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# MOST ENDANGERED PLACES

## 2009

**Announced Tuesday, June 2, 2009**  
**The Maples (Friendship House)**  
**619 D Street, SE**  
**Washington, DC**

*Beginning in 1996, the DC Preservation League has announced annually a list of Most Endangered Places to draw attention to Washington, DC's historically, culturally and architecturally significant places that may be threatened with ill-advised alteration, demolition through neglect, or abandonment.*

*The mission of the DC Preservation League is to preserve, protect and enhance the historic and built environment of Washington, DC through advocacy and education.*



*The Foundry Branch Trolley Trestle. DCPL Archives.*

## Foundry Branch Trolley Trestle

(Crossing Foundry Branch of Potomac River in Glover Archbold Park, north of Canal Road, NW.)

The Foundry Branch Trolley Trestle is one of only two remaining bridges along the former trolley line linking Georgetown and Glen Echo, Maryland. This line, constructed around 1900, provided the transportation to a 'trolley' park and thousands of Washingtonians used the line annually to access the Glen Echo Amusement Park. Although all the tracks have been removed, the right-of-way continues as a trail along the Potomac River overlook through the Palisades neighborhood of Northwest Washington, DC.

The steel bridge span crossing Foundry Branch in Glover Archbold Park is an excellent example of one of the few remaining early transportation bridges in the city. However, weathering and a lack of maintenance have seriously damaged the structure, and the trestle now stands with the help of improvised cables. The derelict condition of the structure impedes its ability to serve as a valuable recreational resource for the city.

DCPL supports the repair and reuse of the trestle as an important resource within the DC park system. Stabilization of the bridge will provide connectivity to paths at both ends and surrounding areas of the park.



*Third Church of Christ, Scientist. DCPL Archives.*

## Third Church of Christ, Scientist 900 16<sup>th</sup> Street, NW

The Third Church of Christ Scientist complex exemplifies many issues posed by efforts to preserve the recent past. Built in 1971, the complex was designed by renowned architect Araldo Cassutta, a partner in the firm of I.M. Pei & Partners. From its completion, the Third Church complex received recognition and accolades. According to a Visitor Guide once distributed by the church, the complex was cited for architectural excellence by the Washington Board of Trade. At the time, the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects, dubbed the church “perhaps the most satisfying new complex in the city.” Of course not all critics approved entirely of the design. The Washington Post’s architectural critic of the time called it “rude and disorderly.” However, he also acknowledged the fact that the building, with its “great shafts of light,” was “unquestionably ingeniously designed.”

At issue with the design of the Third Church was, and is, its “brutalistic,” expression. Imposing, exposed poured-in-place reinforced concrete, minimal glazing, and a deliberately inward-looking design continue to be characteristics of the “brutalist” style of architecture popular in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s that has its champions and critics. The generally “cold” feeling of the building and the empty plaza between the church building and its companion L-shaped office tower, have received their share of criticism. Some believe the building to be a programmatic failure and expensive to maintain. However, through the years, the complex has continued to be sighted for its architectural excellence by the likes of the United States Commission of Fine Arts and *Architecture* magazine.

Although the Third Church of Christ, Scientist complex was recently listed on the DC Inventory of Historic Places, the office building and the land have been purchased by a developer who intends to demolish the complex to construct a new office building with a new, smaller space for the congregation. A demolition permit has been granted by the Mayor’s Agent for Historic Preservation. DCPL will appeal this decision in the DC Court of Appeals and applied for and is pending review by the HPRB. DCPL will continue its efforts to work with the developer and the congregation to find a solution for this unique property.





*Top: 827-833 Kentucky Avenue SE. Bottom: 712-718 16th Street SE. DCPL Archives.*

## Barney Circle Neighborhood

(Bounded by Potomac Avenue, SE to the north, 17<sup>th</sup> Street, SE to the east, Kentucky Avenue, SE to the west, and Pennsylvania Avenue, SE to the south.)

Located to the east of the Capitol Hill Historic District in Southeast Washington, Barney Circle is a residential neighborhood, roughly triangular in shape, developed during the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to provide affordable housing for people moving to Washington as a result of World War I. The neighborhood is comprised of uninterrupted rows of single-family brick row houses that typify the area and provide its character and identity. Largely unadorned and modest in scale and style, these two-story row houses are wider and shallower than their nineteenth century predecessors and are characterized by their horizontal orientation, front porches and yards, and details including overhanging eaves, mansard roofs with dormers, and brick stringcourses. Known as “daylight” row houses because they were designed to be only two rooms deep to ensure that each room had natural light and air, the row houses are set back from the street and read as a cohesive unit along the streetscape.

