

Our nation's capital is a city of monuments, museums and characteristic neighborhoods. From pre-Civil War construction to the present, many hands have contributed to the District of Columbia's physical evolution. Let's explore some of the people and places that have left indelible imprints on the District's landscape.

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WASHINGTON, DC

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DC LOTTERY

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Courtesy of the National Museum of African American History and Culture, Smithsonian Institution.

Photos of enslaved workers and historical images of the U.S. Capitol and the White House provided courtesy of the Library of Congress.

MEET THE ARCHITECTS

ENSLAVED WORKERS | 1790 - 1862

The building of many of the symbolic structures adorning our city took place before the Civil War. Slavery was abolished in the District of Columbia in 1862. Construction of the White House began in 1792 and the U.S. Capitol in 1793. The materialization of these and other historical buildings was aided by the hands of enslaved workers who served in varying capacities including carpenters, quarriers and brick masons. The assembly of the plaster model of the Statue of Freedom that sits atop the U.S. Capitol is attributed to bondsman Philip Reid. Unveiled in 2012, a marker commemorating the efforts of enslaved workers is displayed in Emancipation Hall of the U.S. Capitol's Visitor Center.

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BENJAMIN BANNEKER | 1731 - 1806

Astronomer, mathematician, author and farmer Benjamin Banneker was born a free man in the then-slaveholding state of Maryland. Largely self-taught, he is an integral figure in the shaping of what would become our nation's capital. In 1791, Mr. Banneker participated in the initial survey of the territory for the newly established federal city and determined its original boundaries.

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ARCHIE ALEXANDER | 1888 - 1958

Archie A. Alexander was an honored mathematician, engineer and business owner. He has a collection of domestic and international building projects to his credit including the Tidal Basin Bridge and the Whitehurst Freeway.

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ALBERT I. CASSELL | 1895 - 1969

While working as a professor and architect at Howard University, Albert I. Cassell designed iconic buildings for its campus including Founders Library, Greene Stadium and the College of Medicine. His influence extends beyond the collegiate setting to include the design of Mayfair Mansions in Northeast, DC. Constructed in the mid-1940s housing segregation era, Mayfair Mansions was conceived as premier housing for middle- and working-class residents. Mr. Cassell's work can be discovered in ecclesiastic, educational and residential structures throughout the city.

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ZENA HOWARD | 1966 - PRESENT

Award-winning architect Zena Howard's imprint can be found in the District's neighborhoods as well as on the National Mall. Her design portfolio includes the Anacostia and Tenley-Friendship neighborhood libraries and she served as senior project manager for the Smithsonian Institution's newest addition, the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

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ALBERT CASSELL
- HOWARD UNIVERSITY'S
FOUNDERS LIBRARY
- MAYFAIR MANSIONS

ENSLAVED WORKERS

- THE WHITE HOUSE
- UNITED STATES CAPITOL

ARCHIE ALEXANDER
- TIDAL BASIN BRIDGE
- WHITEHURST FREEWAY

BENJAMIN BANNEKER
- SURVEYED ORIGINAL
BORDERS OF DC

ZENA HOWARD

- NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE
- ANACOSTIA NEIGHBORHOOD LIBRARY
- TENLEY-FRIENDSHIP NEIGHBORHOOD LIBRARY

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