Lock
~~Toll~~ Keepers Lodge (Now Police House)
(Formerly C&O Canal)
17th & Constitution Ave.
Washington, D. C.

HABS No. DC 36
HABS
D.C.
WASH
12-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORIC AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
Washington, D. C. District

Historic American Buildings Survey

Prepared at Washington Office

ADDENDUM TO
LOCK KEEPER'S HOUSE LODGE
(Toll Keeper's ~~House~~)
17th Street and Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-36

HABS
DC
WASH,
12-

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20001

ADDENDUM TO:
LOCK KEEPER'S HOUSE
(Toll Keeper's Lodge)
National Mall & Memorial Parks
Seventeenth Street & Constitution Avenue, Northwest
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS DC-36
HABS DC,WASH,12-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

ADDENDUM TO:
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

LOCK KEEPER'S HOUSE
(Toll Keeper's Lodge)

HABS No. DC-36

Location: Seventeenth Street & Constitution Avenue, Northwest, Washington, DC

The Lockkeeper's House is located at latitude: 38.391940, longitude: -77.039742. The point represents the center of the building and was obtained on October 29, 2015, using Google Earth. There is no restriction on its release to the public.

Present Owner/ Occupant: The Lockkeeper's House is part of the National Mall and Memorial Parks, a unit of the National Park Service.

Present Use: Vacant.

Significance: The 1837 Lockkeeper's House is significant as the only visible remnant of the nineteenth-century canal extension connecting the Washington City Canal to the Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Canal. A lock at this location was needed to connect the two canals, and this house served as the lockkeeper's residence. In addition, it is a surviving example of the standard plans developed by the C&O Canal in 1836 for the lockkeeper's houses built along the waterway. After the creation of West Potomac Park, the Lockkeeper's House was subsequently converted to use as a watchman's lodge and tool house around 1903. In 1915-16, plans for widening Seventeenth Street required moving the house to the west. It was then renovated for use as a comfort station, bicycle room, and locker room for the park watchmen patrolling West Potomac Park.

Project Information: The documentation of the Lockkeeper's House and site was produced by the Historic American Buildings Survey, Catherine Lavoie (Chief) at the request of the National Park Service, National Mall and Memorial Parks in 2015-2016. The structure will be moved and rehabilitated and new landscaping installed in preparation for its use as a visitor center. Chris Stevens served as Project Leader. Ryan Pierce completed the laser scanning and drawings. Justine Christianson wrote the historical report, and Todd Croteau and Paul Davidson produced the large-format photographs.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The Lockkeeper's House had been completed by October 1837.

2. Architect: The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company (C&O Canal) developed standard plans for the lockkeeper's houses built along the canal in 1828 and 1836. This particular lockkeeper's house was built according to the 1836 plans.

3. Original and subsequent owners, occupants, uses: The Lockkeeper's House was located on Tide Lock B on a canal extension between the C&O Canal and the Washington City Canal. During the canal's operation, the lockkeeper resided in this house. The building was vacated after the Washington City Canal ceased operations in the 1870s since the connection to the C&O Canal was no longer necessary.

The title to the Lockkeeper's House transferred from the C&O Canal Company to the Army Corps of Engineers in 1902. At that time, an African-American family who had taken up residence in the vacant building was evicted.[1]

The Lockkeeper's House was incorporated into West Potomac Park in the early twentieth century. The Army Corps of Engineers' Office of Public Buildings and Grounds oversaw the park. The Lockkeeper's House was subsequently converted to use as a watchman's lodge and tool house around 1903. In 1915-16, the Lockkeeper's House was moved back from the intersection of Seventeenth Street and Constitution Avenue and used as a comfort station, bicycle room, and locker room by the park watchmen.

In 1925, the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds became the Office of Public Buildings and Parks of the National Capital, reporting directly to the President of the United States. Executive Order 6166, signed June 10, 1933, transferred this office to the Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations in the Department of the Interior. In 1934, the Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations was renamed the National Park Service. The former Office of Public Buildings and Parks of the National Capital became National Capital Parks, a unit of the National Park Service. West Potomac Park, including the Lockkeeper's House, is now part of National Mall and Memorial Parks and continues to be administered by the National Park Service.[2]

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: The C&O Canal board authorized Thomas Carbery, a commissioner of the Washington City Canal, to "have a house of the usual dimensions

---

[1] *Annual Reports of War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1903*, XII, in *Report of the Chief of Engineers*, Part 4 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1903), 2554.
[2] Kay Fanning, "Constitution Gardens, National Mall and Memorial Parks-West Potomac Park, Cultural Landscapes Inventory" (National Park Service, 2008), 23; Gordon Chappell, *Historic Resource Study, East and West Potomac Parks: A History* (Denver Service Center, Historic Preservation Team, National Park Service, June 1973), 123, 135.

erected at said Tide Lock B" in 1836 and 1837. Carbery had built a wharf at the foot of Seventeenth Street after the War of 1812, and the lock and proposed house were built nearby. Superintendent J. Y. Young had the stone quarried and transported to the site for Tide Lock B and the house.[3]

5. Original plans and construction: The first specifications for the lockkeeper's houses on the C&O Canal date to 1828 and were based on those built along the Erie Canal. These specifications were updated in 1836, and the lockkeeper's house in Washington, DC, was built to the 1836 plans. The houses were to be 18' x 30' brick or stone buildings. The masonry was to be laid in lime mortar, except for the top 1-$^1/_2$', which was to be water cement. The houses would have cellars with a 6' clearance, earth floors, and 22"-thick walls extending 2" outside the upper floor walls. The chimney was to be in the middle of the building and constructed of brick, although the foundation could be stone or brick. The main floor was to be 8' tall from floor to ceiling with 14-$^1/_4$"-thick walls if brick and 20" if stone. The attic walls were to be the same thickness, except for the end walls, which were to be 9" thick if brick and 12" if stone. The attic would have a 6'-3" clearance. Each floor would have two rooms. Walls were to be plastered, except for the attic, which would have 1-$^1/_2$" planks. The main floor would have five windows of twelve lights, but the attic would have four windows of nine lights. Casings were to be yellow pine. Window and door lintels and sills were to be locust. The doors were all plain paneled. The first floor joists were 3 x 12, while the second floor joists were 3 x 10, all of yellow pine. The tongue-and-groove flooring was 1-$^1/_4$" heart of pine. The roof frame consisted of sixteen pairs of rafters, $^3/_4$" board sheathing, and 18"-long cypress shingles.[4]

6. Alterations and additions: The filling in of the Washington City Canal in 1870 raised the ground level and resulted in a reduction in height of the Lockkeeper's House from 2-$^1/_2$ stories to 1-$^1/_2$ stories.[5]

