

MARION PARK  
(Reservation No. 18)  
Between Fourth and Sixth streets at  
intersection of E street and  
South Carolina Avenue, SE  
Washington  
District of Columbia

HABS NO. DC-679

HABS  
DC  
WASH,  
616-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MARION PARK  
(Reservation Number 18)

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Location: Between Fourth and Sixth streets at intersection of E Street and South Carolina Avenue, SE.

Owner/Manager: U.S. government, National Park Service.

Use: Sitting park, playground.

Significance: Included as open space on both L'Enfant's and Ellicott's plans of the city, this reservation has served continuously as a park since its first improvement in 1885. It is also located within the Capitol Hill Historic District.

PART I      HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A.      Physical History:

1.      Date of plan: 1791, L'Enfant Plan; 1792, Ellicott Plan.
2.      Original and subsequent owners: Within a tract of land known as Houp's Addition, owned by Jonathan Slater since 1764 and purchased by William Prout in 1791, the land for the park was acquired by the federal government for streets and avenues in 1791.<sup>1</sup>
3.      First improvement: In 1885 the reservation was graded and sown, and gravel paths were laid out.<sup>2</sup>
4.      Alterations and additions:
  - 1886:      Trees and shrubs planted, gas introduced, and eight lamps erected.
  - 1887:      Vase from Rawlins Square transferred to this reservation.
  - 1964:      Redesigned with geometric plan and playground on western side.

B.      Historical Context:

Upon intersecting with South Carolina Avenue, E Street changes latitude. At this interchange, L'Enfant left an open rectangle one block wide such that E Street approaches the rectangle from the west on axis with its northern border, and continues east after the park on axis with the southern border. Ellicott's map includes a similar configuration but the open space is enlarged and extends for two blocks.

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<sup>1</sup> McNeil, 43, 48.

<sup>2</sup> Annual Report . . ., 1885, 2507.

Because this reservation was located several blocks west of the U.S. Marine Barracks and approximately halfway between the Capitol and the Navy Yard, the surrounding neighborhood was moderately developed by the 1860s with modest row houses. Nevertheless, this open space remained unimproved.

While many parks in the northwest quadrant were elaborately landscaped following the Civil War. This rectangle was largely unimproved before 1885. Because it was merely an open space within a roadway, vehicles passed through it. In an 1872 survey of federal properties by the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, the open space was indicated as two unimproved triangles divided by the still unpaved carriageway of South Carolina Avenue. Later, in 1876, the intersection was shown as a rectangle measuring 110' x 550' and named "Long Square." Dotted lines on the plan indicate parallel walkways either actual or proposed. In this rendering, Fifth Street, rather than South Carolina Avenue, appears to bisect the park.<sup>3</sup>

When the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds (OPB&G) compiled its list of federal reservations in 1884, this space, designated as Reservation No. 18, measured 35,200 square feet and was bisected by Fifth Street. The OPB&G had begun improving the space.

Improvement continued in 1885 and by 1886 the reservation was highly improved and described as "quite ornamental to this section of the city, which private enterprise is rapidly improving."<sup>4</sup> It featured trees and shrubs, gravel paths and was illuminated by eight gas lamps. Sidewalks 8' wide and comprised of 266 square yards of brick bordered Fifth Street which was then just a gravel roadway bisecting the park.

In 1887, after the Grand Army of the Republic convinced the OPB&G to move a statue of Gen. John A. Rawlins from Rawlins Square--then in an undeveloped area of the northwest quadrant--to a better location, the two large vases were also relocated, one transferred to this park. The "large Hilton Iron Vase," was placed in the center of reservation No. 18, creating a small traffic circle on Fifth Street within the park. Throughout the 1880-90s, the vase was filled each summer with tropical and flowering plants propagated in government greenhouses. Also in 1887, the park was referred to as Marion Park for the first time, "in honor of the distinguished soldier Francis Marion nicknamed the Swamp Fox who hailed from South Carolina and served his country so gallantly in the war of the Revolution."<sup>5</sup> Appropriately, the park dedicated to a South Carolinian was located on the avenue named for the state.

The neighborhood developed simultaneously with these first improvements in the 1880s, and a majority of the structures built at that time still surround the park. In 1963, E Street was widened and a narrow strip on the north side of the park comprised of 4,368 square feet, was transferred to the District Commissioners. At the same time, the park was redesigned and Fifth Street was closed to traffic and incorporated in the landscape, and the vase was removed. The new plan, featuring straight paths and large grassy panels, differed greatly from the curved paths laid out in the 1880s. The new plan also included an enclosed

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<sup>3</sup> City Lots, 1876.

