

This graphic depicts the nineteenth-century Mall reservations overlaid on the current Mall. (CLP file "Mall res overlay final")

## **1901-1928: The Senate Park Commission Plan Charts a New Direction**

### The Senate Park Commission

In the 1890s, both private citizens and the government developed plans for the improvement of central Washington. These plans were of varying degrees of sophistication, but they fired the ambition of architect Glenn Brown, appointed Secretary of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) in 1898, to arrange for the AIA to devote its annual meeting in December 1900 to the issue of Washington's redesign. The talks included an address by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. that was "one of the first attempts by an American designer to define the role of landscape architecture in the planning and improvement of cities." (Reps 1966:89; Olmsted, "Landscape in Connection with Public Buildings in Washington," in Glenn Brown, *Papers*, pp. 25+.) The meeting resulted in the formation of an AIA committee on legislation, which lobbied Congress to undertake serious examination of the city's design problems. With the aid of Senator James McMillan, chairman of the Senate District Committee, the AIA committee helped bring about the formation of the Senate Park Commission in 1901. (Reps 1967:Chapter 3. For more details on the workings of the McMillan Commission, see Moore, *Senate Park Report*, 1902; Reps, *Monumental Washington*; Gutheim, *Worthy of the Nation*; and *The Mall in Washington, 1791-1991*, ed. Longstreth.)

A joint resolution introduced by McMillan in December 1900 had proposed the creation of a committee to study the arrangement of public buildings in Washington and the development of a comprehensive park system. This was defeated, apparently because of the opposition of the powerful, conservative Republican Speaker of the House, Joseph "Uncle Joe" Cannon of Illinois, a vehement opponent of using federal funds for the aesthetic improvement of the District of Columbia.

McMillan sidestepped this obstacle by having a Senate Resolution passed in executive session in March 1901, which mandated the use of Senate funds for a redesign of the park system only, though McMillan clearly intended to include public architecture. (Reps 1967:92-93) McMillan succeeded in establishing the Senate Park Commission, but his political maneuvering, particularly the bypassing of House approval, led to continuing problems in getting specific portions of the plan enacted.

Congress appointed the Senate Park Commission – popularly known as the McMillan Commission – that month. Its members included architects Daniel Burnham and Charles McKim, landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., and sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens. All the commission members had been involved in the creation of the 1893 Columbian World's Exposition in Chicago, a landmark of City Beautiful design. They were assisted by Charles Moore, McMillan's secretary and Clerk of the District Committee.

The term “City Beautiful” refers to a broad set of progressive beliefs and practices espoused in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries concerning ways to improve urban communities – from the creation of new municipal centers to the installation of neighborhood playgrounds. City Beautiful architectural design relied on the principles taught at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, which was attended by many of the era's leading architects and wielded enormous influence. Beaux-Arts architecture focused on the planning of monumental civic buildings that embodied hierarchical and symmetrical arrangements of spaces and structures, using dominant axes and subordinate cross-axes. The buildings were commonly designed in classical styles, and often employed all the traditional visual arts: architecture, sculpture, and painting.

The McMillan Commission applied City Beautiful precepts to the redesign of Washington's central core. As laid out in a report published in 1902, their plan attempted to recapture the fundamental principles of the original L'Enfant plan for the Mall; to establish and maintain design standards for this area; and to extend the District of Columbia's park system to protect views, natural and scenic features, and the city water supply.

The Commission began meeting in April 1901. That summer, the members (with the exception of Saint-Gaudens) took a seven-week journey to Virginia and then Europe for the intensive study of the greatest classical urban ensembles of the Western tradition, the American estates and cities that would have been familiar to Washington and Jefferson, and the European sources on which L'Enfant may have based his plan. (Reps 1967:94-98; Streatfield 1991:123) Among the European cities they visited were Paris, Rome, London, Vienna, and Frankfurt. Designs that proved particularly influential in their conception of the Mall were the grounds of Hatfield House and Bushy Park in England, and the great seventeenth-century French landscapes by Andre le Notre at Vaux-le-Vicomte and Versailles.

On their return, the commission members set to work in their respective cities. They arranged an extensive publicity campaign and sought the backing of important political figures. They prepared large-format color renderings and three enormous models, which were exhibited in Washington's Corcoran Gallery of Art in December 1901. McMillan presented the commission's report to Congress on January 15, 1902. (Reps 1967:103-108)

One critical victory won by the commission was securing the removal of the Baltimore & Potomac Railroad and the construction of a new Union Station, shared with the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, on a site north of the Capitol. (Reps 1967:97-100) On the Mall, key sites were reserved for memorials to Grant, at the east, and Lincoln, at the west. McKim redesigned the Washington Monument grounds with walled terraces ornamented by small temples and pools to emphasize the intersection of the two controlling axes and to highlight the fundamental relations between the legislative and executive branches of government. (Reps 1967:97)

The McMillan Plan showed monumental classical buildings housing the offices of congressmen and serving as a frame for the Capitol, and proposed a new building for the Supreme Court. It widened the Mall to 1600 feet, almost 200 feet more than previously, and realigned its east-west axis twenty-five feet to the south to conform with the deviation caused by the placement of the Washington Monument. The Mall was to be transformed into a grassy lawn bordered by carriage drives and ranks of elm trees, dotted with fountains and places to sit, rest, and enjoy the view.

Inspiration for the grounds of the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial came from Italian and French Renaissance villas. According to Moore, the commission members believed “the effects produced by tree-crowned terraces should be sought where the configuration of the land permitted.” (Reps 1967:97)

#### The Fight over the Department of Agriculture Building, 1904

The first major test of the McMillan Plan was the siting of the new building for the Department of Agriculture. Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson had approved a plan that set the new structure only 300 feet from the Mall’s center line, the same distance as the original building by Cluss and as the Smithsonian Castle, and not the 450 feet called for by the McMillan Commission. President Theodore Roosevelt had inadvertently approved the building, ignorant of the setback issue. Senator Francis G. Newlands of Nevada introduced a resolution that no building on the Mall should occur within 400 feet of the center line. Burnham and McKim spoke at the March 12 hearing, and Burnham’s testimony clearly set forth the commission’s reasoning:

*In order to make more sure and to check ourselves, as we felt the very grave importance of the recommendations to the Senate, we had flagpoles erected through the Mall so that we could see them from the steps of the Capitol and from the Monument itself. We tried two hundred and fifty feet, then four hundred feet, and the three hundred feet space was plainly the best. . . .*

*Having determined that a three hundred foot opening is necessary between the greatest monument in the world and one of the greatest domes in the world, the discussion went to supporting it by trees on each side. There again we examined every notable avenue in Europe. We found that not less than four trees constituted an avenue. Three trees produced a bad effect, because no space is left in the centre and the composition becomes lop-sided. People walk either on one side or the other, whereas with four trees there is a valley under the trees with a great promenade on either side.*

*Then the distance apart for planting elms was considered, and many hundreds of elm trees were measured in order that we might not make a mistake in the distance which the trees should be placed apart, lengthwise or crosswise; and the result (fifty feet) represents our conclusion after a careful study. The effect of four trees is rich. There are some notable avenues in England which have six or even more, and there is a certain richness and beauty that convinced us of the propriety of recommending not fewer than four trees on each side of the central parkway vista. We felt that the scheme had better not be executed if only two trees on the sides were planted. It would be better not to attempt the development because the line of trees would be so thin and ineffective as to*

*make this city a laughing-stock, instead of obtaining such an effect as the entire country has the right to expect of Congress. . . .*

*It is not proposed by us, and has never been proposed by us, to build in the Mall a central avenue for traffic. We propose a great open vista and that vista is the great architectural feature if we may speak of landscape work as architectural. The centre is to be grass, like a green carpet, with roadways on each side, overhung by trees. The width of the Mall from building to building is a little greater than the length of the Capitol, as it should be. The Mall buildings form the architectural lines which lead up to the Capitol.*

*I want to say once more, in order to impress it upon the Committee, that the great height of the Monument, 555 feet, and the dome of the Capitol, influenced us. Things must be in proportion. If the Mall were short, a narrow parkway two hundred feet in width could be made, but such a narrow parkway would appear mean and insignificant in a park of the length and magnitude of the Washington Mall. (Text taken from the report prepared by National Capital Planning Commission City Planner Charles Eliot II, entitled "Mall Building Lines," 1/20/32 FRC12. See Supplemental Information for key to Federal Records Center materials.)*