In 1903, repairs were made to the building after its acquisition by the Army Corps of Engineers. On the first floor, new floor joists and flooring were laid, four new windows were installed, wainscoting was installed in one room, and a partition measuring 18' long and 8' tall was built. On the second floor, four new dormers were installed, and new floor joists and flooring were laid. The roof was also replaced. In addition, photographs in the 1903 *Annual Report* indicate the presence of an awning or porch on the front façade, which appears to have been removed during the 1903 repairs. Examination of contemporary photographs also seems to indicate there was whitewashing on the

---

[3] Harlan D. Unrau, *Historic Structure Report, The Lockhouses, Historical Data, Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historic Park, MD, DC, WV* (Denver: Denver Service Center, Historic Preservation Team, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, May 1978), 15; "Journal of the Proceedings of the President and Director of the Chesapeake and Ohio Company from the Commencement of Year 1837 to the End of Year 1838," Wednesday, June 7, 1837 entry, in Record Group 79, National Archives and Records Administration-College Park [hereafter cited as RG79, NARA-College Park].
[4] The 1836 specifications are reprinted in Unrau, 12-14.
[5] Fanning, 21.

building's exterior, which was commonly done on lockkeeper's houses along the C&O Canal in the early twentieth century.[6] [See Appendix, Figures 1 and 2.]

Substantial alterations took place in 1915-1916 when the building was moved 49' to the west and 6' to the north prior to the widening of Seventeenth Street. The building was used as a comfort station, bicycle room, and locker room, resulting in additional interior alterations. A new roof was installed, stone chimneys were built, a door was probably added to the south façade, and the dormers may have been altered. Extensive landscaping was completed in the area immediately surrounding the house, as well as in West Potomac Park as a whole. This included transplanting forty-one shrubs and small trees; installing 581 square yards of bridle paths, 143 square yards of concrete walk, 64 linear feet of curb, 65 linear feet of brick gutter, and 92 linear feet of 6" terra-cotta sewer pipe; grading and laying new sod; and planting a total of 398 trees in four parallel rows between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial. Work continued through 1917, with a concrete walk and bridle path built along Seventeenth Street.[7] [See Appendix, Figure 3.]

There appear to have been no further significant alterations to the building since the move. The first floor may have been further altered for use as a public comfort station in 1940, and in 2004, the roof was replaced.[8]

B. Historical Context:

Washington City Canal

Pierre Charles L'Enfant first proposed building a canal extending from the Eastern Branch (Anacostia River) to the mouth of the Tiber Creek, which was located near Seventeenth Street and Constitution Avenue, NW, as a way to connect the Eastern Branch and the Potomac River. George Washington supported the idea of a canal within the city, as it would improve shipping and transportation and thus help the city's economy and development. Andrew Ellicott's 1792 revision to L'Enfant's plan maintained the canal. By 1795, the Maryland legislature had authorized a proposal by seven citizens to conduct two lotteries for the purpose of raising funds to build the canal. These lotteries were not successful due to opposition from Georgetown residents, who enjoyed the benefits of a canal and harbor and were therefore wary of what they

---

[6] *Annual Reports*, 1903, 2554; Unrau, 26. Relevant historic photographs held by the Historical Society of Washington, DC, include: CHR 53, Peter Christie Photograph Collection and CHR 02708, General photograph collection. Photographs CHS 14192, and CHS 14193, CHS 14194, General photograph collection, ca. 1900-1920 show the house prior to the 1903 renovations and rehabilitation. They reveal what look like patches of whitewash on the north façade, a deteriorated roof, no door on the south façade, and a frame structure abutting an end wall. Photograph CHS 14193 captures laundry hanging from a clothesline in the front yard, confirming reports that people had moved into the house prior to the 1903 title transfer.

[7] *Annual Reports of War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1916*, Part 3, in *Report of the Chief of Engineers U.S. Army* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1916), 3594; *Report of the Chief of Engineers U.S. Army*, Part 1, in *Annual Reports, War Department, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1917* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1917), 1891; Quinn Evans Architects, "Canal Lockkeeper's House, Washington, DC," Historic Structure Report (August 2011), 1.1.6 – 1.1.7. Photograph RA 0353, Rambler photograph collection, Historical Society of Washington, DC, dates to 1917 and reveals thick plantings around the building.

[8] Quinn Evans Architects, 1.2.5.

perceived as competition. Canal proponents, on the other hand, continued to view a canal running through Washington, DC, as a way to import goods like wood, lumber, and corn from nearby Bladensburg and the Eastern Branch without having to rely on Alexandria and Georgetown. The canal could also be used to more directly transport goods like sand, slate, lime, copper, wood, stone, and timber from the Potomac River to the Navy Yard via the Eastern Branch. Little progress was made on the canal from 1795-1802.[9]

In response to continued petitions from private citizens eager for a city canal, Congress authorized the establishment of the Washington City Canal in 1802. The enabling legislation, passed on May 1, 1802, incorporated the Washington City Canal and authorized the company "to raise $80,000, and construct a canal from the Potomac to the Eastern Branch, to admit boats drawing three feet water to pass through the whole extent of said canal, with the right to charge and collect tolls and wharfage." If the canal had not been completed within five years, it would revert to the United States. The company members included Thomas Tingey, Daniel Carroll, Thomas Law, and Daniel Carroll Brent, all of whom had also been part of the 1795 group authorized to conduct the two lotteries to fund canal construction. By 1808, the only progress that had been made was a 1-$^1/_2$ mile cut from Sixth Street, NW, to Tiber Creek.[10]

With work on the canal again stalled, Congress chartered the Washington Canal Company on February 16, 1809. The company was granted $100,000 in capital with a seven-year deadline to finish construction. The conditions of the charter also stipulated that if the canal ever became so obstructed that 3' draft boats could not pass through, the company could not collect any tolls or wharfage fees. Construction on the canal (primarily by Irish laborers) started on May 2, 1810, even though only half of the $100,000 had been raised. Congress reauthorized the two 1795 lotteries on May 6, 1812, but again they failed to raise the necessary funds. After a brief hiatus due to the War of 1812, work resumed on the canal in fall 1815, and it opened for the season on November 21.[11]

As completed, the Washington City Canal extended from what is now Seventeenth Street and Constitution Avenue, where a wharf was located, along the edge of the Tiber Creek to Fifteenth Street, then east to Seventh and Sixth streets. Tiber Creek channel was filled in where the canal used an artificial channel. In this area, the channel was 150' wide. The route then extended south for 776' with a 90' width. The canal went east for 1,570' to Third Street by the U.S. Capitol, then south for 705' to below Maryland Avenue at a 70' width. It continued south for 2,365' to South

---

[9] Cornelius W. Heine, "The Washington City Canal," in *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, D.C.* 53/56 (Washington, DC: Historical Society of Washington, DC, 1953/1956), 1-4; Thomas Law, "Observations on the Intended Canal in Washington City," reprinted in *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, D.C.* 8 (Washington, DC: Historical Society of Washington, DC, 1905), 160-163, quote from 163.

