

This document was prepared to provide MRP Realty with information about their development site, known as Bryant Street, located north of Rhode Island Avenue within the eastern section of Edgewood. This site was until recently the location of the Rhode Island Avenue Shopping Center. This report is not a fully developed history of the area, but rather its purpose is to provide a series of historic narratives related to the development of both neighborhoods that can be later included as part of an interpretive brochure or booklet. Any images found during the course of our research will be transmitted separate and in addition to this document.

## Introduction

The thirteen-acre site being developed by MRP is located in the north east quadrant of Washington, DC within the Edgewood neighborhood. The land being developed sits on the border of an area that was once part of two nineteenth century estates: Edgewood and Eckington.

The narratives included within this package are:

- Early Development of Edgewood;
- History of Metropolis View, divided into periods that correspond to changes in ownership (Colonel Washington Berry, Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase, socialite Katherine Chase);
- Gypsies of Edgewood, Nomads of Berry's Woods;
- St. Vincent's Orphanage;
- Development of Eckington; and
- Late Twentieth Century Development.

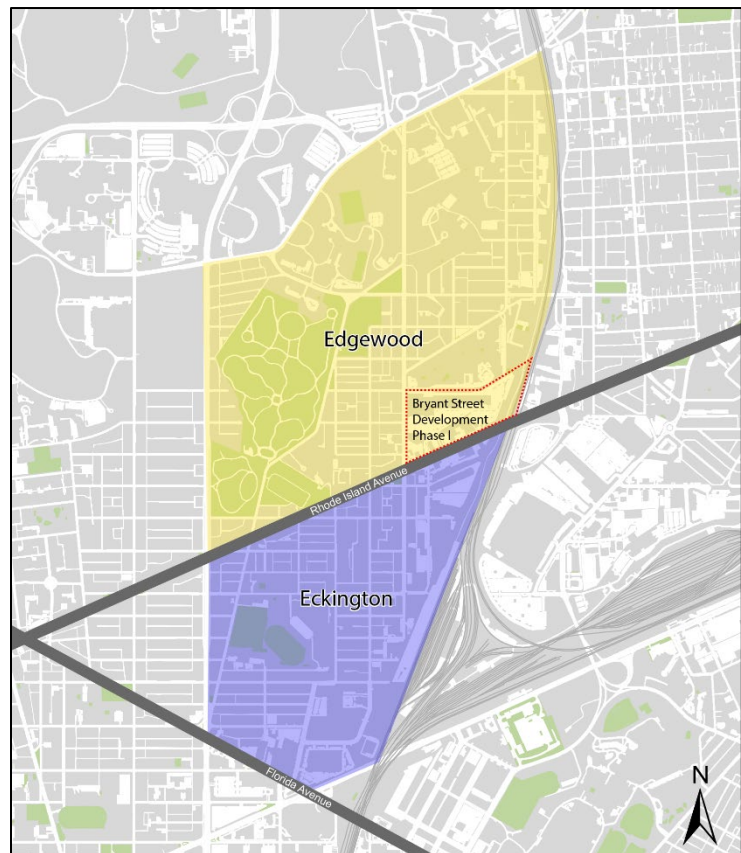


Figure 1. Map showing the locations of the Edgewood and Eckington neighborhoods. The development site is outlined in red.  
(EHT Traceries, 2020)

## Historic Context

### Early Development of Edgewood

The first known inhabitants of the region that was to become the District of Columbia were the Powhatan people of the Algonquian tribe. The story of the development of the area now known as Edgewood begins in the mid-seventeenth century, when Europeans began colonizing the region. One of the first formal land proprietors of the area, at that time part of the Maryland colony, was a lawyer named George Thomas. In 1663, Thomas patented an approximately 1,800-acre tract of land that included farms called Duddington Pasture, Duddington Manor, and New Troy. Thomas' tract corresponds to the present-day site of the Mall, Union Station and the surrounding Swampoodle neighborhood, southwest DC, and the Washington Navy Yard.



Figure 2. A map of the western parts of the colony in Virginia showing locations of Native American tribes in 1754.  
(Library of Congress)