The 800-foot width of the Mall won Senate and then presidential support. Following this, another decision was made to uphold the level grade called for in the McMillan Plan. As Gutheim writes: "Thus, in piecemeal decisions on closely fought issues a national commitment to the key provisions of the McMillan plan was built up over the years." (Gutheim 1977:131; see also Reps 1967:145-150)

Even so, the chief construction engineer for the Agriculture Department building began excavating foundations for the new structure at the 300-foot setback, with a ground level rising eight feet higher than recommended by the McMillan Commission and thus higher than the base of the Washington Monument. McKim said: "One of the most important elements in the Mall plan is the continuous up grade from the Grant Statue to the Washington Monument." (quoted in Reps 1967:147; Reps gives this story in full)

Secretary Wilson refused to change it, however, and McKim paid a visit to Secretary of War William Howard Taft, who arranged a joint meeting with McKim, Wilson, and the president. The political maneuvering at this meeting won a final victory for the McMillan Plan, establishing that it was to be followed in this and subsequent development. (Reps 1967:149)

The marble classical revival building of the Department of Agriculture, designed by Rankin & Kellogg of Philadelphia, was built in stages. Two wings were begun in 1904 and completed in 1908, behind the original brick building. Construction of the center section was delayed by World War I and not completed until 1928-1930, when the original building was destroyed. The new section was built on the 400-foot setback recommended by the McMillan Plan.

### The Commission of Fine Arts

In 1909, during the last days of his presidency, Theodore Roosevelt created a Council of Fine Arts, but this was quickly dissolved by Congress. Then, in 1910, President William H. Taft

established a Commission of Fine Arts (CFA), created by Congress in Public Law 61-181, to act in an advisory capacity on new construction in the central area of Washington and adjoining federal properties, in accordance with the City Beautiful precepts laid down in the McMillan Plan.

The Commission of Fine Arts became the “guardian of the McMillan Plan.” (Thomas 415) The first members were clearly its supporters: Daniel Burnham was appointed chairman, with Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., Charles Moore, architect Cass Gilbert, sculptor Daniel Chester French, and painter Frank Millet. The new commission did not, strictly speaking, have absolute veto power, but its advice was to be followed in the majority of cases (until the Jefferson Memorial in the 1930s). So, through the Commission of Fine Arts and other means, “The McMillan Commission members maintained a role as unofficial advisory board and arbiter of design”. (Gutheim 1977:131)

### New Construction on the Mall

The Smithsonian’s new National Museum was built in 1903-1910 directly north of the Castle on the axis of 10<sup>th</sup> Street. A domed classical revival building designed by the firm of Hornblower & Marshall, the museum – now the National Museum of Natural History – established the 400-foot setback for the north side of the Mall. After the National Museum, new construction on the Mall followed the building line set by the McMillan Commission, though over the years some latitude was taken in interpretation (see below, 1929-1936, Construction of the Mall: Siting of Buildings).

### *World War I Tempos*

For decades, the Mall was marred by the presence of the large, cheaply constructed buildings, popularly known as “tempo,” which had been built to provide offices for workers during World War I and were then kept for other purposes, including offices during World War II. The World War I tempos were built with the future of the Mall in mind. They were placed by architect Horace Peaslee so that their circulation system of paths and roads was aligned with the system projected in the McMillan Plan. Because of this, it was possible to lay out the two inner Mall roads between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4½ Streets soon after World War I. (Ickes to Garner 12/19/33 FRC3) As the 1923 Annual Report of the CFA said:

*That section of the Mall between Third and Four and a Half Streets has been laid out and planted with elms in accordance with the plan of 1901, and Congress has provided for putting in roadways. The temporary war buildings in the Mall were so located that upon removal the roadways will be in accordance with the Mall plan and as fast as the buildings are razed the planting of trees can be made. The space between Four and a Half and Sixth Streets will be so improved and restored during the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1921. (CFA, “Ninth Report” 1923:16)*

Under the Urgency Deficiency Act of October 6, 1917, three large tempos – designated A, B, and C – were built in Henry Park in 1918 to house the War and Navy Departments. Each stuccoed wood structure consisted of a 474-foot long, forty-four-foot wide “head house,” oriented east to west, and had six fifty-one-foot-wide north-south wings of different lengths. There was also an administration building, a “mechanical force” building, and a restaurant. Under the Urgency Deficiency Act of March 28, 1918, two more structures to house War Department offices were built in Seaton Park. The one to the north was made of wood, that to

the south of concrete. The same act provided for the construction of a stuccoed wood tempo on the Smithsonian Grounds at the northwest corner of 7<sup>th</sup> Street and B Street North. ("Park Areas Occupied . . ." [from OPBG Annual Reports] no author, no date FRC12)

#### *Freer Gallery of Art*

The small Italian Renaissance-Revival Freer Gallery of Art, by architect Charles Platt, was built between 1923 and 1928, on a site just west of the Smithsonian Castle.

#### *Changes to Agriculture Department Grounds*

By 1923, the Department of Agriculture had replaced its single large old greenhouse with a row of thirty-five-foot-long greenhouses facing Constitution Avenue, between 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Streets, N.W. Some greenhouses "were open to the public and housed displays of acid-soil plants, tropical ornamental plants, cacti, roses, carnations, orange trees, and various species of grapes." (Goode 2003:358) Others provided quarantine space for imported seeds and plants, and rooms for public demonstrations of milking, cheese and ice cream making, pickling, and other domestic tasks.

#### *The George Washington Memorial Building*

Construction began on a massive memorial building dedicated to George Washington in 1921, at the corner of 6<sup>th</sup> Street and Constitution Avenue, N.W. Designed by Tracy & Swartout of New York, the George Washington Memorial Building would have had a three-story Ionic colonnade stretching in front of a recessed façade and terminating at either end in pavilions. (Goode 2003:376)

The George Washington Memorial Association had arranged to have the structure placed under the auspices of the Smithsonian, and had been granted congressional authorization to build it on federal land. The marble memorial would have contained a large auditorium, with meeting halls, offices, and reception rooms for contributing states. After World War I, the name of the project was changed to the George Washington Victory Memorial Building and the program was expanded, with the addition of a military museum and library.

Only the foundation was built. Sufficient funds were never raised to complete the building, and in 1937 the foundation was demolished when the site was chosen for the National Gallery of Art.

#### The Office of Public Buildings & Public Parks

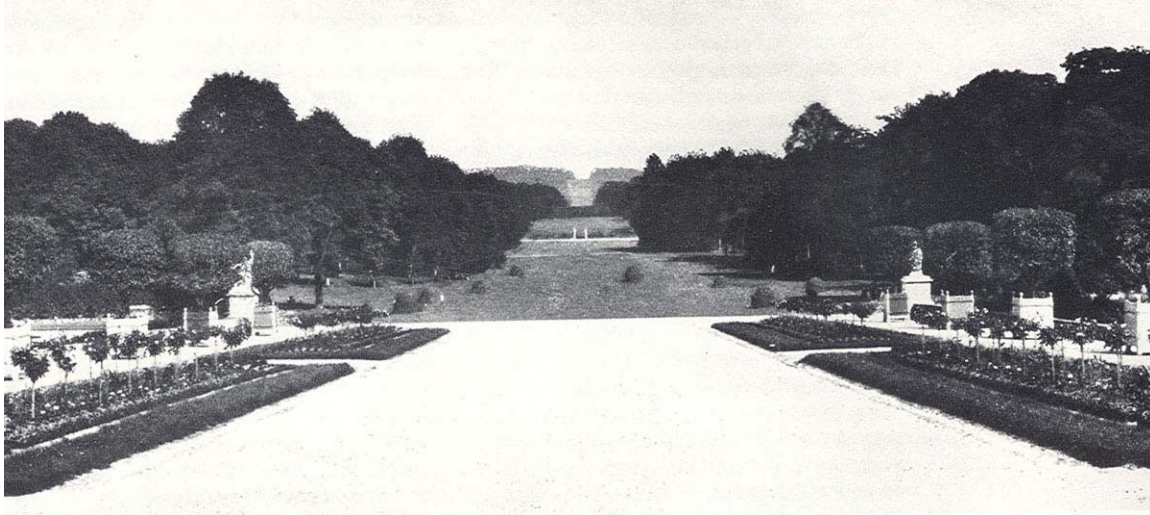
After 1920, the annual reports of the Engineer Officers, Office of Public Buildings & Grounds, no longer included many details on individual reservations. In February 1925, Congress created the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, and moved responsibility for D.C. parks and reservations from the Army's Chief of Engineers to this office. Its director reported directly to the President. Less than ten years later, on June 10, 1933, these duties were transferred to the Department of the Interior, to the Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations, renamed the National Park Service in 1934. Since then, the National Park Service has overseen the National Capital Parks, a name first officially used in the D.C. Appropriations Act of June 4, 1934, and now known as the National Capital Region. (Olszewski Franklin:1-3)