[10] 40th Congress, 2d Session, Misc. Doc. No. 95, Senate, "Report of the Executive Committee on a Resolution of the Regents of the Smithsonian Institution on the Influences of the Washington City Canal on the Health of the Population of the City, May 15, 1868," June 6, 1868, in *Index to the Miscellaneous Documents of the Senate of the United States for the Second Session Fortieth Congress, 1867-1868* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1868), 1; Heine, 4-5.

[11] Heine, 5-7; Senate, "Report of the Executive Committee," 1; Mr. Martin, from the Committee to the District of Columbia, Submitted the Following Report To Accompany S-2189, January 19, 1895, in 53rd Congress, 3rd session, Senate, Report No. 791, 4.

Capitol and then south for 705' to below Virginia Avenue. Extending south for 2,100', it ended at the Eastern Branch for a total length of 15,330'.[12] On May 20, 1826, the canal company received authorization to increase the canal width to 150' in those sections extending through the Smithsonian grounds and to build basins. Goods shipped on the canal included firewood, marble and stone for the construction of federal buildings, flour, food, and whiskey. Soon after the canal's completion, however, problems became apparent as large silt deposits and inconsistencies in water levels resulted from tidal action.[13] [See Appendix, Figure 4.]

C&O Canal Extension to Washington City Canal

On January 3, 1831, Washington, DC, city administrators approved the purchase of the Washington City Canal, despite its problems, because they recognized connecting that canal with the C&O Canal would make Washington, DC, the terminus of the C&O Canal rather than Georgetown. The C&O Canal Company was not particularly interested in a connection with the unsuccessful Washington City Canal until city leaders threatened to withdraw their $1 million subscription. In August 1831, the Resident Engineer was "directed to survey and locate the extension of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, from the Basin at Rock Creek, to Tyber Creek, and to report a plat thereof with the estimated cost, said extension to be 40 feet wide at the surfaces and 6 feet deep."[14] The C&O Canal Company Board approved the survey and cost estimate of the extension, albeit with minor modifications, on December 17, 1831. About a month later, the board unanimously resolved to build a lock at Seventeenth Street to provide passage for boats to the Potomac River via Tiber Creek. LeBaron & Camp Contractors were awarded the contract, but the company experienced difficulty in obtaining the required granite and gave up the contract in April. They were subsequently awarded a second contract that did not specify granite but that had a provision that no stone would be used until it had been approved. Congress formally passed "An act vesting in the corporation of the city of Washington all the rights of the Washington Canal Company" on May 31, 1832, provided that the finished canal be 4' deep, 150' wide, and have walls on both sides. An 8'-wide street was built along the south edge of the waterway. In March 1833, Congress appropriated $150,000 for finishing the canal.[15]

By 1834, the new canal branch extended about 1-$^{1}/_{4}$ miles, beginning at the C&O Canal's Rock Creek Basin, running along Twenty-Seventh Street to Constitution Avenue and then extending east to Seventeenth Street, where Tide Lock B and the Lockkeeper's House were located. Another tide lock was located at the Rock Creek Basin. Little information has been found about

---

[12] Garett P. Williams, "Washington, D.C.'s Vanishing Springs and Waterways" (Geological Survey, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1977), 11-12.

[13] Heine, 9-10; Senate, "Report of the Executive Committee," 2; Williams 11-12; "Report and Documents on the Present State and the Improvement of the Washington City Canal" (Washington: R.A. Waters Printers, 1865), 5-6.

[14] *Proceedings of the Presidents and Directors Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company 1830-1831*, Friday, August 12, 1831, in RG79, NARA-College Park.

[15] Heine, 15; *Federal and local legislation relating to canals and steam railroads in the District of Columbia, 1803-1803*, compiled by Charles Moore, clerk of the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1903), 10; Senate, "Report of the Executive Committee," 2; Letter from S. T. Thomas, 4; *Journal of the Proceedings of the Board of President and Directors of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company from September 16, 1831 to October 31, 1833*, in RG 79, NARA-College Park, see entries for: Friday, November 28, 1831; Monday, January 30, 1832; Saturday, April 14, 1832; and Monday, April 30, 1832.

these tide locks, but they were probably 100' long and 15' wide with wood gates, as was standard on the C&O Canal.[16] [See Appendix, Figures 5 and 6.]

By the mid-nineteenth century, it was apparent that the Washington City Canal was never going to be lucrative and in fact had become a detriment to the city. The Smithsonian Board of Regents decried the canal's conditions. The stagnant water contained sewage from water closets, kitchens, laundries, stables, and street gutters, and the lack of a continuous current to move the waste out of the canal and into the Potomac River or Eastern Branch meant the materials simply filled in the channel, creating an "extended cesspool." The Board of Regents described the "putrescence of the organic liquids and deposits in the open sewers and bottoms and beds of streams in all weathers, and the evolution of noxious gases therefrom," which caused "contamination of the surrounding atmosphere, and consequently decreases the purity and healthfulness of the air, and the discharge of sewer matter into the streams and small rivers pollutes the water by the mixture of much organic matter into a state of active putrescence."[17] As a result, the canal was viewed as a harbinger of disease.

On March 3, 1849, Congress appropriated $20,000 to deepen and clear the channel, while a subsequent $20,000 appropriation was designated for "completing, cleaning out, and repairing that portion of the Washington City Canal which passes through and along the public grounds" accompanied by a stipulation that the city spend an equal amount on the other part of the canal. Despite these measures, by 1866, the canal had essentially simply become an open sewer into which cows reportedly often fell. On March 7, 1866, therefore, the U.S. Senate requested a report detailing necessary improvements. The U.S. Army Engineers complied, estimating that $75,000 would be needed to make temporary improvements.[18]

Meanwhile, Richard Wallach (mayor of Washington, DC) had directed Cluss & Kammerhueber, Civil Engineers, to prepare a report on the Washington City Canal in 1865.[19] Their "Report on the Present State and Improvement of the Washington City Canal" noted the unusual flow of water in the canal, identifying three periods:

> in the first, that is, before the flood tide sets in, the water flows from west towards southeast, obedient to regular hydraulic laws. In the second, that is, just after the tide has commenced to rise, the water flows from the west towards southeast and from south towards northwest, simultaneously towards the center, and in the third,

---

[16] Heine, 23; Williams, 12; William H. Swift and Nathan Hale, "Report on the Present State of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal" (printed by Dutton and Wentworth, Boston, 1846).
[17] Senate, "Report of the Executive Committee," 4.
[18] Heine, 20, 23-24; quote from *Federal and local legislation*, 13; Benjamin Severson, "A Plan and Bill for Straightening and Otherwise Improving the Washington Canal—Reasons Why the Improvement Has Not Been Made—Why Congress Ought to Insist Upon Its Speedy Execution—Improvement of the Potomac," in *Index to the Miscellaneous Documents of the Senate of the United States for the Second Session of the Forty-First Congress, 1869-1870* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1870), 24; Senate, "Report of the Executive Committee," 2-3.
[19] Adolf Cluss was a German immigrant and significant DC architect who established a firm with Joseph Wilderich von Kammerhueber in 1862. Cluss later served as the chief of the city's Bureau of Buildings in 1869 and chief engineer of the city's Board of Public Works in 1872.