The historic nature and architectural character of the neighborhood is largely intact, with only a few inappropriate alterations. However, as housing prices and rents have increased over recent years, development pressures to build larger houses and to enlarge existing ones, with additional stories, threaten to destroy the historic fabric of the neighborhood, irrevocably compromising its historic and architectural integrity.

The DC Preservation League supports the preservation of this historic neighborhood and encourages the community’s recent efforts to secure its historic designation and to educate the public about this architecturally and culturally significant neighborhood.





1305 - 1331 H Street. Photo by Peter Sefton.

## Mead's Row 1305 - 1331 H Street, NE

Comprised of rowhouses and distinguished by the presence of two living levels above retail storefront shops, Meads Row represents an example of high commercial style, designed and built by Charles C. Meads, a prominent builder on Capitol Hill and in the Old City section. The buildings' facades consist primarily of pressed brick, limestone and patterned metal.

Two buildings in this row 1309 and 1311 are threatened by demolition by the owner who proposes to build a parking lot for the Atlas Theater to the west and the many new restaurants and bars that have recently opened on H Street.

The threat of demolition is imminent as the landmark nomination submitted by the Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS) was denied in a 5-3 vote by the Historic Preservation Review Board on May 28, 2009 despite the support of ANC 6A and the Stanton Park Neighborhood Association.

DCPL will support CHRS, ANC 6A and the Stanton Park Neighborhood Association in their endeavors to stay the demolition of these important structures to the H Street corridor.



5211 Little Falls Road, NW. DCPL Archives.

## Superintendent's House - Dalecarlia Reservoir, Washington Aqueduct

(5211 Little Falls Road, NW, National Historic Landmark: 1973, National Register of Historic Places: 1973, DC Inventory of Historic Sites:1979)

The two-story, Second-Empire-style, 1875 brick residence was designed by Montgomery C. Meigs, engineer of the Washington Aqueduct (plus several forts, the old Pension Building and expansions of the Capitol and the District's former post office) and later Brigadier General and Quartermaster General. The house and reservoir are elements contributing to the significance of the aqueduct, one of America's early big-city water systems and a National Historic Landmark. The house resembles the model entrance/sexton lodges that Meigs designed for the National Cemeteries established during the Civil War.

Once important to the operations of the reservoir, the house is now vacant and neglected. Last year, Washington Aqueduct personnel (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District) informally approached the Historic Preservation Office with a proposal to demolish the building. The building requires roof, siding, masonry and window repairs and better security against intrusion by humans and animals.

It is a building that could and should be easily rehabilitated for its original use or adapted for a new one. Although it stands on the reservoir property, the building lies outside the secure perimeter around the water source.

DCPL will work to raise awareness of the condition of the house and its vulnerability and encourage the Washington Aqueduct to undertake some positive action it might not otherwise consider, such as physically stabilizing the building and/or leasing it to another user who would maintain it.



619 D Street, SE

## The Maples (Friendship House) 619 D Street, SE

(National Register of Historic Places: 1973, DC Inventory of Historic Sites: 1964)

The Maples, one of Capitol Hill's oldest residences was built between 1795 and 1798 by architect William Lovering for William Mayne Duncanson. Duncanson was a friend of many of the country's early leaders including George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, both of whom are purported to have visited the house often. Duncanson lost his fortune and the house in 1800 when his early land speculations in the Federal City were not profitable.

For the next 135 years the house went through periods of vacancy and neglect in between habitations by prosperous families such as Major Augustus Nicholson, Sr., Senator John Clayton, and Francis Scott Key.

In 1936, the house and grounds were purchased and donated to Friendship House, a settlement organization begun in 1904 to assist impoverished District families. In December 2008, the organization vacated The Maples and placed the property on the market and boarded up its windows and doors to prevent access by vagrants.

DCPL supports the community's efforts to work with Friendship House by encouraging maintenance and disposition of the property. DCPL looks forward to working with the future owners to encourage stabilization, maintenance and revitalization of this important historic property.