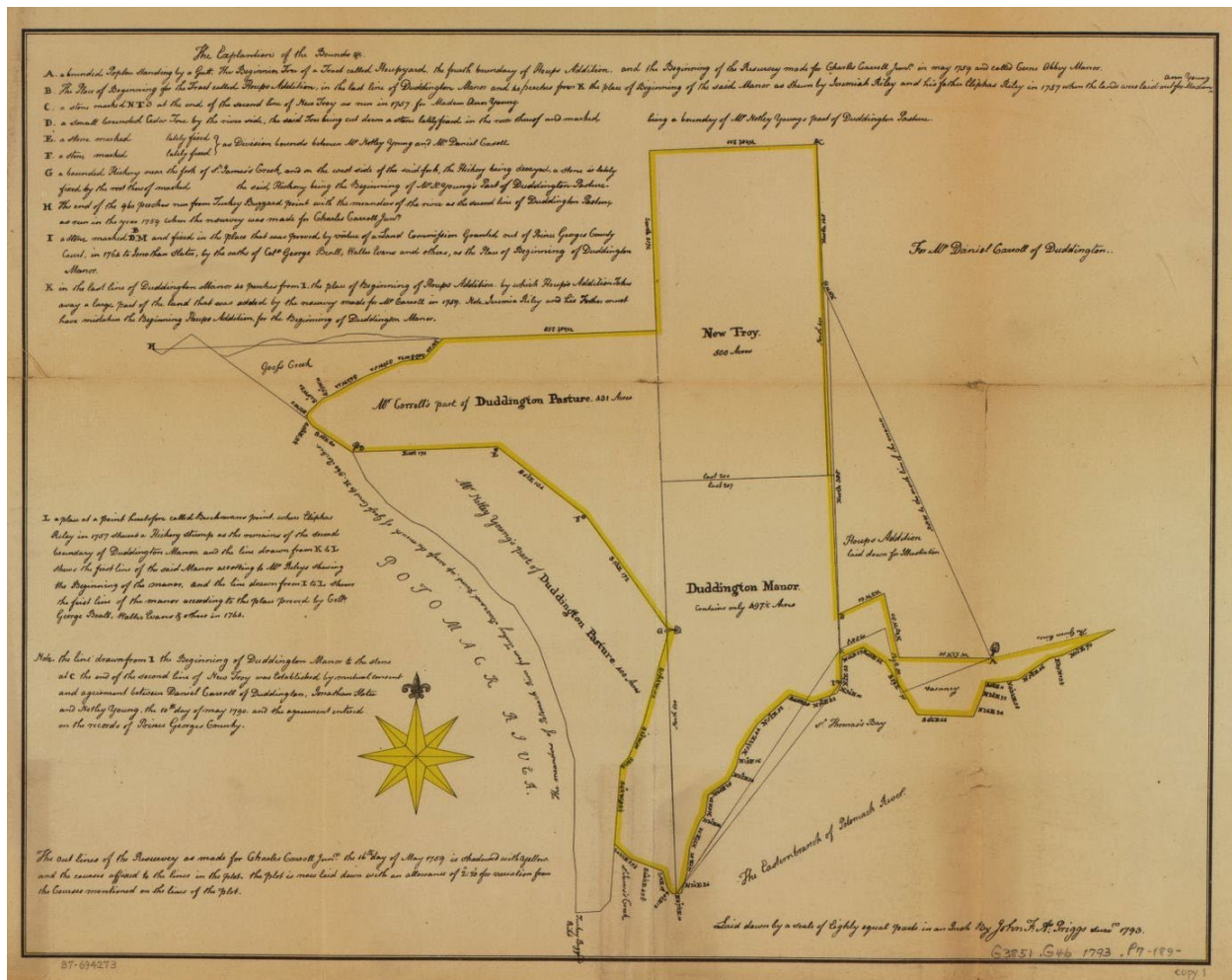


Figure 3. Cadastral survey map of land tracts in the southern portion of Washington, D.C. in 1793. (Library of Congress)

In 1664, early colonist Captain Robert Troope received a patent for a land tract immediately north of New Troy that he named “Scotland Yard”. Captain Troope arrived in Maryland from England in 1651 under a special warrant from Lord Baltimore. He died in Charles County around 1666.<sup>1</sup>

Another tract just north of Scotland Yard was patented to Francis Pope and named “Rome”. Like many of the original land holders, both men were residents of Charles County, Maryland. Also born in England, Francis Pope immigrated to Maryland in 1635. Pope married Margaret Porter in the 1650s and had five children: Thomas, John, Francis, Richard, and Mary.<sup>2</sup> As a family, the Popes were known to have a have an affinity with Roman culture, naming multiple of their land holdings in Worcester and Talbot counties in Maryland “Rome”. In 1671, eight years after purchasing the property, Francis Pope died and left his DC tract to his two younger sons, Richard and John.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Paullin, “History of the Site of the Congressional and Folger Libraries.”