> the current is from south towards northwest for the whole length of the Canal, when it will commence again an opposite course, after this period has elapsed.[20]

They attributed the sediment deposits, consisting of mud, pebbles, gravel, sand, "offal of kitchens," and "soil and filth from water closets," to the tidal action, the irregular course and width of the canal, and the "small declivity." To improve navigation, Cluss & Kammerhueber recommended dredging or excavating the sedimentation so the canal bottom was at least 4' below the low water mark, reducing the canal width to 75' along its entire route, and having sewers empty into the Potomac River rather than the canal.[21]

There were other solutions to the canal problem. An 1868 proposal by the Smithsonian Board of Regents called for building sewers on aqueducts or causeways across the canal that would then discharge into the Potomac River. The Washington City Canal would then be modified into an arched culvert to carry excess water from the Tiber Creek during high water periods. An engineer named Benjamin Severson scoffed at the Smithsonian proposal, as it would necessitate raising Pennsylvania Avenue from Twelfth Street to the U.S. Capitol by at least 4-$^{1}/_{2}$'. Instead, Severson contended that the canal's healthfulness could be restored by dredging and ensuring the passage of running water through the cut to prevent deposits of silt and debris. He suggested building a dam at Georgetown to create a reservoir of water that could be released into the canal to create the necessary steady flow of water.[22] Severson endorsed a February 5, 1869, bill presented to the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds that proposed straightening the canal to Maryland Avenue and reducing its width to 70'. To overcome the tidal action and keep water flowing in one direction, the plan called for

> inclosing, by means of a dike and tide-gates, a basin of some thirty or forty acres at the western end of the canal, and letting that be filled with tide-water to the height the tides rise, which is usually about three feet, the gates closing as the tides begin to fall, the eastern end of the canal remaining open, the inclosed water, averaging some five million cubic feet to each tide, would pass through the canal and out its open end as often as the tides occur…and carry with it all the offensive matter flowing in from the sewers; and that by adding the waste water of Rock Creek, the volume would be so increased, and its eastward flow so prolonged, as wholly to prevent the rising tides entering at the eastern open end.[23]

---

[20] "Report and Documents," 8.
[21] "Report and Documents," 9-15, 30.
[22] Senate, "Report of the Executive Committee," 7; "Memorial of Benjamin Severson, engineer, in behalf of property-holders of the city of Washington, in answer to the report on behalf of the executive committee of the Smithsonian Institution, ordered to be printed by the Senate on the 16th of June, 1868," Washington, June 30, 1868, 16-19, and Benjamin Severson, "A Plan and Bill for Straightening and Otherwise Improving the Washington Canal—Reasons Why the Improvement Has Not Been Made—Why Congress Ought to Insist Upon Its Speedy Execution—Improvement of the Potomac," 20-23, both in *Index to the Miscellaneous Documents of the Senate of the United States for the Second Session of the Forty-First Congress, 1869-1870* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1870).
[23] Severson, "A Plan and Bill," 23-24.

According to Severson, by using and directing the force of tides through channels, the navigation depth could be maintained and the problems of pollution removed. He blamed the city's mayor for not expending the necessary funds and efforts to maintain the canal and disagreed with complaints that the canal was full of fecal matter, instead describing the materials as coarse debris, gravel, sand, and earth.[24]

A final effort to improve the canal occurred in 1870 when the civil appropriation bill directed an appointed commission to determine and execute the best course of action: dredging, dredging and narrowing, or converting the canal into an arched sewer. The bill included a $50,000 appropriation and permission for the city to collect taxes to defray the costs of improvement. However, in 1872, Alexander Robey Shepherd, then Director of Public Works, received a $68,365 appropriation to fill in the canal from Seventh to Seventeenth streets and construct an intersecting sewer. The problematic canal was filled in and B Street North (now Constitution Avenue) was built on top of it. The Lockkeeper's House was abandoned but remained in place. The southern portion of the canal remained open longer, until it too was filled in after 1880.[25]

Tide Lock and Lockkeeper's House

Thomas Carbery, authorized under an August 1836 resolution, obtained the land for the Lockkeeper's House at Tide Lock B. The Chesapeake & Ohio Company board approved construction of a lock house "of the usual dimensions." The building was completed on October 25, 1837, and John Hilton was appointed as the first lockkeeper at an annual salary of $50. The lockkeeper was responsible for operating the lock as necessary and collecting tolls.[26]

After the canal was abandoned, the Lockkeeper's House was supposed to be vacant, but there are reports of the eviction of an African-American family from the house when the title was transferred to the Army of Corps of Engineers. There is little information about the use of the house in the twentieth century aside from brief mentions in government publications.

By 1903, the Army Corps of Engineers owned the house and was using it as a watchman's lodge and tool house. With the establishment of West Potomac Park in the early twentieth century, the Lockkeeper's House became part of the park. Prior to the widening of Seventeenth Street, the house was moved back from the intersection of Seventeenth Street and Constitution Avenue in 1915-16 and subsequently renovated to serve as a comfort station, bicycle room, and locker room for park watchmen. Since the late nineteenth century, park watchmen had been employed in Washington, DC, city parks. An 1882 act of Congress expanded their authority, putting them on par with city police. By 1915, there was a first sergeant, second sergeant, and forty privates working as park watchmen in city parks. On December 4, 1919, Congress changed their title to U.S. Park Police. The Lockkeeper's House later served as the headquarters for the Park Police and contained a temporary holding cell.[27]

---

[24] Severson, "A Plan and Bill," 23-24, quote from 32.
[25] Heine, 26; *Federal and local legislation*, 16, 17; Letter from S. T. Thomas, 4; Fanning, 21.
[26] *Journal of Proceedings of the President and Director of the Chesapeake and Ohio Company from the Commencement of the Year 1837 to the end of the Year 1838*, Wednesday, June 7, 1837, and Wednesday, October 25, 1837, in RG79, NARA-College Park.
[27] *Annual Reports*, 1903, 2554; *Annual Reports*, 1916, 3594; *Annual Reports*, 1917, 1891; Fanning, 36; Chappell, 174.

The house served as the model for installation of dormers at other lockkeeper's houses on the C&O Canal. In summer 1939, Thomas Vint, Chief of Planning of Branch of Plans and Design for the National Park Service noted that the dormers "have furnished the pattern for the dormers it has been necessary to add to other lockhouses in order to give light and ventilation to rooms under the roofs."[28]

West Potomac Park

The Lockkeeper's House was incorporated into West Potomac Park in the early twentieth century, standing as the only visible remnant of the canal that once ran through the nation's capital. The surrounding landscape changed dramatically in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries due to the filling in of the Washington City Canal, continued dredging of the Potomac River, and reclamation of the marshy Potomac Flats.