### The National Capital Park and Planning Commission

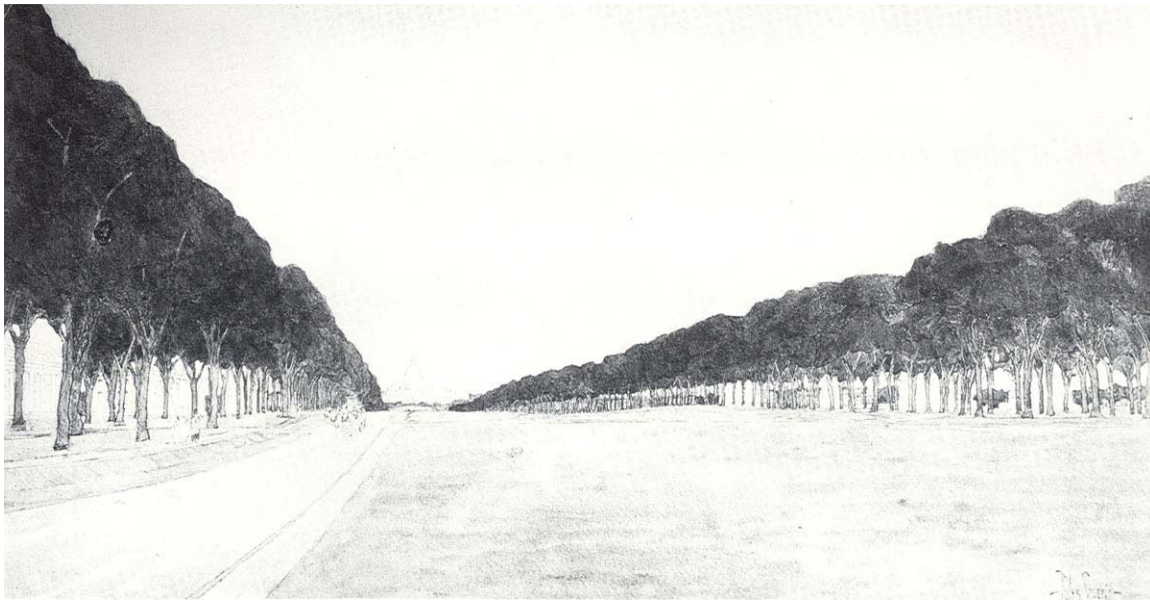
The National Capital Park Commission was created by Congress in 1924, with authority to acquire land for municipal parks and parkways. Two years later, by an amendment to its authorizing legislation, it was replaced by the National Capital Park and Planning Commission (NCPPC; renamed the National Capital Planning Commission in 1952) and its mandate was changed to allow for comprehensive planning for the District. (On the NCPC and NCPPC, see Gutheim 1977:169-174) The same year, the Public Buildings Act was passed, authorizing \$50 million to be spent primarily on construction of a new Supreme Court and for the Federal Triangle complex of office buildings, in the area bounded by Constitution Avenue, 15<sup>th</sup> Street, and Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., the former Murder Bay and Hooker's Division. Though concerned with an increasingly broad array of urban issues, the NCPPC made completion of the McMillan Plan Mall one of its first priorities. Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. was one of the NCPPC's original members.



The McMillan Commission prepared exquisite plans and renderings. Most of the improvements recommended by the commission for the Mall from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> Streets were implemented in the 1930s. (from Repts 1991:253; CLP file "McM Plan BW 200")

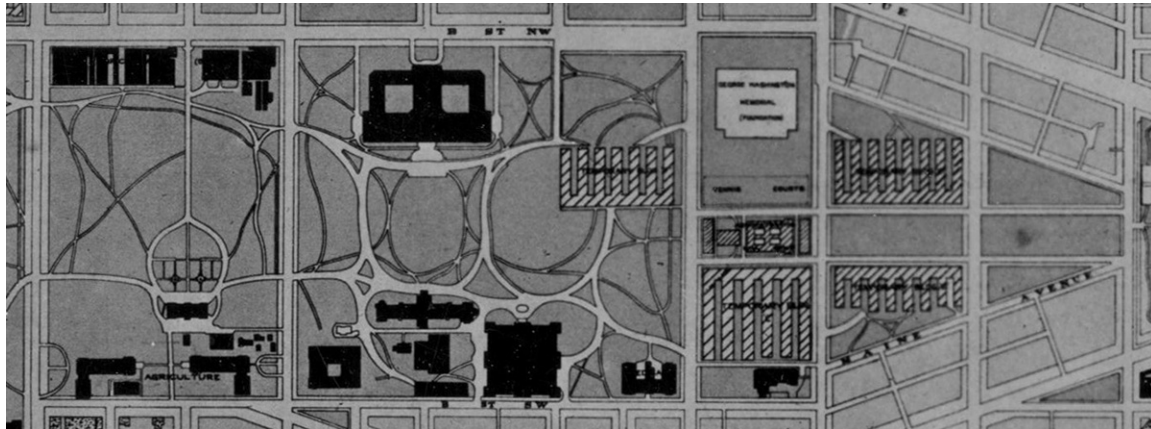


One of the images of European landscape allees used to illustrate the *Senate Park Commission Report*, showing a long greensward flanked by rows of trees. (CLP file, "Avenue de Beaumont, Compiègne," from Senate Park Com. Report, 1902: facing p. 44)



Rendering in the McMillan Commission Report of the view looking east down the Mall from 6<sup>th</sup> Street towards the Capitol. (CLP file "SP view Mall from 6<sup>th</sup>" from 1902 Report facing p. 42)





Map prepared by the Public Buildings Commission in 1927 showing existing structures on the Mall before new grading and landscaping began. The two large tempos at the bottom of the map remained until c. 1971. (MRCE; CLP file "Mall & Vicinity 1927 200 dpi crop 2")

## **1929-1936: Construction of the Mall**

### A Note on Sources

A great deal of primary information regarding the creation and development of the Mall in the 1930s was found in contemporary National Capital Parks files pulled from the Federal Records Center (FRC). The files extend from the late 1920s through the 1960s, with the majority of documents dating from the 1930s and 1940s.

This material has some limitations. It does not provide a complete record. Excerpts of relevant minutes and other documents from the NCPPC and CFA are often, but not always, included. Some documents produced by other commissions are only referred to in passing. Planned actions are discussed more frequently than completed actions, making it difficult at times to state for certain just when work projects took place.

The time available for producing a CLI precludes thorough search and review of primary source material. Therefore, some gaps in the story outlined by these FRC files are inevitable and many questions cannot be answered at this time, though additional research in CFA and NCPPC minutes was conducted. Nonetheless, the FRC documents provide a new window on the creation of the Mall, and suggest the challenges faced by the city's leading planners as they tried to revive a plan from a previous era and prove its relevance for the modern world.

For a key to the abbreviations for the FRC files referred to in parenthetical notations, see Supplemental Information.

### The Mall in the 1920s

At the end of the 1920s, the Mall remained a relic of Victorian Washington. Several eclectic Victorian buildings stood on the Mall's south side: Renwick's sandstone Norman Revival Castle and three red brick Romanesque Revival structures by Adolf Cluss – from east to west, the

Army Medical Museum, the old National Museum (today the Arts and Industries Building), and the Department of Agriculture headquarters. Both the Castle and the Agriculture Department lay only 300 feet from the Mall's center line. The temporary World War I buildings erected at the east end of the Mall still remained, though the structures and their connecting walks had been laid out in anticipation of the grades of the McMillan Commission's street plan. A couple of new buildings had been constructed that conformed to the placement and architectural styles recommended by the McMillan Plan: the new National Museum (now the National Museum of Natural History, completed 1904), on the axis of 10<sup>th</sup> Street, due north of the Smithsonian Castle; and the Freer Gallery of Art (completed 1928), immediately west of the Castle, on the axis of 11<sup>th</sup> Street. The foundation of the George Washington Memorial Building lay at the north end of Armory Square.

