

# WASHINGTON

## THE CAPITAL CITY

by Gertrude Van Duyn Southworth and Stephen Elliott Kramer

Washington, the capital city of our nation, is the center of interest for the whole country. Every citizen of the United States thinks of the city of Washington as a place in which he has a personal pride.

Here one may see in operation the work of governing a great nation. The representatives whom the people have chosen meet in the splendid Capitol to make laws for the whole country. The home of the president is here, and here are located the headquarters of the great departments of our government.

The capital city is a city of splendid trees, of wide, well-paved streets and handsome avenues. At the intersection of many of the streets and avenues are beautiful parks and circles, ornamented by statues of the great men of the nation.

“How,” we are asked, “did it happen that the capital of a great nation was built almost on its eastern boundary?” The distance from Washington to San Francisco is 3205 miles. In other words, Washington is almost as near to London as to San Francisco. The answer is simple. The site was chosen when the settled part of our country lay between the Allegheny Mountains and the Atlantic Ocean. At that time most of the land west of the Alleghenies was looked upon as a wilderness whose settlement was uncertain, while no one dreamed that the infant nation would extend its boundaries to the Pacific Ocean.

“And why was it decided to build a new city as the nation's capital, on a site where there was not even a settlement? Why was not some city already established chosen to be the chief city of the nation?” The story is interesting.

Before the Revolutionary War the colonies were much like thirteen independent nations, having little to do with one another, but during the war a common peril held them together in a loose union. With the danger passed and independence won, this union threatened to dissolve, but thanks to the influence of the wisest and best men in the country the thirteen states finally became one nation and adopted the Constitution which governs the United States to-day. Then discussion arose as to the site of the new nation's capital. Several states clamored for the honor of having one of their cities chosen as the government city. The men who framed the Constitution were wise enough, however, to foresee difficulty if this were done, and insisted that the seat of government should be in no state but in a small territory which should be controlled entirely by the national government.

After much debate the present location was chosen, and the two states of Maryland and Virginia each gave to the federal government entire control over a small territory on the Potomac River. The two pieces of land formed a square, ten miles on each side. The territory was named the District of Columbia, and the city to be built was called Washington in honor of our first president, whose home, Mount Vernon, was but a few miles away. Later, in 1846, the Virginia part of the District was given back, so now all the District is on the Maryland side of the Potomac and is no longer in the shape of a square.

A firm belief in the future of Washington led to the making of very elaborate and extensive

plans for laying out the city. But as the public buildings began to rise, with great stretches of unimproved country between them, many thought the plans much too elaborate and feared that the attempt to build a new city would end in failure. It was in the fall of 1800 when the government moved to Washington. Then, in 1814, when things had taken a start, a dreadful misfortune happened; just a few months before the close of the war of 1812, the British attacked the city and burned both the Capitol and the White House. In spite of these early discouragements and years of ridicule, the capital has fully justified the plans and hopes of the far-seeing men who built not for their own day but for the years to come.

Perhaps one gets the best idea of the city to-day from the height of the Capitol's beautiful dome that rises over three hundred feet above the pavement. There is a gallery around the outside of the dome, just below the lantern which lights its summit, and from here one can see for miles in any direction.

Our view of the city from this height shows us that most of the streets are straight and run either north and south or east and west. The east and west streets are lettered; those running north and south are numbered. One might easily imagine four great checkerboards placed together, with the Capitol standing at the point where the four boards meet. I say four checkerboards, because from the Capitol three great streets go to the north, the south, and the east, while a broad park runs away to the west, thus dividing the city into four sections. Running across the regularly planned streets of these checkerboards are broad avenues, many of which seem to come like spokes of wheels from parks placed in different sections of the city. These avenues are named for different states.

Close about us is a splendid group of majestic buildings. The Capitol, upon the brow of the hill overlooking the western part of the city, is the center of the group. To the north and south of the Capitol rise the beautiful marble buildings for the use of the committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives. To the east is the Library of Congress, the most beautiful building of its kind in the world.

Toward the northwest and southeast runs Pennsylvania Avenue, one hundred sixty feet wide, the most famous street in the city. About a mile and a half up Pennsylvania Avenue from the Capitol is another imposing group of public buildings. Here are the Treasury Department, the Executive Mansion,—the home of the president,—and the State, War, and Navy Building. Pennsylvania Avenue leads past the fronts of these buildings and on for more than two miles to the far-western part of the city.