The particular geography of the Potomac River in the vicinity of Washington, DC, led to an 1872 plan by the Army Corps' Board of Survey to maintain a navigable clearance in the river and reclaim the marshy and muddy Potomac Flats around the future Washington Memorial site. As the Potomac River entered Washington, DC, it widened into a tidal stream with a 5,000' width and a soft bottom, while above what is now Theodore Roosevelt Island, it was a narrow channel measuring no more than 900' wide and 85' deep with a rock/gravel bottom. This created difficulties in maintaining navigation on the river. The material from the Potomac River dredging activities along with soil from various building excavation projects formed East and West Potomac Parks, which had been authorized in Senate Bill 3,308, passed on March 3, 1897. The reclamation and dredging efforts resulted in the creation of 621 acres of land and 118 acres of tidal reservoir. The final land acquisition for West Potomac Park occurred in August 1909. By 1911, the land reclamation for East Potomac Park had been completed. Both parks were then transferred to the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds.[29]

The first appropriation for the development of West Potomac Park was made in 1902, followed by yearly appropriations for grading; planting lawns, trees, and shrubs; building bridle paths and roads (the bridle paths were removed in the 1950s); among other necessary activities. Throughout the twentieth century, the Lockkeeper's House served at various times as a comfort station, storage facility, holding cell, and employee facility within West Potomac Park.[30]

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Lockkeeper's House is a surviving example of the standard plans developed by the C&O Canal for the lockkeeper's houses built along the

[28] Unrau, 27.
[29] Chappell, 1, 66, 93-94; Fanning, 30. For a thorough discussion of the massive reclamation undertaking that resulted in West and East Potomac Parks, see Chappell.
[30] Fanning, 23; Chappell, 123, 135; *Annual Reports*, 1917, 1891.

canal.

2. Condition of fabric: Both the exterior and interior of the building are in poor condition due to the extended period of vacancy.

B. Description of Exterior:[31]

1. Overall dimensions: The rectangular, one-and-a-half story building is 30' x 18' and stands nearly 22' tall from ground to the roof ridge. The first floor is 7'-10 $^1/_2$" tall (from floor to ceiling) while the second is 7'-11 $^1/_2$" (also from floor to ceiling).

2. Foundations: The building sits on a concrete and stone foundation. The foundation dates to 1915-16, when the building was moved to its current location. Test pits dug as part of the investigation for the 2011 Historic Structure Report by Quinn Evans Architects revealed what appeared to be lintels below ground. Based on these excavations and the typical siting of similar houses on the C&O Canal, Quinn Evans Architects concluded the building was originally banked into the canal bed and stood two-and-a-half stories on the side facing away from the canal and one-and-a-half facing the canal. When the house was relocated in 1916, a new concrete foundation and concrete floor slab were poured.

3. Walls: The exterior stone walls are 22" thick, with the exterior faces of ashlar stone. The north façade has coursed ashlar while the other three facades are random ashlar. The Historic Structure Report states that the walls are built of 90 percent gneiss and 10 percent sandstone. There is a mixture of mortar types, resulting from repairs and the 1916 move of the building. This includes the 1916-era large aggregate in sand mortar; mortar of various colors with raised profile joints; and a fine white mortar.

4. Chimneys: The chimneys, located on the east and west ends of the building, were originally brick. The brick flues can still be seen within the walls, but the portions above the roofline were replaced with random ashlar stone with raised mortar joints in 1916. The stone matches that used in the walls.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: There is a door centered on both the north and south facades. The one on the north façade is reached by two concrete steps flanked by metal pipe railings. The door is recessed into the wall with a wood surround, stone lintel, and granite sill. The six-panel wood door has a metal kickplate and a simple metal doorknob. The south door, probably added in 1917 as evidenced by a drawing of a door from that date, is reached by one stone step. It too is recessed into the wall, with a wood surround, narrow stone lintel, and granite sill. The six-panel wood door also has a simple metal doorknob.

[31] Description of current conditions based on site visits made in September 2015 and the Historic Structure Report.

b. Windows: Windows flank the doorways on both the north and south facades. These are double-hung, six-over-six-light wood windows with wood casings and stone sills and lintels. The east window on the south façade and the west window on the north façade have metal security bars covering them. The east window on the north façade has been boarded up. The east and west facades are devoid of window and door openings.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The gable roof is clad in wood shingles and was rehabilitated in 2004. There are painted metal fascia and bargeboards, although the south one on the east façade is missing.

b. Dormers: The north and south facades each have two gable dormers that were replaced as part of the 1916 building move. The dormers are clad in shingles with wood gable ends. They contain nine-light, wood windows with wood casings and stone sills. The southeast dormer window is a casement, but the rest are double-hung, six-over-three.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The first floor is divided by partitions into rooms; the two rooms on the east end and center of the building as well as the stairway are only accessible from the north entrance door. The room on the west end of the building is only accessible from the south entrance door.

The north entrance door opens to a small vestibule that is 3'-6" wide. A hallway to the east leads to two toilet rooms, with a wash sink located in the northeast corner. These toilet rooms were each equipped with a toilet and a sink. Directly across from the entrance door is an L-shaped room with a pass-through window that provides the only communication with the west room. Due to the presence of security bars on the interior and exterior of the northeast window, this portion of the first floor probably served as the holding cell when the building was used by the U.S. Park Police. A quarter-turn stairway running along the interior of the north wall provides access to the second floor. This stairway covers the northwest window and is not in the original location.

The south entrance door opens to a vestibule and L-shaped room on the west end of the building. This room has remnants of toilet facilities, which were probably public restrooms.

The stairwell opens at the northwest corner of the second floor; the door to the second floor is at a forty-five-degree angle. There are closets located at the northeast, northwest, and southwest corners of the second floor, but the floor is otherwise open.[32]

[32] See "Lockkeeper's House," HABS DC-36, sheets 2 and 3 for detailed floor plans and dimensions.

2. Stairways: Located at the northwest corner of the first floor is a quarter-turn wood stairway that is not original due to its location covering the northwest window.

3. Flooring: The first floor has a concrete slab floor. The second floor has asbestos floor tile laid on 3 x 9 joists.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The first floor east toilet room walls are painted plaster on wood lath. The west toilet rooms, hall, and vestibule also have painted plaster on wood lath walls. The center room has beadboard wainscot on the lower half of the walls while the upper half is painted plaster on wood lath. Some of the walls also have peg boards on the upper portions. The first-floor ceilings are plaster.

The stairwell is clad in beadboard wainscot.

The second floor walls are covered in wood paneling. The ceiling and stairwell are framed and clad in sheets of wood.