Between all the structures there remained the dense tree and shrub plantings and the curving paths and roads built over the preceding fifty years by the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, obscuring most views between buildings. The 1930 Annual Report of the Commission of Fine Arts noted also the pressures that were being brought to bear on the Mall by new means of transportation:

*The disastrous effects brought forward by the so-called temporary structures in producing a depressing air of slovenliness is exemplified in the case of the Mall buildings: The spaces at the back are receptacles for trash; the entire Mall Park (including the Smithsonian grounds) has become an open-air garage; in the Department of Agriculture grounds automobiles are parked on the grass; even the President's Park (or the Ellipse) is given over to all-day parking, with the result that these spacious park spaces designed for the satisfaction of all the people of the country are monopolized by a comparatively few persons, nineteen out of twenty of whom live in the District of Columbia. (Eleventh Report of the CFA, Jan. 1, 1926 to June 30, 1929. 1930, p. 31)*

Changes in the federal government and in municipal planning enabled local officials to realize the Mall design of the McMillan Plan in the 1920s and 1930s. The creation of the National Capital Park Commission in 1924, and its reorganization as the National Capital Park and Planning Commission in 1926, had established a civic body entrusted with the authority to enact urban improvements. In March 1929, authorization of the use of federal funds to rebuild the Mall, as approved in principle at its January 1929 meeting, was included in an act for enlarging the Capitol Grounds. Franklin Delano Roosevelt's presidency, beginning in March 1933, led to the institution of the New Deal, and New Deal programs, particularly the Public Works Program, made available millions of dollars for the thorough rehabilitation of federal parks in the District of Columbia. Lafayette Park, Franklin Park, Folger Park, Lincoln Park, and the Mall all benefited from these relief funds. Roosevelt's Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes, also served as the administrator of the Public Works Administration.

Four months after his inauguration, on June 10, 1933, Roosevelt signed Executive Order #6166, which transferred all public reservations and buildings, including National Capital Parks, to a new Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations, in the Department of the Interior. On March 2, 1934, the Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations was renamed the National Park Service. The Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks became National Capital Parks (now the National Capital Region).

The rebuilding of the Mall in the 1930s required not only New Deal funds but the sustained efforts of several planners and designers whose careers and connections bridged Victorian Washington, Beaux-Arts Washington, and the beginnings of Modernism in Washington. The landscape architects among them also had roots in the beginnings of landscape architecture as a profession. These men included the landscape architect Charles Eliot II, the first city planner for the NCPPC (and also the nephew and namesake of Charles Eliot, a pioneer landscape architect and former partner in the firm of Olmsted Brothers); Frederic A. Delano, Chairman of the NCPPC from 1929 to 1942, and the uncle of Franklin D. Roosevelt; Ulysses S. Grant III, the grandson of the president memorialized at the east end of the Mall, and the head of the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks (the precursor to the National Capital Region of the NPS), as well as the director of the NCPPC in the 1940s, after Delano; and, most importantly, the landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., the son of the designer of the U.S. Capitol Grounds, a founding member of the NCPPC, and the last surviving member of the McMillan Commission.

### The 1929 Authorizing Act

Congressional sanction to rebuild the Mall was provided by Public Law No. 1036 (70<sup>th</sup> Cong., H.R. 13929), "An Act to provide for the enlarging of the Capitol Grounds," passed on March 4, 1929. This provided authorization for a commission created by an earlier act (April 11, 1928) to carry out the plan for enlarging the grounds laid out in Scheme B of their report to Congress (House Document 252, 70<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> Sess.). The work focused on new lands acquired north of the Capitol, between the Capitol and Union Station: demolishing buildings, closing streets, new landscaping, etc. However, Section 5 of the act addressed authorization of work on the Mall and transfer of its jurisdiction:

*The Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital is hereby authorized and directed to proceed with the development of that part of the public grounds in the District of Columbia connecting the Capitol Grounds with the Washington Monument and known as the Mall parkway, in accordance with the plans of Major L'Enfant and the so-called McMillan Commission, with such modifications thereof as may be recommended by the National Capital Park and Planning Commission and approved by the Commission for the Enlarging of the Capitol Grounds. . . . For the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this section, jurisdiction over that part of the public grounds the development of which is herein authorized shall be transferred to the Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital at such time as may be approved by the Joint Committee on the Library.*

### Organization of Planning and Work

Plans for the Mall were developed by Olmsted and the NCPPC (Olmsted had sole responsibility for the general plan for Union Square). They were reviewed and approved by the CFA and the Commission for the Enlarging of the Capitol Grounds (CECG). The NCPPC coordinated and approved plans prepared by the different agencies involved, and acted as a liaison with the Smithsonian and the Department of Agriculture. Funding came through the National Capital Parks of the National Park Service. NCP staff also provided advice, developed work plans, let contracts, and probably oversaw the work. Roads were built by the Bureau of Public Roads.

The NCPPC developed what they termed a “plan for the ultimate development of the Mall.” A version showing 6<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> Streets, with locations for roads, walks, and trees, grading, and underpasses at 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Streets, was sent to landscape architect Henry Hubbard of Olmsted’s firm, Olmsted Brothers, in May 1932. Hubbard served on the NCPPC from 1932 to 1947. (Grant to Hubbard 5/23/32 FRC7)

Olmsted had been a member of NCPPC since its founding in 1926. He worked out both general and specific design plans for the Mall. He prepared general plans at both a fifty-foot and sixty-foot scale, showing grades, the width and location of roads, and the spacing and location of trees. These plans did not show many details, such as grade intersections. (Nolen to Cammerer 10/13/33 FRC3)

A “Mall Coordinating Committee” was formed by November 1933; it is not clear how long it remained in existence. Members were primarily representatives from the NPS and NCPPC. At the first meeting, on November 18, a list of priorities for Mall work was drawn up: removing streets from the center panel; moving or cutting trees between 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Streets, and staking out the two central roads in this area; deciding on lighting; closing Maine and Missouri Avenues; designing Union Square; and making plans for Mall contracts. (Minutes 11/18/33 FRC7) Several other documents produced in 1933 and 1934 also outlined the various steps needed to complete the Mall.

### Siting of Buildings

One of the early documents on the Mall rebuilding was written by planner Charles Eliot II for the NCPPC. “Mall Building Lines” discussed the importance of following the correct setbacks in the construction of future buildings on the Mall. (Eliot “Mall Building Lines” 1/20/32 FRC12) Eliot included much of the testimony that had been delivered by architect Daniel Burnham in the hearings on the Newlands bill in 1904, during the controversy over the Department of Agriculture building (quoted earlier in this CLI; see History p. 49), and he then reviewed the placement of Mall buildings constructed since that time.

Since 1901, Eliot wrote, all plans had set building lines 445 feet from a center line drawn between the Capitol and the Washington Monument. The façade of the National Museum (National Museum of Natural History) followed the recommended building line, but its entrance portico projected twenty-five feet beyond, and its two proposed wings were to project twelve feet. (Eliot “Lines” 1) The foundations of the George Washington Memorial Building projected about twenty feet into the Mall. (Eliot “Lines” 3-4) Most of the Freer Gallery’s façade projected eight feet into the Mall, and the central entrance pavilion projected even further.

“It is thus seen,” wrote Eliot,

*that there have been two entirely contradictory interpretations of the Mall building line. In one case it has meant the furthest forward point of any structure or approach beyond which no projections were permitted. In all the other cases it is [has] meant the main wall of the structure or furthest recess anticipating projections forward of the line. The purpose of the first of these two kinds of building lines is that explained by Messrs. Burnham and McKim in the hearings during the fight over the location of the Agriculture Building, that is – to secure an absolute minimum of open space between buildings. The purpose of the second*

*kind of line – anticipating projections, is to secure relative continuity of a façade [with adjoining structures].*

*In the case of the Mall, the park-like setting of the [National] Museum Building makes the second kind of line relatively unimportant while the assurance of a minimum open space along the Mall between buildings is vital to the conception of L'Enfant and to the whole scheme for the Mall development.*

*It is recommended that the Commission assert and uphold an interpretation of the building line in the Mall as indicating the furthest forward point of any structure or approach beyond which projections will in no case be permitted.  
(Eliot "Lines" 1)*

### Grading Studies and Road Construction

Plans developed by both the National Park Service and NCPPC from 1934 until at least 1966 show the Castle removed, and the lines of elms and Jefferson Drive continuing in straight lines from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> Street, interrupted only by a break at the 8<sup>th</sup> Street axis. (NPS, 802/81002, 1934; NCPPC, 802/80068, April 1942) This scheme was not abandoned until the early 1970s, when the second Master Plan for the Mall by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill was developed. The emphasis of the 8<sup>th</sup> Street axis was retained in most, or all, plans for the Mall; L'Enfant had shown a turning basin on the canal at 8<sup>th</sup> Street and had placed a National Church several blocks north of the Mall along the same axis, keeping open the view between Mall and church.