<sup>2</sup> “Early Colonial Settlers of Southern Maryland and Virginia’s Northern Neck Counties,” *The Next Generation of Genealogy Sitebuilding*, <https://www.colonial-settlers-md-va.us/getperson.php?personID=I023043&tree=Tree1>, (accessed December 14, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Robert Malesky, “Local Lore: Wealth, Scandal, and Tragedy: The story of Metropolis View and Edgewood,” *Bygone Brookland* (blog), March 6, 2017, <http://bygonebrookland.com/local-lore-wealth-scandal.html>; Stantec, DC HPO Project No. 16-0228:

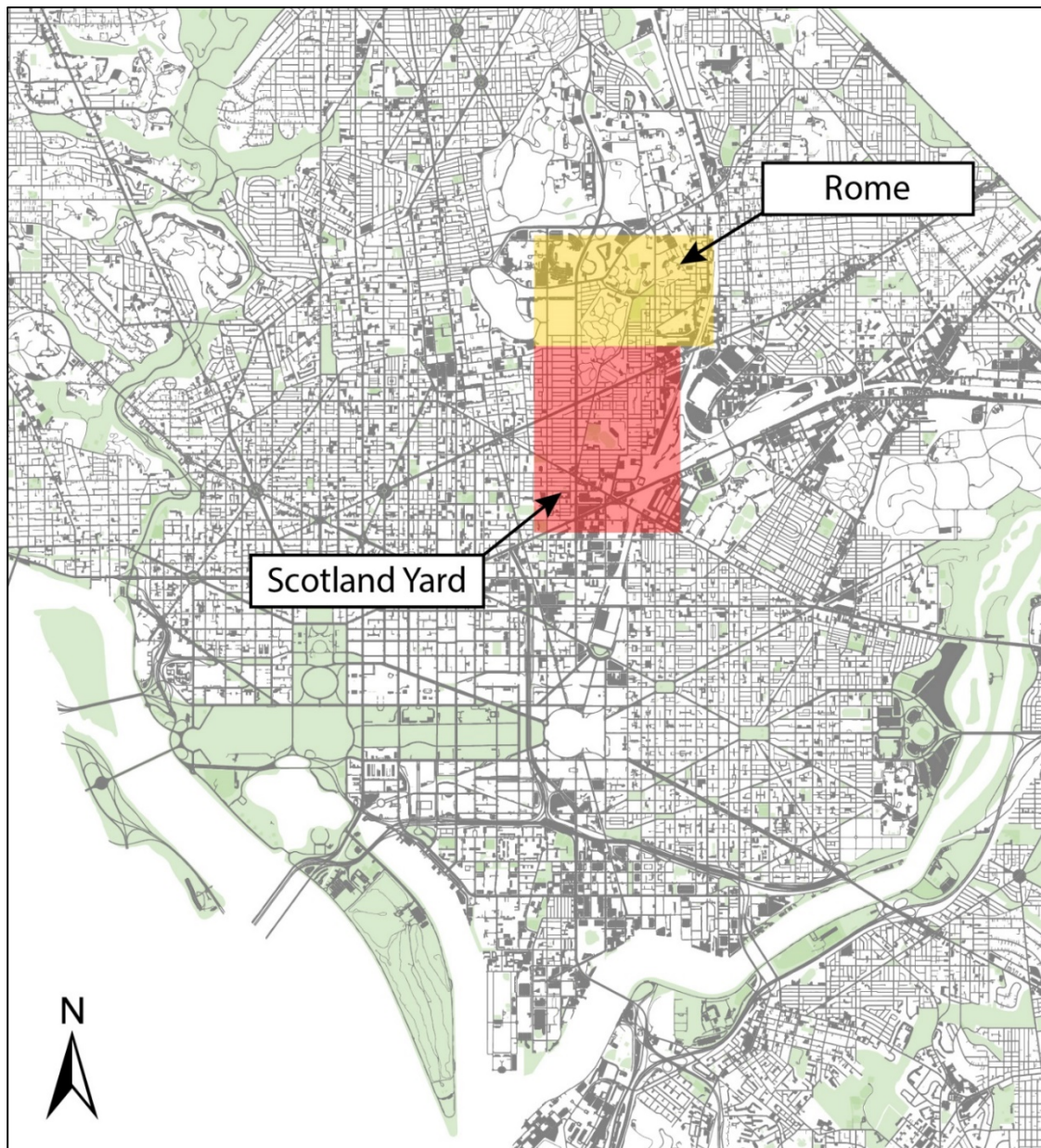


Figure 4. Map showing the approximate locations of the Rome and Scotland Yard land patents in 1696 based on Priscilla McNeil's research. (EHT Tracerics, 2020)

Scotland Yard and Rome correspond to the modern day Eckington and Edgewood neighborhoods in northeast Washington, DC. Although neither land owner settled on their properties, they likely bought the land out of necessity for fertile soil as surrounding agricultural land was increasingly depleted of nutrition.<sup>4</sup> Land records of Charles County show that the properties were sold by heirs of the Troope and Pope families for considerably large sums of tobacco. In 1672, heir of Troope and Charles County planter James Mackey sold Scotland Yard to Francis Kylbourne for 2,000 pounds of tobacco. In 1706, Bathsheba

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Phase IB Archaeological Investigations Conducted for Improvements at the Edgewood Recreation Center in Washington, DC (June 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Priscilla W. McNeil, "Rock Creek Hundred: Land Conveyed for the Federal City," *Washington History* 3 no. 1 (1991). 35-37.