5. Openings:

> **a. Doorways and doors:** The entrance doors are both painted, six-panel wood doors in wood casings with granite sills. Interior doors are primarily painted wood panel doors, except for the west toilet rooms, which have painted metal doors. The door from the vestibule to the west toilet rooms is a painted six-panel wood door. The door to the second floor is a painted, five-panel wood door. The closet doors on the second floor are painted four-panel wood doors.
>
> **b. Windows:** The second and first floor windows are on the north and south facades. They have wide wood sills and simple wood framing.

6. Decorative features and trim: Mounted on the exterior east side of the north entrance door is a bronze plaque installed in 1928 by Frederick D. Owen, a retired architect and engineer who advocated for DC parks. The plaque reads:

Lock Keeper's House
Formerly the Eastern Terminus of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal
Erected August 1837
The canal passed along the
Present line of a street in front of this house emptying into
Tiber Creek and the Potomac River

The first floor windows and doorway openings are trimmed in wood molding on the interior. There are no baseboards on the first floor, but the second floor has a simple baseboard with quarter-round trim.

7. Hardware: The extant door knobs consist of metal knobs, door plates, and locks. Additional padlocks have been added to the exterior doors.

8. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating, air conditioning: The original brick chimneys are hidden behind the walls. There is no other source of heating or air conditioning.

b. Lighting: Electricity was installed in the building at an unknown date. Two fluorescent light fixtures are mounted on the second floor ceiling. There are also fluorescent light fixtures on the first floor hallway ceiling by the north entrance and the toilet rooms.

c. Plumbing: Plumbing was installed for the toilet rooms on the first floor. The hallway has a square wash sink at the end. Toilets remain in the stalls of the east toilet room, and there is a sink in the western stall. The west toilet room has a porcelain sink on one leg at the southwest corner. There are two waste pipes showing the location of the toilets in this room. Copper piping and a ventilation duct in the wall are also visible.

D. Site:

1. Historic landscape design: That portion of West Potomac Park around the Lockkeeper's House initially included American elms, planted in 1907 along Seventeenth Street and other trees on B Street North (now Constitution Avenue). After the move of the building in 1916, an extensive planting plan was developed. While a paved area with mounting blocks was located west of the house, small shrubs and trees were planted adjacent to the building's other facades, including various junipers and eastern hemlocks. The curving walkway to the east of the house was lined with shrubs. The Constitution Garden *Cultural Landscape Inventory* notes that "in all, forty-one shrubs and small trees were transplanted near the house, 505 new trees and shrubs were planted, and a new concrete walk and a new bridle path were built." By 1985, the west, south, and east sides of the building were planted with Delaware Valley white azalea and Japanese aucuba. The north façade featured annual beds.[33]

As of spring 2016, one mounting block left from when bridle paths traversed the park remains nearby, but the rest of the plantings had been removed as part of the preparation of the Historic Structure Report. The current landscape includes *Ulmus Americana* (American elms) lining Constitution Avenue and Seventeenth Street. The lawn area to the south of the Lockkeeper's House includes *Cornus floridus* (flowering dogwood), *Juglans nigra* (black walnut), *Amelanchier* sp. (serviceberry), *Quercus bicolor* (swamp white oak), *Quercus phellos* (willow oak), and *Acer maple* (red maple).

[33] Fanning, 36; "Lock Keepers House, Existing Conditions," U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Capital Region, Office of Design Services, December 1985, Drawing No. 301, Sheet 1 of 1.

An additional nearby feature of note is the flood-control levee. On June 22, 1930, Congress passed the Flood Control Act that stipulated the National Park Service was responsible for maintaining the height of a levee in West Potomac Park. On March 19, 1936, major flooding of the Potomac River resulted in construction of a temporary levee, running "parallel to the Reflecting Pool, north of the double row of elms and south of the Navy and Munitions Buildings, extending from the Lincoln Memorial east to 17th Street, with a gap at 23rd Street, where the design required placement of temporary earth fill barriers." This was rebuilt in 1939 as a permanent concrete and earth structure and modified again in the 1940s. In 1974, during the construction of Constitution Gardens, the levee was reconstructed as an earthen berm and incorporated into the design of the park. To provide more reliable flood protection to a portion of the monumental core and downtown Washington, D.C. and to meet U.S. Army Corps of Engineers standards, between 2011 and 2014 the flood protection system at the east end of the levee was replaced with a movable post and panel closure system in conjunction with flanking permanent masonry berms.[34]

2. Outbuildings: There are no outbuildings associated with the lockkeeper's house.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural drawings:
Lock Keeper's House, HABS DC-36, Sheets.

B. Early Views:
General photograph collection, Peter Christie photograph collection, Rambler photograph collection, Zack Spratt photograph collection, Historical Society of Washington, DC. See especially photographs with call numbers: CHR 53, CHS 02708, CHS 05309, CHS 14192, CHS 14193, CHS 14194, RA 0353, ZSI 018A, ZSI 018B, ZSI 018C, ZSI 018D, and ZSI 018E.

C. Selected Sources:
40th Congress, 2d session, Misc. Doc. No. 95, Senate. "Report of the Executive Committee on a Resolution of the Regents of the Smithsonian Institution on the Influences of the Washington City Canal on the Health of the Population of the City, May 15, 1868," June 6, 1868. In *Index to the Miscellaneous Documents of the Senate of the United States for the Second Session Fortieth Congress, 1867-1868*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1868.

Chappell, Gordon. *Historic Resource Study East and West Potomac Parks: A History*. Denver: Denver Service Center, Historic Preservation Team, National Park Service, June 1973.

[34] Fanning, 2, 38; Superintendent's Narrative Report, January 1938, in Central Classified File 1933-49, National Capital Parks, 207.03-207.024 Folder, Box 2812, in RG79, NARA-College Park; "National Mall Historic District," Draft, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2016.

Fanning, Kay. "Constitution Gardens, National Mall and Memorial Parks-West Potomac Park, Cultural Landscapes Inventory." National Park Service, 2008.

Federal and local legislation relating to canals and steam railroads in the District of Columbia, 1802-1803. Compiled by Charles Moore, clerk of the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1903.

Heine, Cornelius W. "The Washington City Canal." In *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, D.C.*, Volume 53/56. Washington, DC: Historical Society of Washington, D.C., 1953/1956, 1-27.

Index to the Miscellaneous Documents of the Senate of the United States for the Second Session of the Forty-First Congress, 1869-70. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1870.

Law, Thomas. "Observations on the Intended Canal in Washington City." Reprinted in *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, D.C.*, Volume 8. Washington, DC: Historical Society of Washington, DC, 1905, 158-168.

Letter from S. T. Thomas, December 1, 1893, Exhibit C, in "Mr. Martin, from the Committee on the District of Columbia, submitted the following report to accompany S-2189, January 19, 1895, in 53rd Congress, 3rd session, Senate, Report No. 791.

"Lock Keepers House, Existing Conditions." U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Capital Region, Office of Design Services, December 1985. Drawing No. 301, Sheet 1 of 1.