Directly west from the Capitol we look along the fine parkways which divide the city in that direction just as do the main streets which run from the Capitol to the north, east, and south. This handsome series of parks is called the Mall. In the Mall are a number of public buildings placed in an irregular line stretching west from the Capitol, with sufficient distance between them to allow spacious grounds for each building. Here we find the home of the Bureau of Fisheries, the Army Medical Museum, the National Museum, the Smithsonian Institution, the Department of Agriculture, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, and the Washington Monument.

As we walk around the gallery of the Capitol dome, we see that almost every street and avenue is lined on either side with beautiful shade trees which give the city a gardenlike appearance. And looking toward the south we see the eastern branch of the Potomac meeting the main stream and flowing away in a majestic river, over a mile in width. On all sides of the city the land rises in beautiful green hills, guarding the nation's capital as it lies nestled between the river's protecting arms.

Having this picture of the general plan of Washington, let us visit some of the buildings; first of all the Capitol, for it is the most imposing as well as the most important building in the city. For a good view of the building, walk out upon the spacious esplanade which extends across the eastern front. Even here it is hard to appreciate that the Capitol is over 751 feet long, 350 feet wide, and covers more than 3½ acres of ground. The eastern front shows the building to have three divisions, a central building and a northern and a southern wing. Each division has a splendid portico with stately Corinthian columns and a broad flight of steps leading to the portico from the eastern esplanade.

Every four years a new president of the United States is elected, and March 4 is the day on which he takes office. On this day a great stand is put up over the steps leading to the central portico of the Capitol, and upon this platform a most imposing ceremony takes place. Here the new president, in the presence of all the members of Congress, the representatives of foreign nations, many distinguished guests, and an immense throng of people, takes upon himself the obligations of his high office. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court holds a Bible before the president, who places his hand upon it and repeats these words: "I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States." After the president has delivered his inaugural address, a splendid procession escorts him to his new home, the Executive Mansion.

Above the central division of the Capitol building, which for many years served as the entire Capitol, rises the imposing dome from which we have just come. It is crowned with a lantern upon the top of which is placed the statue of Freedom.

Across the western front of the Capitol is a marble terrace overlooking the lower part of the city. Though the western front is ornamented with colonnades of Corinthian columns, it lacks the splendid approaches of the eastern side.

This immense building, representing the dignity and greatness of our nation, is given over almost entirely to the work of lawmaking. In the central part is the large rotunda beneath the lofty dome. The northern wing is occupied by the Senate of the United States, while the southern wing is the home of the House of Representatives. We enter the rotunda by the broad stairs leading from the eastern esplanade and find ourselves in a great circular hall, almost a hundred feet in diameter, whose walls curve upward one hundred and eighty feet. At the top a beautiful canopy shows the Father of his Country in the company of figures representing the thirteen original states. About these are other figures, personifying commerce, freedom, mechanics, agriculture, dominion over the sea, and the arts and sciences. Encircling the upper part of the walls, but many feet below the canopy, is a frieze of scenes from the history of the United States.

Around the lower part of the walls are eight great paintings. Four of them are the work of one of Washington's officers, Colonel John Trumbull of Connecticut, and are of great interest because the figures are actual portraits of the people represented. These paintings show the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the surrender of Burgoyne at Saratoga, the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown, and the resignation of General Washington at the close of the Revolution.

From the rotunda, broad corridors lead north to the Senate Chamber and south to the House of Representatives. Following the corridor to the south, we come to a large semicircular room. When the central division of the building was all there was to the Capitol, this room was occupied by the House of Representatives, and here were heard the speeches of Adams, Webster, Clay, Calhoun, and many other famous statesmen. It is now set apart as a national statutory hall, where each state may place two

statues of her chosen sons. As many of the states have been glad to honor their great men in this way, a splendid array of national heroes is gathered in the hall. Among the Revolutionary heroes we find Washington, Ethan Allen, and Nathaniel Green. A statue of Fulton, sent by New York, shows him seated, looking at a model of his steamship. Of all these marble figures, perhaps none attracts more attention than that of Frances Elizabeth Willard, the great apostle of temperance, and to the state of Illinois belongs the distinction of having placed the only statue of a woman in this great collection.

Leaving Statuary Hall, we go south to the Hall of Representatives. Here representatives from all the states gather to frame laws for the entire nation. Seated in the gallery it seems almost as if we were in a huge schoolroom, for the representatives occupy seats which are arranged in semicircles, facing a white marble desk upon a high platform reached by marble steps. This is the desk of the Speaker of the House. The Speaker's duty is to preserve order and to see that the business of this branch of Congress is carried on as it should be. Before delivering a speech, a representative must have the Speaker's permission. The Speaker is a most important person, for all business is transacted under his direction. The representatives come from every state in the Union, and even far-off Hawaii, Alaska, and the Philippines are allowed to send delegates to this assembly to represent them in making laws. Think what a serious matter it would have been to the people of the far West to have the capital of their nation in the extreme Eastern section of the country if the development of the railroads, the telegraph, and the telephone had not made travel and communication so easy that great distances are no longer obstacles.