Nichols, who inherited Rome from the Pope family, sold the land to merchant Philip Lynes for 5,000 pounds of tobacco. Historic records stop here, leaving little information to be known about what happened to the Rome and Scotland Yard land patents during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries apart from a note made in Lord Baltimore's rent rolls stating that Rome and Scotland Yard were "vacated" in 1746.<sup>5</sup> Despite this, it is likely that the land that made up Rome and Scotland Yard likely continued to be used for farming through the greater part of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

## Metropolis View

### Colonel Washington Berry

During the late eighteenth century, the United States Congress approved the creation of the City of Washington as the location for the national capital under the Residence Act of 1790. As a result of the legislation, the area containing Rome was incorporated into the County of Washington County, as it was located outside the boundaries of the Federal City. The land remained rural in character, developed only by small farms, throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century.<sup>6</sup>



Figure 5. 1861 Boschke map with approximate location of the Bryant Street NE Development in red. (Library of

During the mid-nineteenth century, Colonel Washington Berry owned approximately 410-acres of land in the County of Washington. The property, known for its magnificent views of the nation's capital to the south, was aptly named "Metropolis View". Colonel Berry was the grandson and heir of Zachariah Berry, a wealthy Maryland planter who fought in the Revolutionary War as part of the Maryland militia. Following the War of 1812, Colonel Berry moved to DC from Baltimore. At that time, he became a gentleman farmer, using primarily slave labor to tend to his property. While the property was primarily used for farming, about a quarter of the land, commonly referred to as Berry's Woods, was heavily wooded and became a local picnic and event spot for Washingtonians looking to escape the city.

Colonel Berry died in 1856, at which time his estate passed to his children. During the Civil War, the property and Berry's mansion was used by Federal officers and troops, causing extensive damage to the house and property.<sup>7</sup> Following the war, as the government contemplated relocating the executive mansion to higher grounds, Metropolis View was one of the tracts of land suggested.<sup>8</sup> The idea was put to rest, however, after Ulysses S. Grant was elected president in 1868. In order to sell the tract, the land was broken up into smaller five to ten-acre plots that were then sold in auction.

### Salmon P. Chase

Colonel Berry had several children. Legend recounts that in the 1830s, in the hopes of finding a proper suitor for one of his daughters, he invited a host of eligible bachelors to the property. One of these men

<sup>5</sup> McNeil, "Rock Creek Hundred".

<sup>6</sup> Malesky, "Local Lore: Wealth, Scandal, and Tragedy: The story of Metropolis View and Edgewood."

<sup>7</sup> Malesky. "Local Lore: Wealth, Scandal, and Tragedy: The story of Metropolis View and Edgewood."

<sup>8</sup> DC Inventory of Historic Sites, Saint Paul's College, 8-1.

was a young lawyer by the name of Salmon P. Chase.<sup>9</sup> Although Chase did not marry Berry's daughter, he did form a friendship with Colonel Berry and became enthralled with Metropolis View.

Throughout his life, Chase was known for being a passionate abolitionist who was a life-long public servant that helped to establish the Republican Party. He served in many capacities, including as a U.S. Senator, Governor of Ohio, Supreme Court Supreme Justice, and Secretary of the Treasury. During his early career as a lawyer, Chase fought for the freedom of fugitive slaves, and earned the title of "the attorney general for escaped slaves." In 1860, he sought the Republican nomination for President, but lost to Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln named Chase his Secretary of the Treasury, a role that made him responsible for managing the finances of the country during the Civil War. He was credited with establishing the national banking system and for issuing paper currency. Chase resigned from his role as Secretary of the Treasury in 1864 and was appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, a role that he served until his death in 1873.<sup>10</sup>

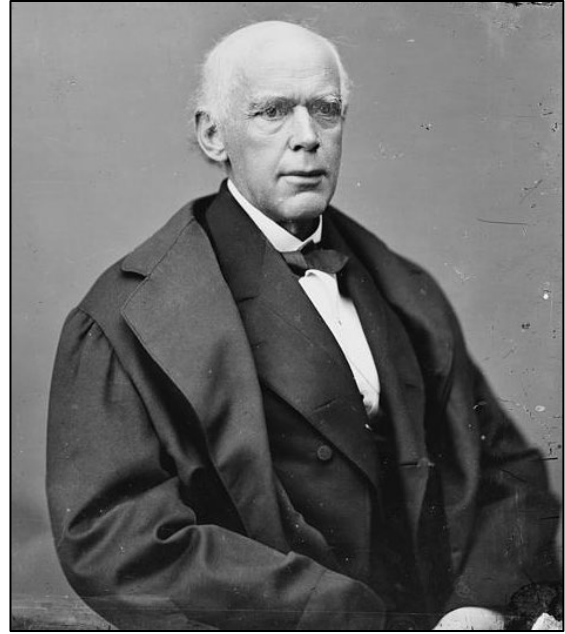


Figure 6. Portrait of Salmon P. Chase, circa 1860.  
(Library of Congress)

In contrast to his professional life, his personal life was faced with adversity. He buried three wives and four children by the age of 46, at which point he was left to raise with two daughters: Janet (Nettie) and Katherine (Kate). It is said that Chase dedicated his life to educating and counselling Kate, who in turn used her intellect, charisma, and political acumen to both serve her father's political career and to establish herself as a presence in Washington society.