"National Mall Historic District." Draft. National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Services, 2016

Quinn Evans Architects. "Canal Lockkeeper's House, Washington, DC." Historic Structure Report, August 2011.

"Report and Documents on the Present State, and the Improvement of the Washington City Canal." Washington: R. A. Waters, Printer, 1865.

Report of the Chief of Engineers, Part 4, in *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1903*, Vol. XII. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1903.

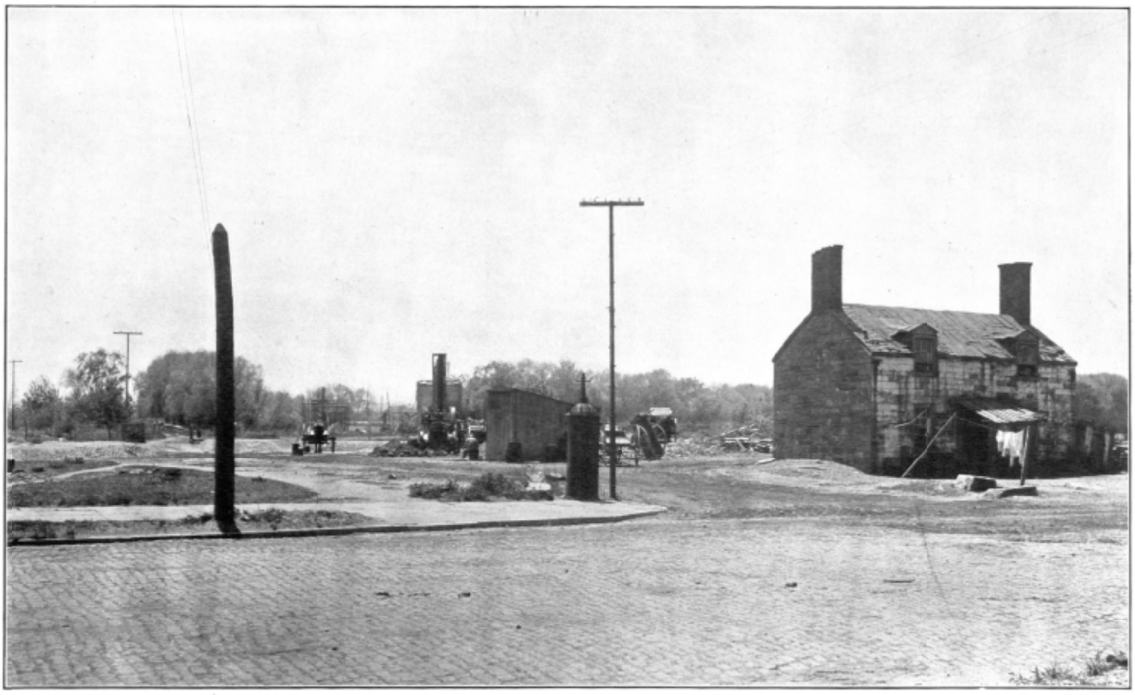
Report of the Chief of Engineers U.S. Army, Part 3, in *Annual Reports of War Department, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1916*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1916.

Report of the Chief of Engineers, Part 1, in *Annual Reports of War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1917*, Vol. II. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1918.

Swift, William H. and Nathan Hale. "Report on the Present State of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. Printed by Dutton and Wentworth, Boston, 1846.

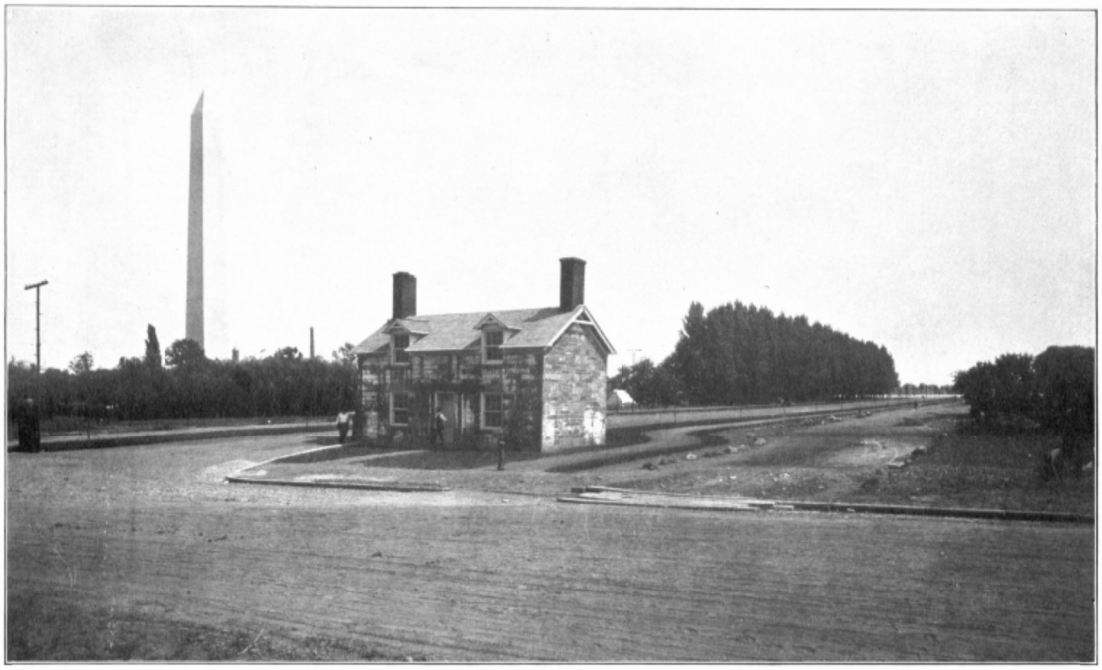
E. Supplemental Material: See Appendix: Historic Images and Maps

Appendix: Historic Images and Maps



MAIN ENTRANCE TO POTOMAC PARK, SEVENTEENTH AND B STREETS NW. (BEFORE IMPROVEMENTS), WITH OLD CANAL LOCK HOUSE IN FOREGROUND, LOOKING SOUTHWEST. MAY, 1902.
(Lock house built in 1837.)

Figure 1: Caption reads: "Main Entrance to Potomac Park, Seventeenth and B Streets N.W. (Before Improvements) with Old Canal Lock House in Foreground, Looking Southwest, May 1902. (Lock house built in 1837.)," from *Report of the Chief of Engineers*, Part 4, in *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1903*, Vol. XII. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1903.



VIEW OF OLD CANAL LOCK HOUSE AND ENTRANCE TO POTOMAC PARK AT SEVENTEENTH AND B STREETS NW., LOOKING SOUTHEAST (AFTER IMPROVEMENTS).
(Lock house built in 1837.)