<sup>4</sup> Annual Report . . ., 1886, 2080.

<sup>5</sup> Annual Report . . ., 1887, 2576.

playground in the western third of the park.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. Overall dimensions: The long rectangular park measures approximately 550' x 120' and covers about 1.5 acres.
- B. Materials:
1. Pathways, paving: Two long paths running the length of the park from east to west intersect two shorter paths running north to south. These paths are brick laid in a Greek key pattern.
  2. Vegetation: The panels between the paths are sodded. A formal evergreen hedge spans the length of the park on the north side. Ornamental and shade trees are scattered throughout the park.
  3. Structures:
    - a. Fences: A low metal-picket fence surrounds the park and a similar taller fence divides the playground area on the west side from the rest of the park.
    - b. Benches: Metal-support wood-slat benches are placed along the paths facing into the park.
    - c. Markers: A wood bulletin board stands on the side of a path on the east side.
    - d. Fountains: Two drinking fountains in square aggregate-concrete bases are located in the northeast and southwest corners.
    - e. Lighting: Mushroom lamps are located along the paths.
- C. Site: The park is located in a primarily residential area featuring two- and three-story row houses, a police sub-station and a church. Traffic around the park consists of mostly local, low-speed traffic on two-lane, two-way streets.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Maps:
- Boschke, A. "Topographical Map of the District of Columbia surveyed in the years '57, '58, and '59."
- District of Columbia Board of Public Works. "Exhibit Chart of Improved Streets and Avenues." 1872.
- Ellicott, Andrew. "Plan of the City of Washington." 1792.
- L'Enfant, Pierre Charles. "Plan of the City of Washington." 1791.

Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. "Plan of the City of Washington, District of Columbia, showing the Public Reservations." Prepared by Orville E. Babcock. 1871.

Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. "Map of the City of Washington showing the Public Reservations Under Control of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds." 1884, 1887, and 1894.

- B. Park plans: See Supplemental Information below for a list of attached plans. Additional plans are located at the Office of Land Use, National Capital Region.

1964: Six sheets showing existing conditions and layout plan; plant identification; details of paving, furniture, fencing; as built; longitudinal cross sections (NPS Reservation Files).

- C. Early Views:

1927: Survey photograph (NPS Reservation Files).

- D. Bibliography:

Annual Reports of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. Annual Reports of the Chief of Engineers. 1867-1933.

"Government Reservations within the City Boundaries." City Lots. Real Estate Atlas (NARA RG42 230).

McNeil, Priscilla W. "Rock Creek Hundred: Land Conveyed for the Federal City." Washington History 3 (Spring/Summer, 1991): 34-51.

Record Group 42, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA RG42).

Reservation files. National Capital Region Headquarters, Land Use Office.

Prepared by: Elizabeth Barthold  
Project Historian  
National Park Service  
1993

#### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION:

The Plan of Washington, D.C., project was carried out from 1990-93 by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) Division, Robert J. Kapsch, chief. The project sponsors were the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation Inc. of Washington, D.C.; the Historic Preservation Division, District of Columbia Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, which provided Historic Preservation Fund monies; the National Capital Region and its White House Liaison office, NPS; and the National Park Foundation Inc.

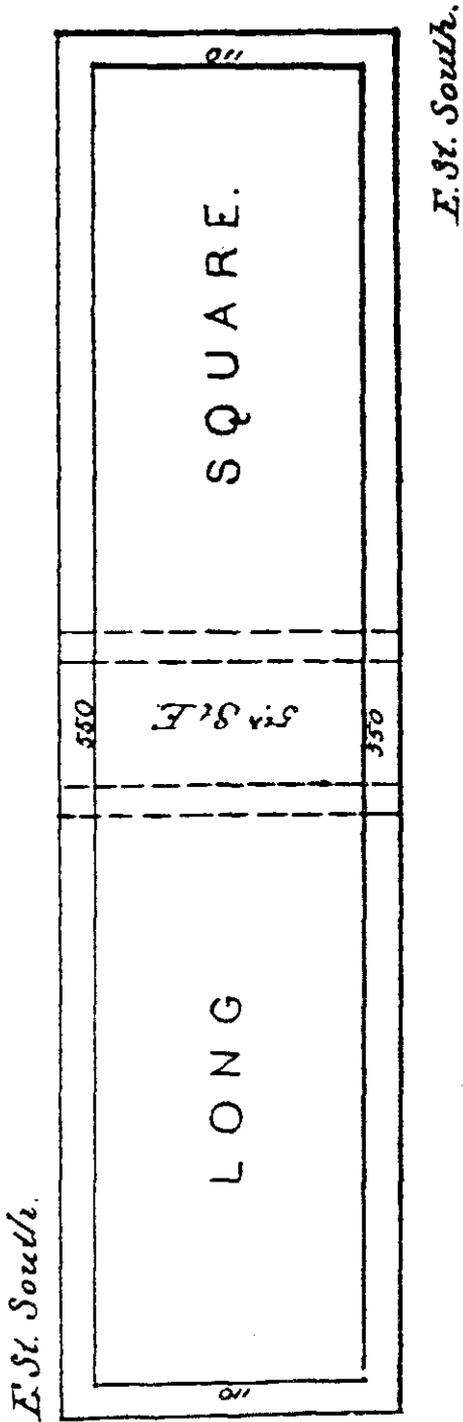
HABS historian Sara Amy Leach was the project leader and Elizabeth J. Barthold was project historian. Architectural delineators were: Robert Arzola, HABS; Julianne Jorgensen, University of Maryland; Robert Juskevich, Catholic University of America; Sandra M. E. Leiva,