However, the biggest problem facing the planners in the 1930s was the topography of the Mall's west end, from 9<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> Streets, and particularly the old Agriculture grounds, between 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>. The land here had a pronounced east-west ridge along its south side, and sank almost 30 feet in elevation from south to north down to Constitution Avenue.

Olmsted and Eliot wrote a series of reports on the problems posed by this area, exploring different solutions to several pressing questions. Should the existing topography be accepted as is? Or should the ground be entirely raised at this end of the Mall and the whole made a level plateau? At what grade should the four new Mall roads – particularly the two northernmost roads – be built? Should they be constructed at the current grade and later rebuilt, if necessary?

They also weighed the question of where to set the grading of the monumental building site due north of the Department of Agriculture – at its natural grade, or at the same level as the National Museum of Natural History, about 12 feet higher, or somewhere in between. Any decision about this site would affect the imminent construction of the North Mall Drive west from Natural History, and how the four Mall drives would meet the cross streets of 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>. If the grade were raised, should 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Streets be sunk in underpasses? If so, should these underpasses be open trenches or decked? Or should 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Streets be raised to cross at the new ground level?

At first, in early 1927, Olmsted took the same position that he had held in 1901, as a member of the McMillan Commission – that it would be wise “to follow the natural surface at most points very closely” because the varying height of Independence Avenue above Constitution Avenue would make it difficult to have a “geometrically perfect” surface. He was also concerned that it would be poor public relations to grade so much land and remove so many trees from a beloved

park all at once; he believed it would be better to proceed gradually, constructing new buildings at new grades and preserving their existing surroundings, while slowly removing trees along the central axis to open the vista between the Capitol and the Washington Monument.

But within a few months Olmsted changed his mind, agreeing with Charles Eliot and Frederic Delano of the NCPPC. It was decided to risk public censure and raise the north end of the Mall to create a broad, flat plateau.

Tons of fill were laid and virtually every tree was moved. Many were transplanted to the grounds around the new Department of Agriculture, south of Jefferson Drive. Some trees were temporarily kept in the Mall, with tree wells built around some. Whether it was thought these trees would be incorporated into the final design, or whether this was just a temporary measure until new locations were found, is not known. Grade separations were discussed for certain cross streets – 9<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and sometimes 15<sup>th</sup> – depressing these roads into tunnels beneath the Mall, which would continue level above them. (Nolen to Cammerer 9/2/33 FRC3)

The CFA approved the Mall road construction plans on May 28, 1931. (Moore to Grant 6/2/31 FRC7) It was determined that the March 1929 Act (and the accompanying hearings) limited construction to the outside roads only. (Jennings to Director 9/3/31 FRC7) The Commission for the Enlargement of the Capitol Grounds approved the Mall road plans on January 4, 1934. Whether these were the same or revised versions of the plans as those approved by the CFA almost three years earlier is not known. (Garner to Ickes 1/15/34 FRC3) Grading and paving of the Mall drives between 7<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Streets was underway in January 1932.

A.H. Hanson, a landscape architect with the Branch of Forestry, National Capital Parks, described the fill preparations needed for grading the west end of the Mall:

*In going over the area with Mr. Olmsted it was decided in general to spread out (or feather) out the edges of the fill. This will necessitate the welling up and the building up of a porous fill over the present ground surface about 1-1 ½ feet deep and extending out to or a little beyond the tips of the lower branches. This porous fill can be made of cracked-up concrete, coarse cinders, brickbats or anything which will provide breathing spaces for the surface roots after the fill is in. On top of this coarse fill should be about 3 or 4 inches of a finer material such as cinders, sand or gravel to act as a cushion between the coarse material and the earth fill. From this coarse material should extend upward about 4 pipes to act as "breather" or ventilating pipes for the tree roots. There are about 4 such large trees to be treated. (Hanson consistently spelled "coarse" as "course." Hanson to Acting Chief 10/8/31 FRC7)*

Additionally, Hanson advised keeping the ginkgoes growing along "upper 15<sup>th</sup> Street" in case they were needed as substitutes in front of the USDA building; moving a large maple (#23) to the southeast corner of 12<sup>th</sup> Street and the "present park road"; and placing "tentative grade stakes" east of 13<sup>th</sup> Street. (Hanson to Acting Chief 10/8/31 FRC7) The work was probably carried out by the National Excavating and Contracting Company of the District. ("Will Move Giant Mall Trees" [clipping c. 1931; no paper, no date] FRC9)

Eliot submitted another report to the NCPPC, entitled "Mall Roads" and dated May 21-23, 1931. This noted that the Independent Offices Appropriations Act would be giving the OPBPP

\$100,000 on July 1, 1931, to be used for the “outer drives or cross-drives”. Federal funds had been deemed appropriate for this work because these roads would serve federal buildings. Work would be concentrated on the block of 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> Streets “so as to bring this portion of the Mall as near as possible to completion at an early date as an example of what the remainder of the Mall will later become.” Road construction would also be carried out in front of the National Museum, between 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Streets. This work was approved at an informal conference of the OPBPP and the CECG before funds were appropriated, and presumably was carried out in this year. (Ickes to Garner 12/19/33 FRC3) By December 1933, NPS had approved the cutting of trees in the locations of roads and sidewalks with currently available funds. Construction of roads was dependent on receiving approval from the CECG. National Park Service Director Arno Cammerer was reluctant to approve cutting other trees, unless they were dying, without consulting Olmsted. (Cammerer to Finnan 12/15/33 FRC3)

### Budgets

A total amount of \$833,625 had been proposed for the Mall and Union Station work in FY34, but apparently the president himself recommended instead a total of either \$500,000 or \$600,000. In an undated memo to Ickes sent on the letterhead of the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works, FDR wrote: “It seems to me especially important that in addition to the roadways we should move all of the trees which are now in the wrong places to their permanent positions.” He further recommended holding the grade separations of 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Streets “in abeyance” for now. (Presumed authorship of this memo by the president is based on the presence of a blank line under which is typed FDR’s name; FDR to Ickes, no date [copy to Nolen 9/30/33] FRC3)

The Public Works Administration disbursed \$600,000 for the Mall and Union Square work in FY34 to the Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations (which had replaced OPBPP in 1933). The National Park Service proposed dividing this, allocating \$373,500 for the Mall “proper,” from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> Streets, and \$226,500 for Union Square. (Cammerer to Ickes 9/19/33 FRC3) In FY1935, \$350,250 was allotted for work on Mall from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> Streets, covering road construction, tree moving, grading and landscaping, water supply, and drainage. (Burlew to Cammerer 11/5/34 FRC3)

### Tree Removals

National Capital Parks staff and Olmsted attempted to save as many trees as possible. All the trees on the Mall were surveyed. Those that were diseased or too large to transplant were removed. Between November 10, 1931, and March 18, 1932, Westcott Nursery of Fairfax, Virginia, cut down ninety-one trees, and moved or transplanted nineteen trees and a number of shrubs (“11 shrubs [6 large shrubs or equivalent thereto and 5 groups of small shrubs [or] evergreens]”). They transplanted a huge magnolia, thirty-six inches in diameter, for \$4947, moving it from the middle of the Mall near 14<sup>th</sup> Street to a spot about 400 feet to the northwest, off the Mall but still near 14<sup>th</sup> Street. A local paper reported: “It is said to be one of the biggest jobs of its kind in the world”. (“Will Move Giant Mall Trees” [c. 1931; no paper, no date] FRC9) Westcott also built tree wells around twelve trees for a cost of \$12,984. (Memo re: Westcott 4/19/32 FRC7)