In 1869, after having lived with Kate and his son-in-law for many years, Chase finally fulfilled a lifelong dream when he purchased forty-acres of the Metropolis View tract.<sup>11</sup> The purchase was a strain on Chase's finances; to make matters worse, the mansion he remembered so fondly sustained significant damage during the Civil War. Chase hired Edward Clark, Architect of the Capitol, to oversee the restoration efforts necessary to make the house livable. After two years of work, the house was occupiable, and, given its location on the edge of Berry's Woods, Chase chose to rename the estate Edgewood.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Malesky. "Local Lore: Wealth, Scandal, and Tragedy: The story of Metropolis View and Edgewood"; "Edgewood and its Surroundings," *The Evening Star*, October 7, 1882. 2.

<sup>10</sup> John Niven, *Salmon P. Chase; A Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>11</sup> "Chief Justice S. P. Chase has purchased a tract of land," *The National Republican*, 23 September 1869, Library of Congress; the remaining acreage was sold to various other stakeholders, including religious orders affiliated with the growing Catholic University.

<sup>12</sup> Malesky. "Local Lore: Wealth, Scandal, and Tragedy: The story of Metropolis View and Edgewood."

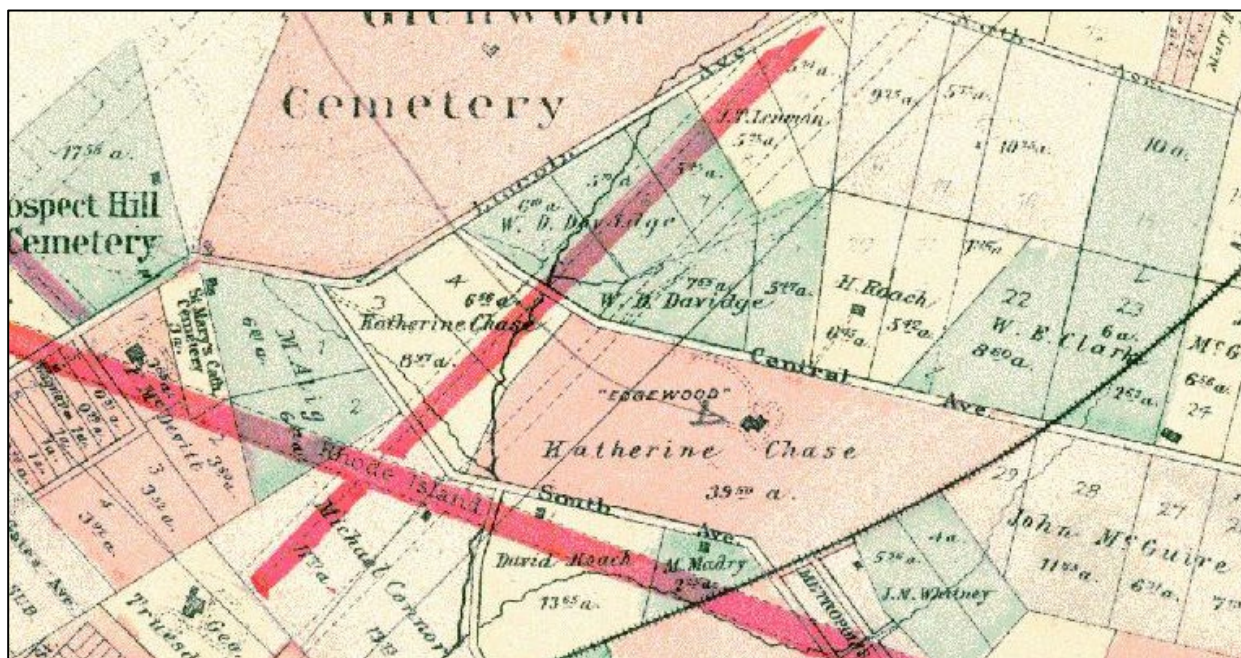


Figure 7. Detail of 1887 Hopkins map (Plate 44) showing the early development of Elkington and Edgewood. (Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.)