But we can pay only a brief visit to the House of Representatives, for there is another body of lawmakers in the northern end of the Capitol which we wish to see. Back to the rotunda we go and then walk along a corridor leading to the northern, or Senate, end of the Capitol. Each day, for a number of months in the year, an interesting ceremony takes place in this corridor promptly at noon. Nine dignified men, clad in long black silk robes, march in solemn procession across the corridor and enter a stately chamber which, though smaller, resembles Statuary Hall in shape. These men make up the Supreme Court of the United States, the highest court of justice in the land.

Often in cases at law a person does not feel that the decision of one court has been just. He may then have his case examined and passed upon by a higher court. This is called "appealing," and some cases, for good cause, may be appealed from one court to another until they reach the Supreme Court. Beyond the Supreme Court there is no appeal. What this court decides must be accepted as final. The room in which the Supreme Court meets was once used as the Senate Chamber, and many of the great debates heard in the Senate before our Civil War were held in this room.

The Senate Chamber of to-day is further down the north corridor. This room is not unlike the Hall of Representatives in plan and arrangement, though it is somewhat smaller. Instead of having a chairman of their own choosing, as is the case in the House, the Senate is presided over by the vice president of the United States. This high official, seated upon a raised platform, directs the proceedings of the Senate just as the Speaker directs those of the House of Representatives. There seems to be an air of greater solemnity and dignity in this small group of lawmakers than in the House of Representatives. It is smaller because each state is entitled to send but two senators to the Senate, whereas the number of representatives is governed by the number of inhabitants in the state. The populous state of New York has thirty-seven representatives and but two senators, the same number as the little state of Rhode Island whose population entitles it to only two representatives.

The purpose of having two lawmaking bodies is to provide a safeguard against hasty and unwise legislation. In the House of Representatives the most populous states have the greatest influence, while in the Senate all states are equally represented, and each state has two votes regardless

of its size and population. Since every proposed law must be agreed to in both the Senate and the House before it is taken to the president for his approval, each body acts as a check on the other in lawmaking.

Just to the east of the Capitol grounds stands the magnificent Library of Congress. This wonderful storehouse of books is a marvelous palace. It covers almost an entire city block, and its towering gilded dome is visible from almost every part of the city. Once inside, we could easily believe ourselves in fairyland, so beautiful are the halls and the staircases of carved marble, so wonderful the paintings and the decorations. Every available space upon the walls and ceilings is adorned with pictures, with the names of the great men of the world, and with beautiful quotations from the poets and scholars who seem to live again in this magnificent building which is dedicated to the things they loved.

In the center of the building, just beneath the gilded dome, is a rotunda slightly wider than the rotunda of the Capitol, though not so high. Here are desks for the use of those who wish to consult any volume of the immense collection of books.

The books are kept in great structures called stacks, 9 stories high and containing bookshelves which would stretch nearly 44 miles if placed in one line. Any one of the great collection of 1,300,000 volumes can be sent by machinery from the stacks to the reading room or to the Capitol. When a member of Congress wants a book which is in the Library, he need not leave the Capitol, for there is a tunnel connecting the two buildings through which runs a little car to carry books.

The Librarian of Congress has charge of the enforcement of the copyright law. By means of this law an author may secure the exclusive right to publish a book, paper, or picture for twenty-eight years. One of the requirements of the copyright law is that the author must place in the Library of Congress two copies of whatever he has copyrighted. Hence, on the shelves of this great library may be found almost every book or paper published in the United States.

Leaving the Library we once more find ourselves upon the great esplanade east of the Capitol. In the majestic white-marble buildings to the north and south,—known as the Senate and House office buildings,—committees of each House of Congress meet to discuss proposed laws. Having seen the lawmakers at work in the Capitol, let us visit the officials whose duty it is to enforce the laws made by Congress.

Chief among these is the president of the United States. His house is officially known as the Executive Mansion, but nearly everybody speaks of it as the White House. The first public building erected in Washington was the White House. It is said that Washington himself chose the site. He lived to see it built but not occupied, for the capital was not moved to the District of Columbia until 1800, a year after Washington's death.