US/ICOMOS-Argentina; and Tomasz Zweich, US/ICOMOS-Poland, Board of Historical Gardens and Palace Conservation. Katherine Grandine served as a data collector. The photographs are by John McWilliams, Atlanta, except for the aerial views, which are by Jack E. Boucher, HABS, courtesy of the U.S. Park Police - Aviation Division.

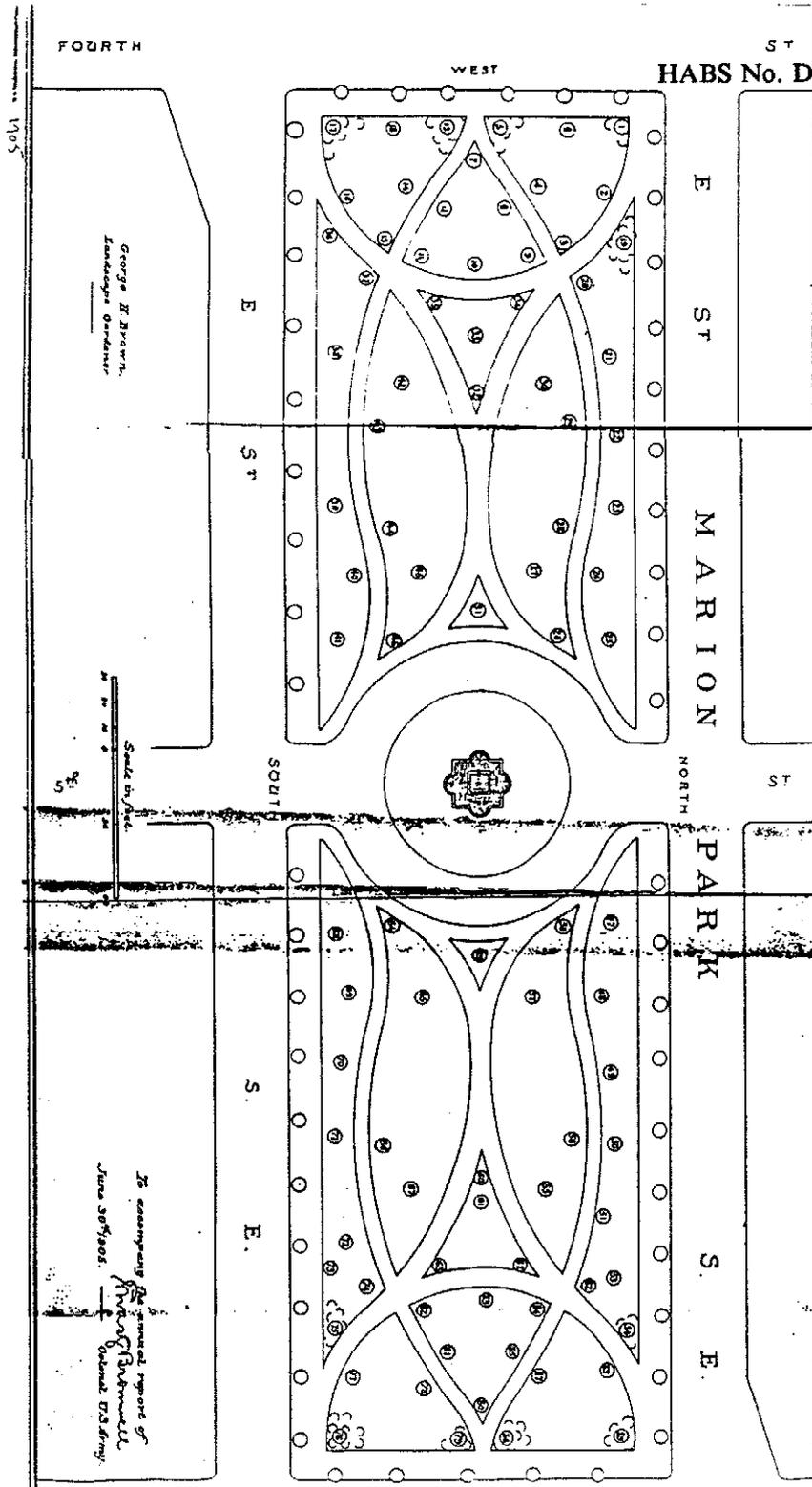
PART V.      SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