### Katherine Chase

Throughout her early adulthood, Chase's daughter Kate was a frequent visitor to her father's country home. Chase was a widower several times over, so his daughter oversaw most of the mansion's interior decorating, a skill that she was well known for in the District. She was also a well-regarded socialite and intellectual; she was, in fact, once referred to as "one of the most remarkable women ever known to Washington society."<sup>13</sup> Towards the beginning of the Civil War, Kate married William H. Sprague, a textile magnate and Governor of Rhode Island. Following the Civil War, Sprague suffered with an alcohol addiction, which in turn resulted in the physical and mental abuse of his wife. With her marriage on the rocks, the financial panic of 1873 that resulted in the loss of her husband's fortune, and the death of her father that same year, Kate moved to the Edgewood estate.



Figure 8. Portrait of Kate Chase Sprague, 1855. (Library of Congress)

<sup>13</sup> "Kate Chase Sprague Dies at Her Old Home," *The San Francisco Examiner*, 1 August 1899.

Despite residing at the estate, Kate's sister, Nettie, pressured her to sell the property so the siblings could benefit from the profits. Kate eventually bought out Nettie's share, leading to a lifelong estrangement.

In 1882, after multiple accusations of infidelity and a tarnished reputation, Kate's marriage officially ended in divorce, resulting in financial instability. She tried desperately to hold onto the Edgewood estate. With the extension of the streetcar in the 1880s, Kate and her creditors saw an opportunity to improve her financial situation and in 1890 platted a section of her estate between Fourth Street and Lincoln Avenue for residential development. She aptly called subdivision "Edgewood".<sup>14</sup>

By 1895, Kate's financial struggles had not resolved, resulting in her creditors foreclosing on her multiple mortgages and selling her personal effects at auctions. In an effort to stop the auctions, Kate went to court, where she was granted six months reprieve from the creditors. During that time, Kate pleaded with her father's old friends to help save the land as a historic landmark and preserve the memory of Salmon P. Chase. With the assistance her father's acquaintance, J.P. Morgan and other investors, Kate gathered a trust fund of \$80,000 to prevent the creditors from seizing her property.<sup>15</sup>



Figure 9. Kate Chase and her daughters on the steps of Edgewood mansion, circa 1890. (Historical Society of Washington)

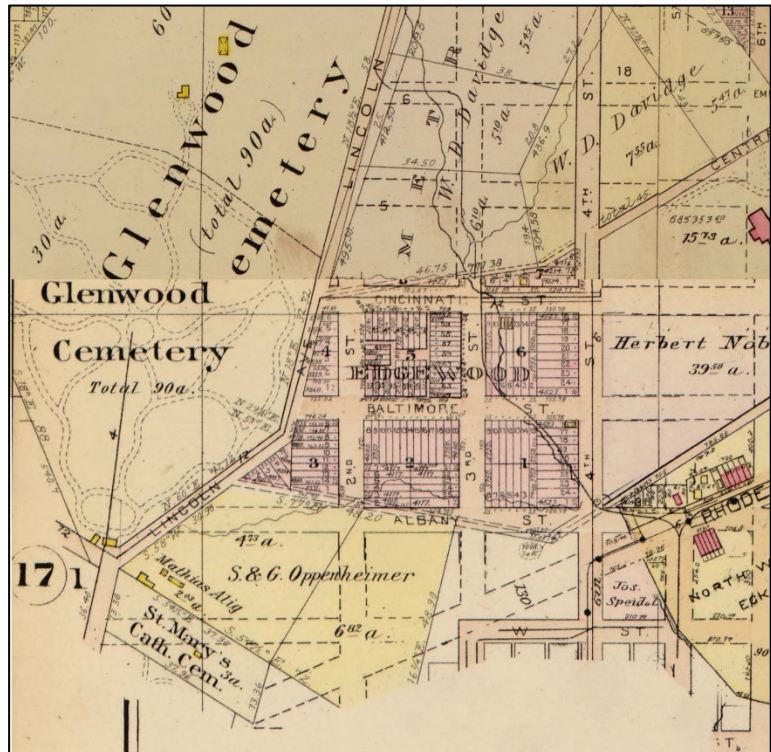


Figure 10. Edgewood Subdivision visible on 1903 Baist Map, volume 3 page 27.

<sup>14</sup> In 1891, also taking advantage of the expanded streetcar line, a tract of land to the north of the Edgewood subdivision was platted by William Denison. He named this subdivision "Metropolis View."

<sup>15</sup> Malesky. "Local Lore: Wealth, Scandal, and Tragedy: The story of Metropolis View and Edgewood"; "Old Edgewood is Safe," *The Washington Post*, July 28, 1895, 12.