This simple, stately building is a fitting home for the head of a great republic. In the main building are the living apartments of the president and his family, and the great rooms used for state receptions; the largest and handsomest of these is the famous East Room. Other rooms used on public occasions are known, from the color of the furnishings and hangings, as the Blue Room, the Green Room, and the Red Room. There is also the great State Dining Room, where the president entertains at dinner the important government officials and foreign representatives.

In the Annex, adjoining the White House on the west, are the offices of the president and those

who assist him in his work. In this part of the building is the cabinet room, where the president meets the heads of the various departments to consult with them concerning questions of national importance.

Across the street from the president's office is the immense granite building occupied by the three departments of State, War, and Navy. The secretaries in charge of these departments have their offices here, together with a small army of clerks.

On the opposite side of the White House from the State, War, and Navy Building is the National Treasury. The Treasury Building is one of the finest in the city. To see the splendid colonnade on the east is alone worth a journey to Washington. From this building all the money affairs of the United States government are directed.

In the Treasury Building and in the Bureau of Engraving and Printing one may see the entire process of manufacturing and issuing paper money. In the Treasury we see new bills exchanged for old, worn-out bills, which are ground to pieces to destroy forever their value as money.

But to understand the story of a dollar bill or a bill of any other value we must visit the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. This building, which is some distance from the Treasury Building, reminds us of a large printing office, and that is just what it is. Here we are shown from room to room where many men and women are at work, some engraving the plates from which bills are to be printed and others printing the bills. The paper used is manufactured by a secret process for United States money, and every sheet is most carefully counted at every stage of the printing. Altogether the sheets are counted fifty-two times. Many clerks are employed to keep a careful account of these sheets, and it is almost impossible for a single bill or a single piece of paper to be lost or stolen. After the money is printed it is put into bundles, sealed, and sent in a closely guarded steel wagon to the Treasury Building, where it is stored in great vaults until it is issued.

At the Treasury we find the officials sending out these crisp new bills in payment of the debts of the United States or in exchange for bills which are so tattered and torn that they are no longer useful. This exchanging of new money for old is a large part of the business of the Treasury and calls for the greatest care in counting and keeping records, in order that no mistakes may be made.

After the old bills are counted they are cut in half and the halves counted separately, to make sure that the first count was correct. When the exact amount of money has been determined, new bills are sent out to the owners of the old bills, and the old bills are destroyed.

When we have seen enough of the counting of old money, our guide takes us down into the cellar of this great building, where we walk along a narrow passageway with millions of dollars in gold and silver on either hand. All is carefully secured by massive doors and locks, and none but trusted officials may enter the vaults themselves. These gold and silver coins are made in the United States mints in Philadelphia, Denver, New Orleans, and San Francisco.

You see the paper bill is not real money but a sort of receipt representing gold and silver money which you can get at any time from the Treasury. As we peep through the barred doors of the vaults and see great piles of canvas sacks, it is interesting to know that some of the silver and gold coins they hold are ours, waiting here while we carry in our pockets the paper bills which represent them.

In addition to issuing money, the Treasury Department has charge of collecting all the taxes and duties which furnish the money for the payment of the expenses of the government.

Washington is a government city. Of its population of over 330,000, about 36,000 are directly engaged in the various departments of the government, while most of the other lines of business thrive by supplying the needs of the government's employees and their families. Very little manufacturing is done in the District of Columbia, and such articles as are manufactured are chiefly for local use.

People from almost every country in the world may be seen on the streets, for almost all civilized nations have ministers or ambassadors at Washington to represent them in official dealings with the United States. These foreign representatives occupy fine homes, and during the winter season many brilliant receptions are given by them as well as by our own high officials.

The people of Washington have built fine churches and many handsome schools, to which all, from the president to the humblest citizen, send their children. In or near the city are the five universities of George Washington, Georgetown, Howard University for colored people, the Catholic University, and the American University, where graduates from other colleges take advanced work.

The citizens of the District of Columbia do not vote nor do they make their own laws, as it was feared there might be a disagreement between Congress and the city government if people voted on local matters. All laws for the District of Columbia are made by the Congress of the United States and are carried out by three commissioners appointed by the president with the consent of the Senate. Many inhabitants of the District are citizens of the states and go to their homes at election time to cast their votes. Isn't it strange that there is a place in the United States where the citizens cannot vote?