A later assessment stated that, in all, sixty sound trees, one-and-a-half to forty inches in diameter, were cut on the Mall, along with 166 that were “decayed, sickly or ill-shaped”. The

cost of cutting trees and removing their stumps was \$23,335. In addition, fifty-seven trees had been transplanted within the Mall or to contiguous areas for a cost of \$18,952.50. ("Plans" [no author, no date] history of Mall project p. 3 FRC4)

Consultations were held with representatives of the Smithsonian Institution on tree-cutting work to be done in the Smithsonian Grounds. In one such meeting, in early 1932, Grant stated: "I think you will find that this plan embodies what we all decided upon the day that you, Mr. Delano, myself and others went over the ground, which was that the road would be so arranged that the least amount of cutting would be involved." (Grant seems to have been referring to the North Outer Drive; Grant to Wetmore 2/10/32 FRC7)

The trees standing near the National Museum seem to have been of particular concern. While Smithsonian officials had no objection to removing trees within the routes of minor roads or the center panels, they requested that as many trees as possible outside of the inner roads be kept, especially in front of the east part of the National Museum – perhaps because that wing was to be built soon. Grading of the Smithsonian Grounds was all done at the same time. "The general feeling of the Smithsonian people," reported Nolen to Director Cammerer, "is . . . resignation." (Nolen to Cammerer 12/8/33 FRC3)

(After the tree work was completed, National Capital Parks Superintendent C. Marshall Finnan wrote to a citizen concerned about the loss of trees: "As to the destruction of valuable trees, I am afraid that you have been misinformed on this subject. A most careful survey was made of every tree on the Mall before work started. More than 50 of the finest trees have been transplanted at this time, and we only destroyed those trees which had been weakened by disease or other causes and those which were so large it was a mechanical impossibility to move them. Please be assured that other valuable trees in the line of the Vista will be saved and will be transplanted elsewhere for safe keeping." Finnan to Johnson p. 2, 9/4/34 FRC3)

Further work on the Mall was spurred by the imminent completion of the Federal Triangle in the fall of 1933. In September, in a letter to Arno Cammerer, Director of the NPS, John Nolen of the NCPPC projected two phases to the Mall work: 1) completion of the Mall roads, including grading, landscaping, and the planting of trees; 2) opening the central vista. The temporary World War I buildings C, E, and F were to be kept for the time being, since they housed people employed in emergency relief work. The design was worked around them. Nolen wrote:

*The most important thing about the whole Mall project is, of course, to get the central vista opened up from the Capitol to the Monument, the chief obstacles in the way of this being the old heating plant, which is necessary as long as the temporary buildings are occupied, and certain large trees in front of the Smithsonian which it would be unwise to remove until the final grading makes it absolutely necessary and self-evident. (Nolen to Cammerer 9/2/33 p. 2 FRC3)*

Nolen noted that the Mall projects would provide labor under emergency relief plans, estimating that they would employ 350 laborers for eighteen months. (Nolen to Cammerer 9/2/33 p. 3 FRC3)

At the request of the CFA, by October 1933 the architectural firm of Bennett, Parsons and Frost had drawn up plans and profiles for the Mall roads in connection with the Federal Triangle construction (plans numbered NCPPC 1.5-70, 1.5-78, and 1.5-81). Bennett, Parsons and Frost



wielded a great deal of influence on federal projects around the Mall in the 1930s. As a young architect, Edward H. Bennett had been employed in Daniel Burnham's office, working on Burnham's plan for Chicago, before establishing his own firm. He eventually became an architectural advisor to Treasury Secretary Andrew W. Mellon (since federal building projects were the responsibility of the Treasury Department) and Chairman of the Board of Architectural Consultants for Federal Triangle. Bennett counseled Mellon on the "Federal Triangle, the Mall, the site for the [National Gallery of Art], the Legislative Group, the site for the Supreme Court Building, and proposed memorials." (Gutheim 1977:174) The firm designed what was then the final structure of the Federal Triangle, the Federal Trade Commission Building, located at the triangle's apex between Constitution and Pennsylvania Avenues and 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Streets, N.W.

For the CFA, Bennett, Parsons and Frost studied the 8<sup>th</sup> Street cross axis, where L'Enfant had placed the National Church, and which the L'Enfant and McMillan plans had developed with fountains and other features; NCPPC plans had continued to show it as open. Tempo F had been built here, extending to the Inner Mall Drive. This axis was to be anchored on the north by the new National Archives building (architect John Russell Pope). However, the eight rows of elm trees continued uninterrupted across the axis. Bennett, Parsons and Frost recommended removing them to leave open the vista to the Archives. (BPF to Lynn 12/8/33 FRC3) But, as late as 1942, "scraggly" trees remained on the north side of the 8<sup>th</sup> Street axis, blocking this view. (Fowler to Kutz 4/3/1942 FRC6)

#### Further Clearing and Completion of Work

The Department of Agriculture gardens were removed in 1931, though demolition of the USDA greenhouses along Constitution Avenue did not begin until February 28, 1940. (Gillen 2/27/40 FRC12) The major part of Reservation 3B, except for the northern section bounded by Constitution Avenue, the route of the Outer Mall Drive, and 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Streets, was transferred from the USDA to the Department of the Interior about April 7, 1934, the date of Land Transfer Order No. 70. (The northern section was transferred to Interior on February 3, 1942. Information from Joe Cook)

By June 1934, NPS/NCP had developed cost estimates for major items: grading, topsoiling and seeding the Mall from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Streets, planting elms from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>, moving trees between 7<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, construction of Mall roads from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> Streets (and South Drive from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> Streets), and construction of sidewalks along three of the Mall roads (North Drive, North Vista Drive, South Vista Drive) from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> Streets. Estimates also covered installing sprinklers on the Mall, moving the Joseph Henry statue out of the route of the South Inner Drive, and demolishing some buildings on the Botanic Garden site. (Mall Proper Cost Estimate 6/8/34 FRC3)

A water and drainage system had been installed between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Streets by June 1934. (Memo re: Ellis 8/22/34 FRC3) The underground sprinkler system had 1500 jets, each spraying four gallons per minute and covering 524 square feet. It was believed that using the sprinklers once a week would be sufficient in normal weather to keep the lawn green. (Press release ". . . Mall Is Nearing Completion" p. 4 no date FRC1. The system worked into the 1990s, and remains in the ground to this day.)

In July, NCP Superintendent Finnan wrote to Spelman of the Bureau of Public Roads that the NPS withheld their "concurrence on plans for construction of the outer Mall drives", believing

that, with limited funds, these were of lesser importance than completing the inner drives between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Streets, grading 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Streets, adding top soil and seed to the “entire center panel”, and planting elms “wherever possible”. (Finnan to Spelman BPR 7/12/34 FRC3)

Bennett, Parsons and Frost made recommendations on materials for Mall sidewalks, suggesting the use of concrete with a “gravel-revealed surface” as had been specified for new walks in the enlargement of the Capitol Grounds. These walks would have expansion joints about 25 feet apart and no scored markings. (BPF to Lynn 12/8/33 FRC3) In April 1935, NPS landscape architect Malcolm Kirkpatrick wrote to Olmsted Brothers: “it has been definitely decided to use a dark colored exposed aggregate concrete for sidewalk construction throughout the Mall development. . . .” (Kirkpatrick to Olmsted Brothers p. 2 4/18/35 FRC6)

Even after clearing and grading began, a miscellany of structures and activities remained on the Mall. In April 1935, a police lodge still stood between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets, near the former Missouri Avenue. Mall tempos housed relief activities, such as a women’s sewing project, in an area at Missouri Avenue and 6<sup>th</sup> Street known as “the Woodyard.” A proposal in July 1934 to build a shed here, where the unemployed could make mattresses for distribution to people on relief, inspired the NCPPC to pass a motion against building any more tempos on the Mall. They recommended that the District remove all activities housed in tempos, and that the tempos themselves finally be removed when jurisdiction over the Mall land was transferred. (Clark to Finnan 7/18/34, NCPPC Minutes 7/26-27/34 FRC 12)

A contract for demolishing the heating plant and the other WWI tempos on the Mall was let in May 1935. (May FRC Bx 66A1097, 25, AMP 2) The powerhouse was apparently one of the last of these structures to be demolished, at least apart from the tempo at the south end of the 6<sup>th</sup> Street axis. (“Plans” [no author, no date] history of Mall project p. 5 FRC4; also historic photos)