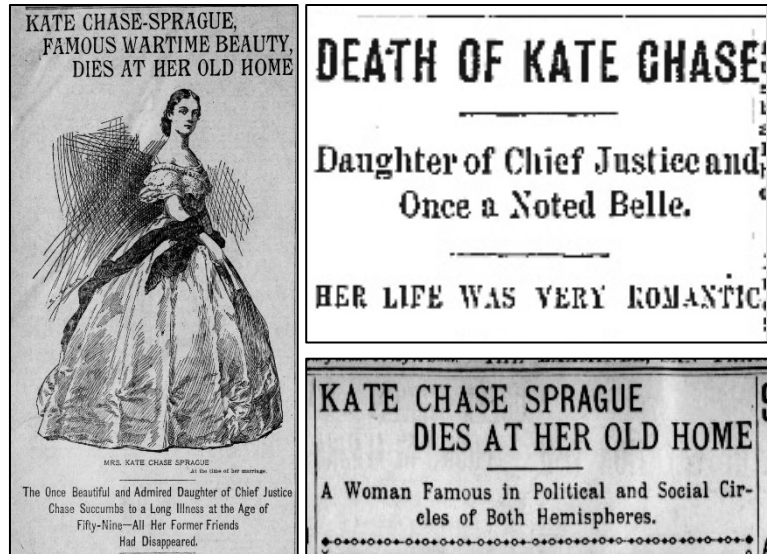


Figure 11. The Washington Post, August 1, 1899 (left); (From right to left) The Times of Philadelphia, PA, August 1, 1899 (top right); The San Francisco Examiner, August 1, 1899 (bottom right).

Even though Kate avoided foreclosure, she did not have the money to maintain the mansion. As the mansion continued to deteriorate, so too did Kate's health. Unbeknown to the public, Kate had been coping with liver and kidney problems many years. On July 31, 1899, Kate died at the age of 58 at Edgewood with her three daughters by her side.<sup>16</sup> Newspapers were filled with obituaries and tributes of her life. While some newspapers tended to focus on the scandals of her life, many described Kate's life as one of Washington's most beloved social and political elite.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Malesky, "Turn of the Century, End of an Era: The story of Metropolis View and Edgewood (Part 3)", *Bygone Brookland* (blog), March 12, 2017, <http://bygonebrookland.com/turn-of-the-century-end-of.html>; "Death of Kate Chase," *The Washington Post*, August 1, 1899, 7.

## Gypsies of Edgewood, Nomads of Berry's Woods

By the end of the nineteenth century, Berry's Woods – a portion of the Eckington estate that remained undeveloped – had become home to a nomadic gypsy encampment. This encampment, largely settled off of Fourth Street, NE near Glenwood Cemetery, was one of many encampments established on the outskirts of the City of Washington. The gypsies of Berry's Woods paid rent (\$1.00 per week) to stay on the land.<sup>17</sup> Further, despite being unwelcome in other parts of the city, they were reported to be very patriotic, displaying the classic stars and stripes flags on and around their brightly colored wagons and tents.

The gypsies that resided in Berry's Woods were often transient; however, some stayed for the majority of their lives. Regardless of how long they stayed, a fee of \$1.00 per week was owed to the landowner for the duration of their stay. One gypsy known to have lived her life in Berry's Woods was Madam Burnett. Born in Egypt along the Nile River, she immigrated to the United States as a child. In addition to overseeing one of the small camps established in the area, she was a fortune teller. In 1895, the *Washington Times* reported that a Senator made a trip to Berry's Woods the year prior to have his fortune read, and that he was so please with the fortune of being a "Presidential probability" that he tipped her with a \$5 bill.<sup>18</sup> Although gypsies were often associated with allegations of thievery or kidnap, this story provides evidence that Washingtonians were, in fact, intrigued by the exotic culture.

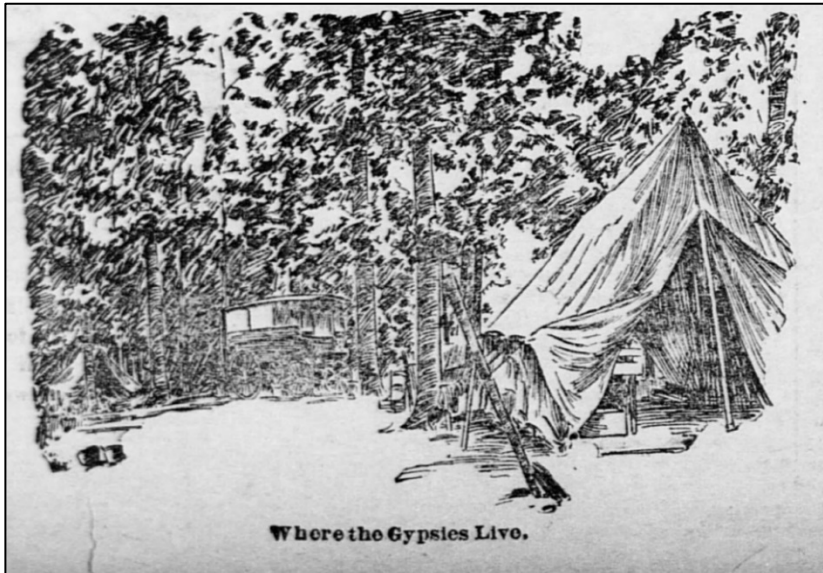


Figure 12. Sketches of Gypsy encampment in Edgewood.  
(*Washington Times*, August 18, 1895)



Figure 13. Various sketches of gypsy life in Edgewood.  
(*Washington Times*, August 18, 1895)

<sup>17</sup> Research to date has not revealed

<sup>18</sup> "Where the Gypsies Live," *The Washington Times*, August 18, 1895, 13.