Figure 2: Caption reads: "View of Old Canal Lock House and Entrance to Potomac Park at Seventeenth and B Streets NW, Looking Southeast (After Improvements). (Lock house built in 1837.)," from *Report of the Chief of Engineers*, Part 4, in *Annual Reports of the War Department for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1903*, Vol. XII. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1903.

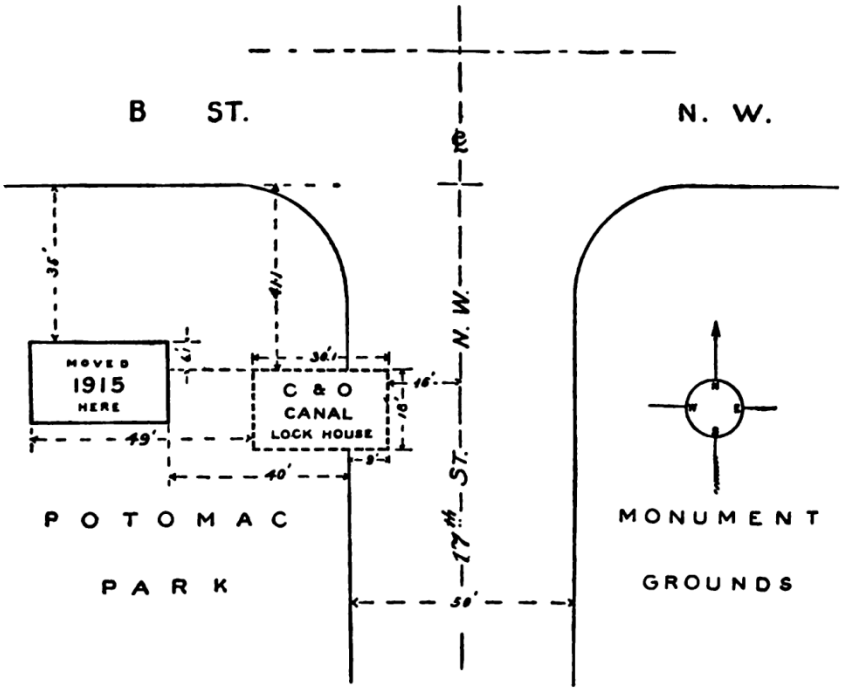


Figure 3: Map showing moving of structure in 1915. From *Report of the Chief of Engineers U.S. Army*, Part 3, in *Annual Reports of War Department, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1916* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1916), 3595.

Figure 4: Dashed white line represents route of Washington City Canal. William S. Elliot, "Plan of the City of Washington, Seat of Government of the United States," Printed by G. H. Throop,1829, available at Library of Congress, Washington, DC, and online at https://www.loc.gov/item/88694087/.

Figure 5: Dashed line represents the extension from the C&O Canal to the Washington City Canal. A. Boschke, "Map of Washington City, District of Columbia, Respectfully dedicated to the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States of North America," 1857. Available at the Library of Congress, Washington, DC, and online at https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3850.ct002292/.

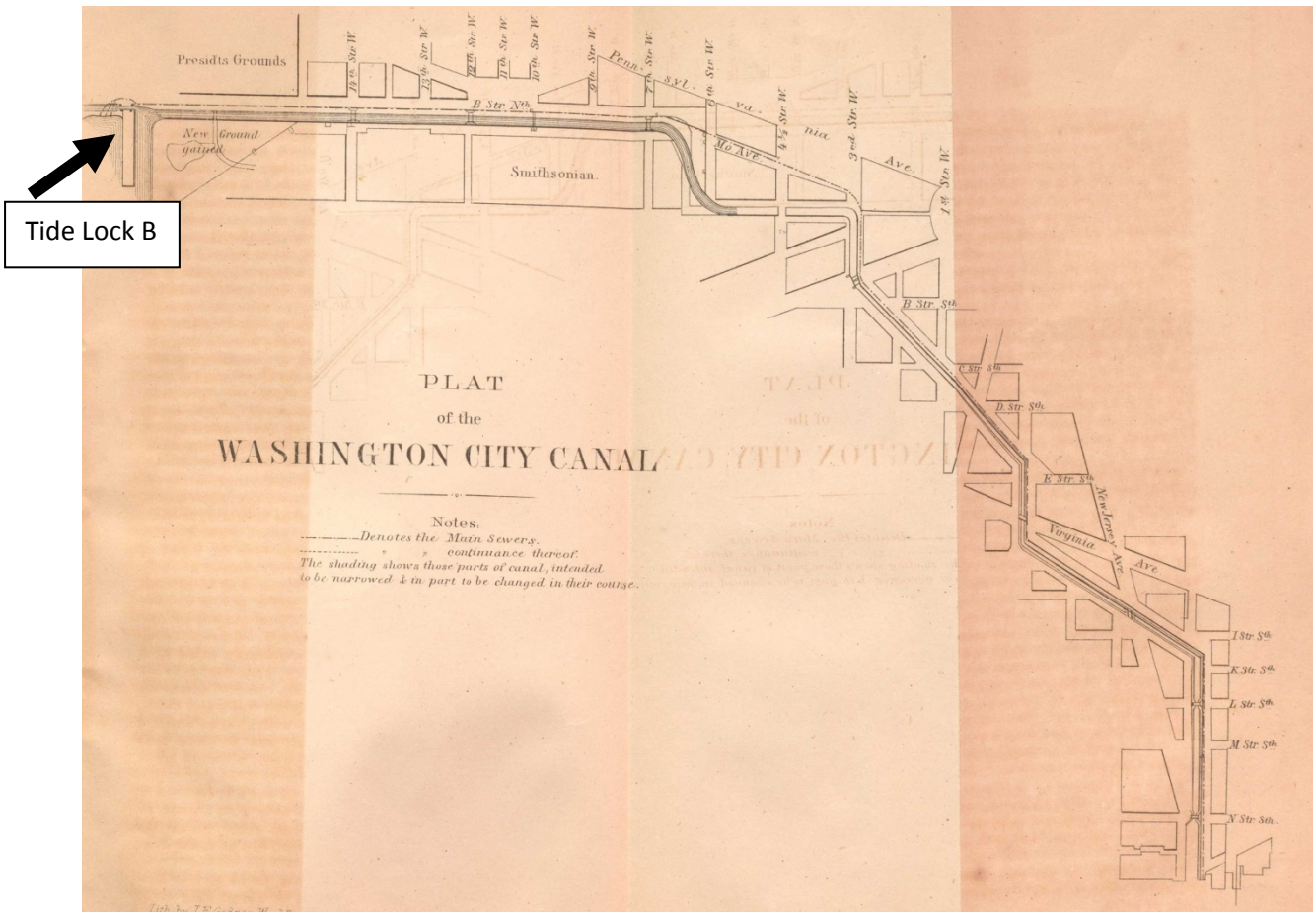


Figure 6: Plat of Washington City Canal, from "Report and Documents on the Present State, and the Improvement of the Washington City Canal" (Washington: R.A. Waters, Printer, 1865).