Construction of the Mall is noted on a press release as being more than 90% completed by about September 1936. This included the construction of the four roads and the planting of 333 elms. (The date of September 14, 1936, is handwritten at the top of the Interior Department press release, “Federal Public Works Project . . .” c. Sept. 1936 FRC1)

### American Elms

The McMillan Commission had first proposed the use of American elms to line the Mall, and Olmsted remained committed to the use of American elms. U.S. Grant III wrote to Hubbard of Olmsted Brothers in May 1932:

*The proposed formal rows of elms as indicated on the plan will, of course, require the removal of all the existing trees. This arrangement of trees in formal rows is opposed by Mr. William A. Delano and Dr. Wetmore, of the Smithsonian Institution, both of whom would prefer an informal planting of trees in the panels with a straight, clipped edge on the side facing the “allee”. If this scheme is adopted, the grading could be adjusted to save a considerable number of the existing trees between 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Streets. (Grant to Hubbard 5/23/32 FRC7)*

The elms were supplied and planted on the Mall by Leissler Nurseries of Connecticut on thirty-eight days in June, July, and August of 1935. (Hanson to Gist 2/4/36 FRC9) A press release

issued in the fall of 1936 (probably by the Park Service) stated that the Mall work was nearly complete, and the rest was underway with current PWA funds. Three-hundred and thirty-three American elms, propagated in Connecticut, had been planted. (Press release “. . . Mall Is Nearing Completion” no date FRC1)

Problems with the elms soon became apparent. Finnan wrote to Hanson:

*I do not believe it would be advisable at this time to replace the older elms growing between Third and Fourth Streets south of the Vista Drive on the Mall. . . . While the character of these trees is undeniably wrong, they do give a reasonably satisfactory mass effect and I hesitate to condemn them when we have such a vast number of doubtful trees recently supplied us by the Leissler Nursery.*

This indicates as well that there were elms already growing on the Mall. (Finnan to Hanson 10/7/1936 FRC9) Many of these elms still exist in the block from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> Streets. Seeding of the lawn panels took place in March 1936. (Gillen to Gartside 3/6/1936 FRC9)

The rest of the Mall elms were planted gradually, apparently over the next few decades. The last of the tree panels to be planted with elms (that is, excepting replacements) were planted in 1975. (See following History section.)

### Renaming of Reservation 3A

In 1933, the NCPPC voted to rename Reservation 3A, the block of the Mall along the 8<sup>th</sup> Street axis, bounded by 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Streets and Constitution and Independence Avenues. The side north of the Mall's center line would be called “L'Enfant Square” and the side to the south would be called “Ellicott Square.” The CFA recommended naming the entire block for L'Enfant and “L'Enfant Square” became the official name. (NCPPC Minutes 4/21/33, 6/14/33, OPBPP Land Transfer Order #33 6/22/33 FRC1)

### Mall Lighting

A new and unique type of street light was developed for the Mall in 1934-1935 by designer J.W. Gosling of the General Electric Company. Discussions about lighting among National Capital Parks staff and members of the CFA and the NCPPC concerned design, spacing, handling of lighting on cross streets, and light intensity.

In a letter of April 1934 to the D.C. Commissioners, NCP Superintendent Finnan wrote that “The major objective of the Mall plan is to keep open an unrestricted vista from the Capitol to the Monument.” He requested that street lights on cross streets be kept “back of the outside line of the two concrete walk-ways paralleling the inner roads.” (Finnan to Commissioners, April 26 1934 FRC14) GE recommended using refractors of the “B symmetric type” at cross streets to spread light evenly up and down the street. Street lights were to be aligned with the Mall lights. (Nolen to Finnan April 30, 1934 FRC14)

Early alternative designs were presented to the CFA in May 1934 by Finnan and representatives of GE. Finnan noted that “the intensity of the light will not be so great as to make it visible at a distance and the arrangement of the posts will be such that one will not see

a line of lights up and down the Mall.” The CFA recommended “that the lights should be evenly spaced” so that street corners were not emphasized and also that lights be placed a few feet in front of the lines of elms. (CFA minutes May 28 1934 p. 9)

In May, the NCPPC agreed on the following general principles to govern Mall lighting, including street lighting:

*The Commission feels that in order to get proper and harmonious lighting for the Mall, the design for the lights on the cross streets between the north and south Mall drives should be considered as part of the Mall lighting scheme, and the lights so located, designed and maintained; the operation, maintenance and spacing of the lights between the cross streets on the Mall drives should be in orderly relation to the trees, and as far as possible away from them; so far as traffic lights are concerned, they should be placed in the normal positions, subject to minor adjustments to make coincident use of the same pole for street lights and traffic lights; that the lights on the cross streets should be in line with the Mall lighting; and that all lights to illuminate the Mall proper and the cross streets should be in a true straight line and no lighting should be within the vista between those lines. (NCPPC minutes May 17-18 1934)*

On July 26, 1934, the CFA and the NCPPC inspected lamps of the proposed design that had been erected on the Mall at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. The Commission of Fine Arts approved the location on the Inner, or Vista, Drives and the “double light standard” (noting that details of the posts would be submitted later). The commission recommended using 400 rather than 600 watt bulbs, and using a thicker, off-white glass globe so that the light would be more diffused. (H.P. Cammerer to Finnan, Aug. 14, 1934, FRC14)

At the CFA’s September meeting, Gosling showed sketches for lamp posts. These included “double light standards with drop lights and vertical lights; also single lamp standards.” The CFA approved one of the single lamp standard designs to “be used on all of the Mall drives and on all cross roads between Independence and Constitution Avenues.” (CFA minutes Sept. 17 1934 p. 10) They formally approved the design in December. (Moore to Finnan, Dec. 4, 1934, FRC14)

Pepco installed the Mall lights between about April and June 1936. (M. McColligan, NCP, to Finnan, Memo, April 6, 1936 FRC14) Thirty-three 600-candlepower lamps and 153 400-candlepower lamps, costing \$273 each, were placed three feet forward of the lines of elms, for a total of 186 lights. (The distribution was shown on plan file #35-226; the plan has not been located and so the TIC number, if any, is not known. Finnan to Pepco, May 18, 1936 FRC14) Finnan reported to the CFA that “by means of reflectors the light is kept down so that from a distance the lights look rather dim, but the lighting near the posts is very good. [National Capital Parks] tried to subordinate the Mall lighting to that of the Monument and the Capitol.” (CFA Min. May 1, 1936 p. 10)

After the installation was complete, National Capital Parks issued a press release, probably in September:

*Another noteworthy feature of the new Mall development is the lighting installation. The posts are 21 feet high and are made of fluted bronze. The lamp is a cylinder of glass inner frosted to prevent glare. It is bordered with bronze at the top and bottom, but the cylinder proper is unobstructed, permitting an even distribution of illumination. The inside top of the cylinder is a mirror which controls reflection and the spread of the light rays. The technical features were developed in the laboratories of the General Electric Company and the lamps are considered by engineers to be the most efficient type of street light yet produced. In general appearance, by both day and night, the lights contribute generously to the beauty of the Mall development. In this respect it is interesting to note that their design was approved by the National Commission of Fine Arts, perhaps the first occasion upon which that exalted body passed upon an object formerly considered purely utilitarian. ("Federal Public Works Project for Development of the Mall Is Nearing Completion" c. Sept. 1936 p. 5 FRC1)*

Originally, the posts were owned by Pepco and rented to the government, at that time a standard arrangement in the National Capital Parks. The last twenty-four gas lights on the Mall, located between 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Streets, were not removed until 1939. (Gartside to Wash. Gas Light Co., June 9, 1939 FRC14)



View looking east from the Washington Monument. Some elms have been planted; trees remain on the Smithsonian Grounds and where grading is still to be carried out along 14<sup>th</sup> Street. (from MRCE; CLP file "Mall showing progress 1934")



By the summer of 1935, more trees had been removed and the slope graded. Trees still grew in the Smithsonian Grounds and the power plant remained. The encampment may have been for the CCC. (from MRCE; CLP file "Gov buildings and Mall 1935")



By 1936, the power plant had finally been removed. This photograph was probably taken early in the year. (from MRCE; CLP file "Mall from Wash Mon 1936")



Grading and the laying of utilities on the Mall. In the distance can be seen some of the tree wells built around mature trees to be moved. (from MRCE; CLP file "Mall grading 7-12 Sts")



In 1935, concrete sidewalks were built along the outer edges of the Mall Vista Drives. (from MRCE; CLP file "Mall laying sidewalk 1935")



## **1937-1966: Incremental Changes to the Mall Landscape**

By 1936, much of the Mall landscape had assumed its current form. The grade had been raised and leveled, most of the streets and sidewalks had been built, the grass panels had been sown, and many of the elms had been planted. The old Smithsonian Grounds, however, still retained many of the older trees. These were not entirely replanted until the 1960s; photographs from 1964 and 1966 suggest that many of the elms had been planted by the latter date, though as late as 1966 a variety of tree species remained in front of the Natural History Museum, at least. The final tree panel was not planted with elms until 1975.