You are, no doubt, beginning to think that the places of interest in Washington must be very numerous. This is true, for few cities in the world have so many interesting public buildings. Among these are the Corcoran Art Gallery; the Continental Memorial Hall, the majestic marble building of the Daughters of the American Revolution; and the palatial home of the Pan-American Union, a place where representatives of all the American republics may meet. Then there is the Patent Office, for recording and filing old patents and granting new ones; the Pension Office, from which our war veterans receive a certain sum each year; the Government Printing Office, whose reports require over a million dollars' worth of paper each year; Ford's Theater, where President Lincoln was shot; the naval-gun factory, for making the fourteen-inch long-range guns used on our battleships; and the Union Railroad Station, whose east wing is reserved for the use of the president.

There is one almost sacred spot, upon which the nation has erected a splendid memorial to our greatest hero, George Washington. The Washington Monument is a simple obelisk of white marble, that towers 555 feet above the beautiful park in the midst of which it stands. Those openings near the top which seem so small are 504 feet above us and are actually large windows. On entering the door at the base of the monument, we pass through the wall, which is 15 feet thick, and find an elevator ready to carry us to the top. If we prefer to walk, there is an interior stairway of 900 steps leading to the top landing. At the end of our upward journey we find ourselves in a large room with two great windows on each of the four sides. From here we get another view of the hill-surrounded city, and the scene which lies before us is inspiring.

The Washington Monument is near the western end of the Mall, that series of parks extending from the Capitol to the Potomac River. Near by are the buildings of the Department of Agriculture, which has been of the greatest help to the farmers of our land by sending out important information concerning almost everything connected with farm life. Through the Bureau of Chemistry this department did much to bring about the passage of the Pure Food Law, which protects the people by

forbidding the sale of food and drugs that are not pure.

In the spacious park adjoining the grounds of the Department of Agriculture is a building which looks like an ancient castle. This is the Smithsonian Institution, which carries on scientific work under government control.

The National Museum, which is under the control of the Smithsonian Institution, has a fine building of its own. This museum is a perfect treasure house of interesting exhibits of all kinds. Here may be seen relics of Washington, of General Grant, and of other famous Americans; and here are exhibits showing the history of the telegraph, the telephone, the sewing machine, the automobile, and the flying machine. Stuffed animals of all kinds are arranged to look just as if they were alive. So numerous are the exhibits that it would require a large book simply to mention them. Many of the boys and girls of Washington spend their Saturday afternoons examining the wonderful things which have been brought to this museum from all parts of the world.

Washington has also a zoölogical park where there are animals from everywhere. It is on the banks of a beautiful stream on the outskirts of the city and is part of a great public park which covers many acres of picturesque wooded country.

We must not omit the Post Office Department, for that is the part of the federal government which comes nearest to our homes. Here are the offices of the postmaster general and his many assistants. To tell of the wonders of our postal system would be a long story in itself. If all the people employed by the Post Office Department lived in Washington, they would fill all of the houses and leave no room for anyone else. Of course this great army of employees are not all in any one city, for the work of the post office extends to every part of the United States, and, through arrangement with other nations, to every part of the civilized world.

In the country surrounding the city of Washington are several important and interesting places. Just across the river, in the state of Virginia, are Fort Myer, an army post, and the famous Arlington National Cemetery. Arlington was the home of Martha Custis, who became the bride of George Washington. At the opening of the Civil War it was the home of the famous Confederate general, Robert E. Lee. Then it passed into the hands of the United States government and is now the burial place of over sixteen thousand soldiers who gave their lives for their country.

On the Virginia shore of the Potomac River, sixteen miles south of the city of Washington, is Mount Vernon, the home and burial place of George Washington. The spacious old mansion in the midst of fine trees and shady lawns looks out over the wide peaceful river which Washington loved. To this home Washington came to live shortly after his marriage. He spent his time in farming on this estate until he was called to take command of the American army. After our independence was won he returned to his home and his farm. Once more he was called upon to leave this quiet country life to become the first president of the new nation. When he had served his country two terms he gladly retired to Mount Vernon, where he lived until his death in 1799.

To-day the house and grounds are preserved with loving care. The rooms of the house are furnished with fine old mahogany furniture, many pieces of which belonged to Washington. In the grounds, not far from the stately mansion, is the simple brick tomb where rest the bodies of Washington and his wife. During the years which have passed since his death, thousands of his countrymen have come to this tomb to do honor to his memory.



As we sail up the Potomac toward the city after our visit to the home of the great man whose name it bears, the Washington Monument, the White House, the State, War, and Navy Building, the Capitol, the Library, and the post office tower above the surrounding buildings and, shining in the golden light of sunset, make a picture never to be forgotten.

This city of parks, of broad avenues, of beautiful buildings, belongs to the Americans who live in the far-distant states as well as to those who live and work in the capital itself. It is our capital and we may justly be proud of it, for it is one of the most beautiful cities in all the world.

Source:

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