

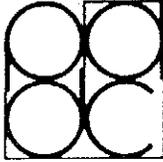
Square 491
Sixth, C Streets, Pennsylvania Avenue, and Marshall Place
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-619

HABS
DC,
WASH,
329-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127



**PENNSYLVANIA
AVENUE
DEVELOPMENT
CORPORATION**
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PRESERVATION & CONSERVATION CONSULTANT
MONK DUNSTONE ASSOCIATES
COST ESTIMATING CONSULTANT

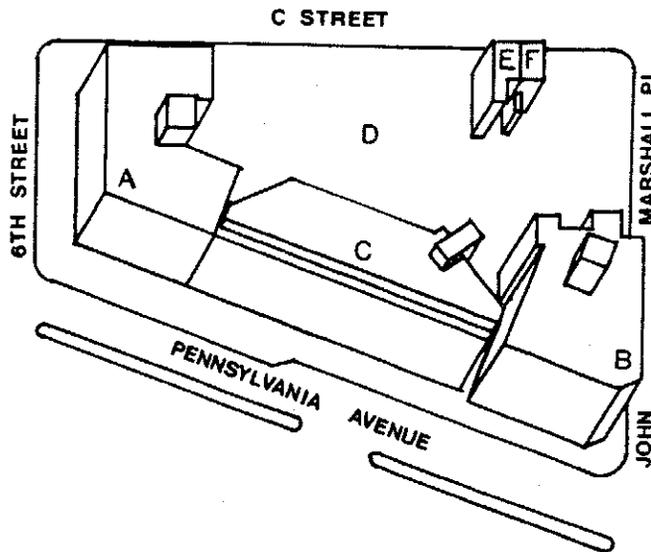
HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

**BUILDING DOCUMENTATION
CODE IDENTIFICATION MAP
SQUARE 491**

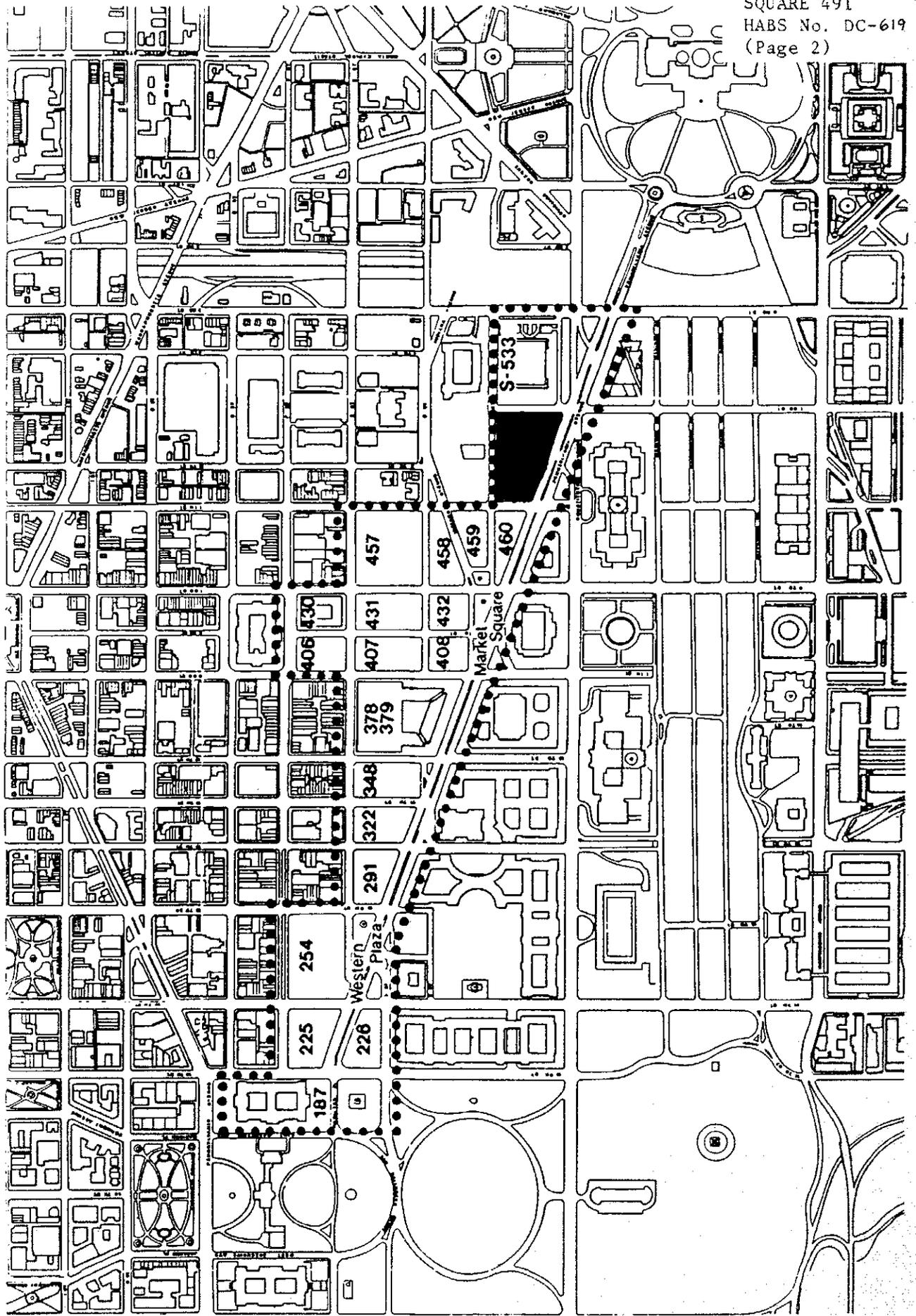
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For documentation of individual buildings within Square 491, see:

- A DC Employment Security Building
- B Ford Motor Company Building.....HABS No. DC-375
- C Old DC Central Public Library.....HABS No. DC-372
- D Parking Lot
- E 458 C Street, NW (Residence).....HABS No. DC-374
- F General John A. Dix House.....HABS No. DC-373



Square Identification Plan



DESCRIPTION

On the extreme eastern side of the Pennsylvania Avenue Historic District lies Square 491, its rectangular plan truncated on the south by the 22° north-of-west oriented Pennsylvania Avenue. The square is bound on the north by C Street and on the east and west by John Marshall Place and 6th Street, respectively.

The Pennsylvania Avenue (south) side of the square is entirely occupied by three large-scale structures: The Ford Motor Company Building, the old DC Public Library, and the DC Employment Security Building. The first of these, at the corner of John Marshall Place is a classical Renaissance building six stories high. The Library and DC Employment buildings are 20th century buildings and are characterized by a strong neoclassically-derived formalism that dominates their facade organization.

The north side of the square contains two mid-Nineteenth Century residential rowhouses amid vacant areas used as parking lots.

Along Pennsylvania Avenue, the block's facade line occurs along two parallel planes. The first is defined by the Ford Motor Company Building, which stands at the sidewalk line. The second plane of facades, made up of the DC Central Library and the DC Employment Building, is set back from the sidewalk line.

The central location of Square 491 and its proximity to the Capitol account for its early development. Originally, the square was divided into twenty-four narrow lots. This layout was maintained at least through the 1870's, as is evidenced by the 1872 Bastert plat map. The lots were all serviced from the rear by an internal east-west alley that had midblock access on both C Street and Pennsylvania Avenue.

The small scale that typifies this period has now disappeared entirely, except for two small rowhouses on C Street, which share what was originally designated as Lot 19. Representative of these early times, these three-story houses feature gabled roofs, and simple facades on a common plane that is slightly recessed from the sidewalk line.

DEVELOPMENT OF SQUARE 491

As the small parcels began to merge into larger lots in order to permit buildings much larger than originally planned for, the break-up of this cohesive configuration began. The first two of these occurrences appear on the 1887 Hopkins Plat. At the west end of the square, Lots 8 through 13 became the site for the then grandiose National Hotel.

On the square's northeast corner, Lots 20 and 21 were integrated to accommodate the Gothic Revival structure of the Metropolitan Methodist-Episcopalian Church. This building's tall spire was for many years a landmark in Washington's skyline.

There was physical stability during the following years. The 1903 Baist Map shows no changes. However, another hotel, the Reuters, had moved into an existing structure at the corner of John Marshall Place and Pennsylvania Avenue. Also apparent from the map is a massive shift along the square's north side from a basically residential use to a commercial one in the form of two large bakery establishments.

In 1917, the Reuters Hotel and several adjacent structures were demolished to make way for the six-story structure of the Ford Motor Company Building, designed by Albert Kahn. Together with the National Hotel at the other end of the block, the Ford Motor Company Building established the predominance of a new, considerably larger scale for the Pennsylvania Avenue facade line.

In 1939, the first demolition without subsequent construction took place, thus marking the start of a trend that continues to characterize Square 491. The four townhouses located on Lots 6 and 7, adjacent to the National Hotel on Pennsylvania Avenue were the first buildings to disappear. Across the alley to the east, a hotel was operating on Lot 5.