Apart from the elms, little remained to complete the McMillan Plan for the Mall except for the construction of appropriate buildings along its north and south sides. Maintenance needs of the new landscape needed to be identified and carried out. Over the succeeding decades, however, new management issues arose, particularly the accommodation of increased vehicular traffic and parking. The health and longevity of the Mall elms has also presented a continuing concern.

### Renaming and Realignment of Mall Roads

After Missouri and Maine Avenues were closed, there were attempts to use these names for the Mall Vista Drives (also known as the Inner Drives). A joint resolution to this effect was introduced in the House and the Senate. Various reasons were given in support: the utilitarian use of these roads to service Mall buildings was similar to the use of other state avenues; and to avoid confusion over the similar names of the inner and outer Mall drives (North Drive, North Vista Drive, South Vista Drive, South Drive) (FRC1)

On the recommendation of Frederic A. Delano, Director of the NCPPC, Secretary Ickes approved naming the four Mall drives after the first four presidents. The North Mall Drive became Madison Drive, the North Vista Drive became Washington Drive, the South Vista Drive became Adams Drive, and the South Mall Drive became Jefferson Drive. (Memo to Finnan 5/12/37 FRC6)

Sixth and 13<sup>th</sup> Streets remained open between Madison and Jefferson Drives until at least February 1942 (TIC 802/80079, "The Mall, Existing Conditions"). By this time, Jefferson Drive had been rebuilt in its current alignment, but Madison Drive still curved into the Mall southeast of the National Museum of Natural History.

### New Construction and Clearing

The original building of the National Gallery of Art opened in 1941 on a site at the north end of the historic Armory Square, between 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Streets and Constitution Avenue and Madison Drive. The site had previously been occupied by the foundations of the George Washington Memorial Victory Building and, before that, by the Baltimore & Pennsylvania Railroad station. The Roman neoclassical Beaux-Arts structure of the National Gallery of Art's West Building is the work of architect John Russell Pope, designer of many prominent monumental structures near the Mall as well as numerous grand residences in Washington. The main entrance, facing the Mall, is through a portico set at the top of a high monumental stairway, leading into a

domed rotunda in the building's elevated main floor. The actual ground floor of the gallery is reached through at-grade entrances off Constitution Avenue, 4<sup>th</sup> Street, and 7<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.

Demolition of the USDA greenhouses along Constitution Avenue began on February 28, 1940. (Gillen 2/27/40 FRC12) These were removed to make room for temporary buildings housing Army and Air Force intelligence detachments. (Goode 2003:358) Apart from these, no other new building opened on the Mall for twenty years, until the National Museum of History and Technology – since renamed the National Museum of American History – was completed in 1964. Designed by Steinman, Cain & White, the successor firm to McKim, Mead & White, this was the first Modernist structure facing the Mall. It retained the monumentality, symmetry, and stone – in this case, marble – facing typical of earlier Mall buildings. Its main, south entrance is set at the raised Mall grade constructed in the mid-1930s, and its north entrance is a floor lower, off Constitution Avenue. The east and west sides of the basement floor are exposed, and retaining walls extend below Madison Drive.

### *Tunneling of 12<sup>th</sup> Street*

The 12<sup>th</sup> Street expressway, including the tunnel under the Mall, was opened on July 31, 1962, after almost three years of construction. The highway led north from the new Washington Channel Bridge to Constitution Avenue. (*Wash. Star* 8/01/62:B1)

### Mall Elms

A significant addition to the staff of National Capital Parks was made with the hiring of Plant Pathologist Horace Wester in 1937. Wester was instrumental in developing the city-wide Dutch elm disease control program, and he monitored the elms for forty years, remaining with the NPS until the 1970s. Wester was the first to notice that an elm on the Mall in front of the Freer Gallery of Art developed leaves earlier in the spring and held its leaves later in the fall than the surrounding elms. Later studies by the NPS and the USDA Agricultural Research Service found the tree to be resistant to Dutch elm disease and named the cultivar 'Jefferson.' The 'Jefferson' elm has been incorporated into the elm population of the parks administered by National Mall & Memorial Parks, including the Mall, for the last couple of decades (see Vegetation).

A plan from 1938 (TIC 802/80041) shows the trees planted by Leissler's Nursery of Connecticut. It also shows the locations of a dozen or more elms that had been planted by A. Gude & Sons, Co., in March 1937. No further information about A. Gude & Sons is known. Additionally, the plan depicts trees that were realigned in January 1938 and perhaps other dates in 1938 (the legend lists symbols for trees "realigned in January 1938" and "realigned in 1938"); it also indicates trees still needing to be realigned, and trees that were to be planted in the spring of 1938.

On this plan, Madison Drive is shown curving into the tree panel in front of the National Museum of Natural History, preventing the complete planting of the outside line of elms; the road went around two small islands, kept to preserve existing trees. Additionally, Jefferson Drive curved into the Mall not only in front of the Castle but also to its east, in front of the Arts and Industries Building (the Old Museum), so that only the two inner rows of elms extended all the way east to 9<sup>th</sup> Street. Both drives retained these alignments at least until 1942. (TIC 802/80065)

More problems with the Mall elms had become evident by 1945. In this year, A.H. Hanson, landscape architect with NCP Branch of Forestry, conducted an inspection and submitted a report which gives a detailed picture of the state of the elms nine years after their planting:

*. . . In developing their shape the branches have grown outward or crossed over and become so irregular that they will by no means support the original idea whereby the trees were to grow in an upright shape so that the gentle arching branches would meet between rows of trees and form a high overhead arch, reminiscent of the nave of a large church or cathedral. . . .*

*Some question may arise as to the advisability of replacing apparently healthy trees with smaller trees of better shape. It is most certain that these unshapely trees will obstruct the vista between rows of trees, and it would be much better to remove them now than when they become so large that replacement trees cannot catch up to others in growth. All the Mall trees measure from 10 inches to 1 foot in trunk diameter. Considering that they were practically 3 inches in diameter [when] they were planted indicates a growth of about 9 inches in 8 years.*

*It is recommended that the largest size of tree that can be planted without a ball of earth be used for replacement. The size of such a tree, affording the greatest margin of safety for successful planting, would be between 2½-3 inches in trunk diameter measured 2 feet above the ground line. They should not be taller than 14 feet.*

*The paramount condition in the specifications for obtaining the true type vase shaped elm would be the actual selection of the tree in the nursery row irrespective of whether the tree was grown from seed or asexually propagated. After all it is the way a tree grows that counts and not its ancestry. . . .*

*It is therefore strongly recommended that the elm trees now growing in the Mall as part of the Mall scheme, which show a decidedly averse tendency to growing into the typical shape of a vase shaped elm, shall be removed and replaced with actual vase shaped elms, that they shall be actually selected for their shape from the nursery row, shall be shipped bare rooted about 2½-3" in trunk diameter. With dead and missing trees a total of 80 trees should be purchased. (Hanson to Sager 10/2/45 FRC9)*

Soon, about forty of the elms were replaced with "new and younger elm trees more of the American Elm type." (NCP staff meeting 12/5/45 FRC9)

### Beautification Program, 1964-1968

In 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson established the Beautification Program, an effort inspired and led by the First Lady, Lady Bird Johnson. Officially in existence until 1968 (though continuing in fact into the 1970s), the Beautification Program focused on projects in Washington, D.C., with a broad mandate for landscape improvements and park rehabilitation. Projects included the planting of trees, shrubs, and floral displays; the creation or rehabilitation of playgrounds; and highway beautification. The National Park Service established a