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|-----------|-------|--|
| Page 6    | 1876: | Plat of reservation ( <u>City Lots</u> , NARA RG42 230).   |
| Page 7, 8 | 1905: | Park plan showing locations of trees listed by species on an accompanying list ( <u>Annual Report . . .</u> , 1905). |
| Page 9    | 1925: | Park plan showing path layout. Amended in 1963 to show transferred area (NPS Reservation Files).                     |

718 vis



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FOURTH

WEST

ST

E ST

MARION

NORTH ST

PARK

S. E.

E

ST

SOUTH

S. E.

1905

George H. Brown,  
Landscape Gardener

Scale in Feet  
50

To accompany the general report of  
The Board of Commissioners  
of the District of Columbia  
for the year 1905.

MARION PARK.

1, 17, 76, 89.....	California privet .....	Ligustrum ovalifolium.	Foreign deciduous shrub.
2, 16, 77, 88.....	Sweet gum tree .....	Liquidambar styraci- flua.	Native deciduous tree.
3, 15, 58, 64.....	Pearl bush .....	Exochorda grandiflora.	Foreign deciduous shrub.
4, 14, 78, 87.....	English field maple .....	Acer campestre.....	Foreign deciduous tree.
5, 13, 79, 86.....	Deutzia shrub .....	Deutzia.....	Foreign deciduous shrub.
6, 18.....	Nettle tree .....	Celtis occidentalis.....	Native deciduous tree.
7, 9, 11, 80, 82, 84.....	Althea .....	Hibiscus syriacus.....	Foreign deciduous shrub.
8, 10, 12, 31, 83, 85.....	Purple-flowering magnolia.	Magnolia obovata.....	Do.
19, 20, 36, 64.....	Naked jessamine.....	Jasminum nudiflorum.	Do.
21, 38, 51.....	Silver-leaved linden .....	Tilia argentea.....	Foreign deciduous tree.
22, 23, 24.....	Norway maple .....	Acer platanoides.....	Do.
25, 41, 46, 47, 68, 72.....	Fringe tree .....	Chionanthus virginica.	Native deciduous shrub.
26, 27, 45, 57, 65.....	British oak .....	Quercus robur.....	Foreign deciduous tree.
28, 43.....	European hornbeam .....	Carpinus betulus.....	Do.
29, 42.....	Pin oak .....	Quercus palustris.....	Native deciduous tree.
30.....	Japan pagoda tree .....	Sophora japonica .....	Foreign deciduous tree.
31, 59.....	European white birch.....	Betula alba .....	Do.
32, 34, 35, 60, 62, 63, 75	Spanish bayonet .....	Yucca aloifolia.....	Native evergreen shrub.
33.....	Double-flowering peach.....	Amygdalus flore plena.	Foreign deciduous tree.
37, 52, 74.....	Judas tree .....	Cercis japonica.....	Foreign deciduous shrub.
39, 49, 50, 70, 71.....	Bycamore maple .....	Acer pseudo-platanus..	Foreign deciduous tree.
40, 48, 69.....	Colchican maple .....	Acer colchicum rubrum	Do.
44.....	Varnish tree .....	Koeleria paniculata	Do.
53, 73.....	Yellow wood .....	Cladrastis lutea .....	Native deciduous tree.
55, 67.....	Laurel oak .....	Quercus imbricaria .....	Do.
56, 66.....	Purple beech .....	Fagus sylvatica pur- purea.	Foreign deciduous tree.
61.....	Hercules club .....	Aralia spinosa.....	Native deciduous tree.
Trees on sidewalks of E street north and south.	Locust.....	Robinia pseudacacia...	Do.
Trees on sidewalks of Fourth street and Sixth street.	Silver maple.....	Acer saccharinum.....	Do.

