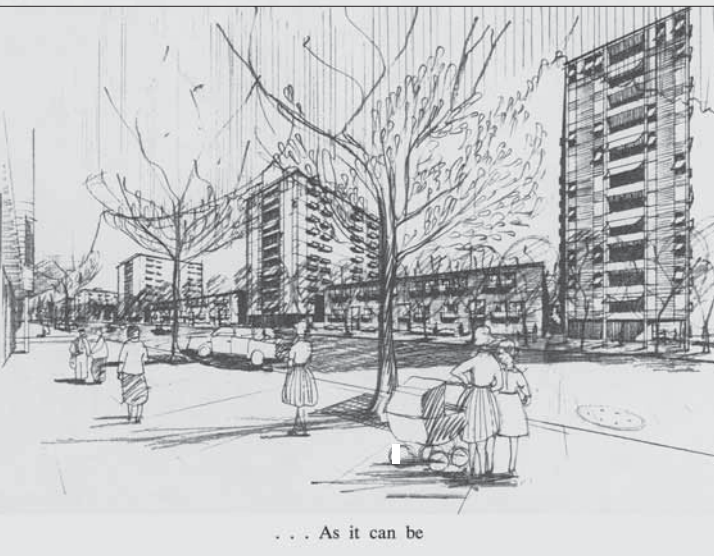
The original Morgan School was named after City Commissioner Thomas P. Morgan, whose Oak Lawn estate was on the site of today’s Washington Hilton. At first Morgan School served white children. Then in 1929, when John Quincy Adams School was built for them on 19th Street (Adams once owned land along Rock Creek), African American students were given the old Morgan School. By the 1950s, Washington’s black schools were overcrowded and run-down, while white schools were under-enrolled due to “white flight” to the suburbs.

When the Supreme Court ruled that school segregation was unconstitutional in 1954, Washington’s schools were ordered to desegregate immediately as a model for the nation. Here, black and white community members had already laid the groundwork for better schools and improved race relations. In 1955 school officials and residents created the Adams Morgan Better Neighborhood Conference — and the Adams Morgan name stuck.

# 17

## Urban Renewal Era

18TH STREET AND KALORAMA ROAD NW



Plans to remake 18th Street in 1963 called for Modernist "luxury apartments."

*National Capital Planning Commission*

THE CHARMING VICTORIAN ROWHOUSES you see along 18th Street are an Adams Morgan signature. But they were nearly lost in the 1960s in the name of progress.

During World War II, thousands flooded Washington to work for the government, seriously overcrowding existing housing. Afterward, planners and citizens considered how to repair Washington's beaten-down neighborhoods. In Southwest, they chose wholesale "urban renewal." Nearly all of Southwest was razed for new construction. Some 23,500 residents were forced out. Many came to already crowded Adams Morgan.

Then citizens and planners agreed: Adams Morgan would not be another Southwest.

So in the early 1960s citizens formed the Adams Morgan Planning Committee to work with federal agencies to improve the neighborhood. With much debate, they first called for better shopping and community facilities, and less traffic. Early plans called for paved plazas and high-rises on 18th Street and Columbia Road. Reed-Cooke's industrial buildings (auto dealerships, power plants, and warehouses) and deteriorating housing would have been razed or re-used.

But then residents realized that plans would displace thousands of Reed-Cooke residents and dozens of businesses. And private restoration efforts were already underway. So in 1965 the National Capital Planning Commission rejected urban renewal for the area.

At the same time, many residents joined other Washingtonians to stop plans for a freeway alongside Florida Avenue to the south that would have cut off Adams Morgan from Downtown Washington.



# 18

## The Artistic Life

18TH BETWEEN BELMONT AND  
COLUMBIA ROADS NW



Jazzmen Charlie Byrd (guitar) Eddie Phye (drums), and Keter Betts (bass) at the Show Boat, 1960.

*The Washington Post*

THE LIVELY SCENE ON 18TH STREET began with an arts movement in the 1950s. Musicians, dancers, and artists found the centrally located street attractive as declining rents made it affordable.

Early on, jazz guitarist Charlie Byrd brought fame to the Show Boat Lounge at 2477 18th Street. Byrd, Keter Betts, and Stan Getz introduced Americans to Brazilian jazz with their best-selling album *Jazz Samba* (1962). The album was recorded at nearby All Souls Unitarian Church. Byrd headlined at the Show Boat until it closed in 1967.

The arts got a boost from Colin “Topper” Carew, a young architect who created the New Thing Art and Architecture Center. The New Thing (1966–1972) was innovative and free-form, offering arts programs for all ages. One of its five buildings was 2127 18th Street. Carew later became a filmmaker, contributing to the 1983 film *D.C. Cab*.

As the New Thing was doing its thing, the Ambassador Theater produced rock concerts with psychedelic sound and light shows. Performers in 1967 included an obscure new group, the Jimi Hendrix Experience.

GALA Hispanic Theatre opened in 1976 at 2319 18th Street, the home of founders Hugo and Rebecca Medrano. Dance Place began at 2424 18th Street in 1980, and the city named an alley near this sign in its honor.

Also in this area was the Whitman-Walker Clinic, the health service for gay men and lesbians. It operated its second home at 2335 18th Street from 1980 until 1987. Here it developed its pioneering responses to the AIDS crisis.



# 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 information on this neighborhood, please consult the resources in the Kiplinger Library/The Historical Society of Washington, D.C., and the Washingtoniana Division, D.C. Public Library. In addition, please see the following selected works:

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# Acknowledgments

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Cultural Tourism DC (CTdc) is a nonprofit coalition of more than 150 heritage, cultural, and neighborhood organizations that works to strengthen the image and the economy of the nation's capital by engaging visitors and residents of the metropolitan area in the diverse history and culture of the entire city of Washington. For more information about CTdc's Neighborhood Heritage Trails program and other cultural opportunities, please visit [www.CulturalTourismDC.org](http://www.CulturalTourismDC.org) or call 202-661-7581.

The Adams Morgan Heritage Trail Working Group is an ad-hoc, diverse coalition of neighborhood residents, business owners, activists, historians, and others organized to develop the Adams Morgan Heritage Trail in cooperation with Cultural Tourism DC. The group works to deepen residents' awareness of Adams Morgan's history, attract daytime business and visitors to the neighborhood from the region and beyond, and encourage respect for the neighborhood and its residents. The working group solicited funding, organized oral history sessions, and coordinated historic resources volunteered by Adams Morgan residents. The working group partners with Cultural Tourism DC on outreach and maintenance of the Adams Morgan Heritage Trail.