The two empty lots, the hotel site, and Lots 2, 3, and 4 were merged in 1941 to become the site for a single building to be used by the DC Public Library. This structure bridges the stepping down in scale that had existed since 1917 between the Ford Motor Company Building and the National Hotel. However, just after the Second World War, the cohesiveness is once again lost by the demolition of the National Hotel, and its site was left vacant for nearly twenty years. The 1949 Baist map shows further demolitions taking place, this time on John Marshall Place, between the Ford Motor Company Building and the Metropolitan Church. The trend grew during the 1950's, when the bakery buildings and the Metropolitan Church also fell to the wrecker's ball. By 1957 most of Square 491 was barren. Only the Ford Motor Company Building and the DC Public Library remained on Pennsylvania Avenue. On C Street, the two 1850's rowhouses stood isolated, a vestige from a distant past.

In the early sixties, on the site of the former National Hotel, the DC Employment Security Building was erected, an undistinguished modern design that fills the gap on the Pennsylvania facade line.

No further constructions or demolitions have taken place since that time. At present, the open lots are used by the DC Moor Pool as vehicular parking. The Ford Motor Company Building and the two 1850's rowhouses will be vacated to make room for the chancery of the Canadian Embassy.

August 1979



NORTHWEST CORNER OF SQUARE 491 WITH VIEW OF C STREET
LOOKING EAST.



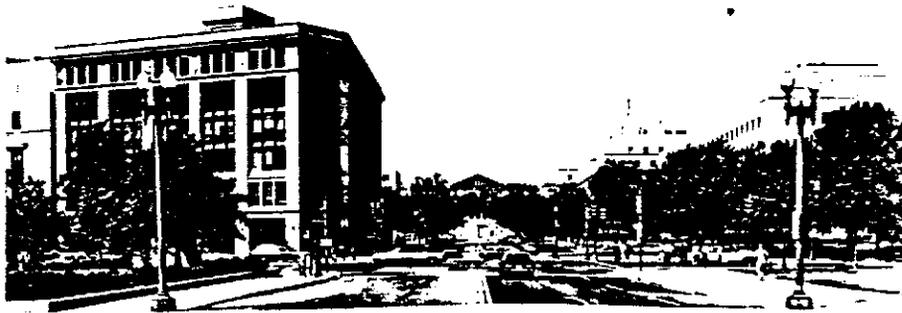
NORTHWEST CORNER OF SQUARE 491 WITH VIEW OF SIXTH STREET
LOOKING SOUTH. THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART LIES AT THE
TERMINATION OF THE AXIS.



NORTHEAST CORNER OF SQUARE 491 WITH VIEW OF C STREET
LOOKING WEST



NORTHEAST CORNER OF SQUARE 491 WITH VIEW OF JOHN MARSHALL
PLACE LOOKING SOUTH.



SOUTHEAST CORNER OF SQUARE 491 WITH VIEW OF JOHN MARSHALL PLACE LOOKING NORTH. THE JUDICIARY SQUARE COMPLEX AND THE PENSION BUILDING LIE AT THE TERMINATION OF THE AXIS

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF PUBLIC DOCUMENTS

SQUARE 491
HABS No. DC-619
(Page 8)

1792	(October 5) Washington first platted
1813	First TAX ASSESSMENT record
1819	Tax Assessment
1822	First CITY DIRECTORY
1824	Tax Assessment
1829	Tax Assessment
1834	City Directory
1839	Tax Assessment
1840	Tax Assessment
1843	City Directory
1844	Tax Assessment
1846	City Directory
1850	City Directory
1853	City Directory
1855	City Directory - first time house numbers were used as part of addresses
1858	First MAP of DC - Baschke
1858	City Directory
1859	Tax Assessment
1862	City Directory - Directories published annually hereafter
1864	Tax Assessment
1869-1871	Tax Assessment
1870	New street numbering system instituted; many early addresses in PADC site changed
1872	Plat Map (Bastert)
1878	First recorded building permit
1878-1879	Tax Assessment
1883-1884	Tax Assessment
1887	Plat Map (Hopkins)
1892	Plat Map (Hopkins)
1893-1894	Tax Assessment
1899-1900	Tax Assessment
1903	Plat Map (Baist)
1919	Plat Map (Baist)
1920	Plat Map (Baist)
1923	Plat Map (Baist)
1924	Plat Map (Baist)
1939	Plat Map (Baist)
1948	Plat Map (Baist)
1957	Plat Map (Baist)

SOURCES

Baist Real Estate Atlas
Bastert and Enthoffer Plat Maps
Boyd's City Directories
District of Columbia Building Permits
District of Columbia General Assessment Records
District of Columbia Recorder of Deeds
District of Columbia Surveyor's Office Records
District of Columbia Tax Records
Hopkins Real Estate Atlas
Polk's City Directories
Property Map for Downtown Urban Renewal Area for District of Columbia Redevelopment Land Agency
Sanborn Insurance Map