Figure 14. Depiction of Madame Burnett.  
(Washington Times, August 18, 1895)



Figure 15. Photograph of Gypsy Wagon, undated. (Library of Congress)

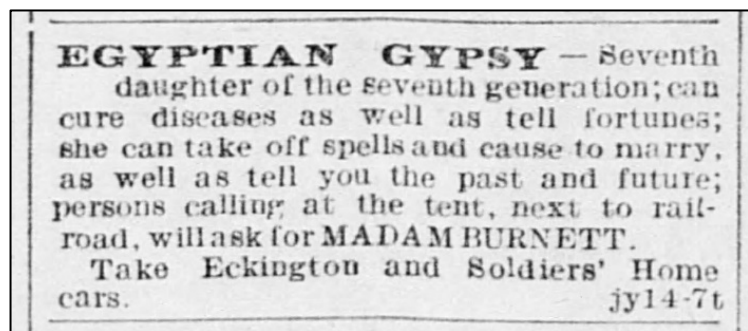


Figure 16. Newspaper advertisement for "Egyptian Gypsy."  
(Washington Times, July 16, 1895)

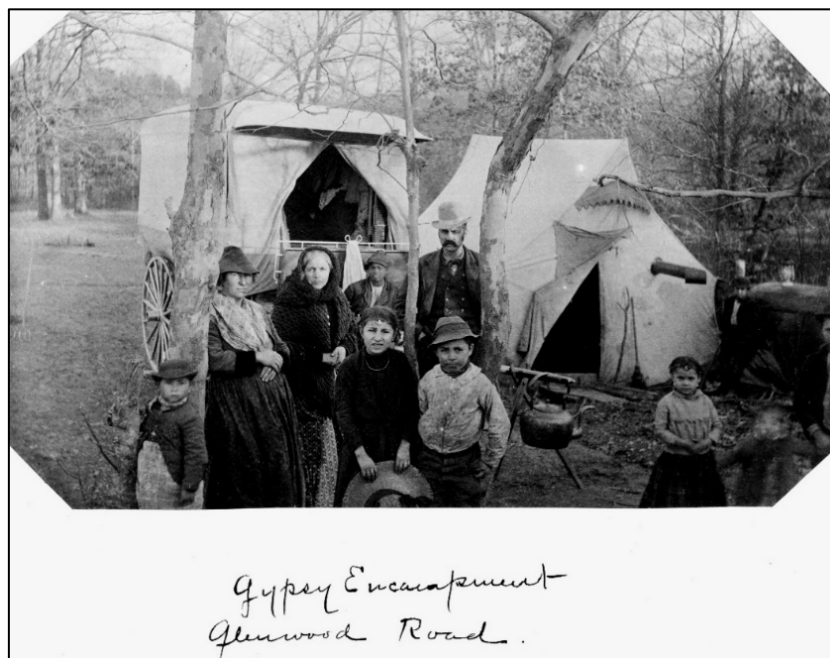


Figure 17. Photograph of the Gypsy Encampment on Glenwood Road, 1888. (Library

## St. Vincent's Orphanage

With the passing of Kate Chase, the Edgewood estate was seized by the property's creditors. In April 1900, the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph purchased nineteen-acres of the Edgewood estate from representative heirs of the Kate Chase Sprague Estate for \$67,000 with the goal of relocating St. Vincent's Orphanage for Girls to a larger, purpose-built building. Given the estate's close proximity to the newly established Catholic University,

St. Vincent's Orphanage for Girls was established in 1825 under the auspices of Fr. William Matthews, the first native-born priest ordained in the United States. The institution was so successful and well-supported by Fr. Matthews' parish, St. Patrick's Church, that they moved into a larger building at Tenth and G Streets, NW in 1828. In 1831, Congress granted the orphanage a charter to incorporate. The orphanage continued to grow throughout the nineteenth century; thus, by 1900, it had outgrown its home on the corner of Tenth and G Streets.<sup>19</sup>

Once the property had been purchased, Chase's mansion was demolished to make room for the construction of a substantial orphanage, designed by local architect Henry Simpson of the firm Barry & Simpson. The cornerstone was laid on May 24, 1900 with ceremonies led by Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore. The new building was designed to accommodate all of the needs of the orphan asylum including a refectory, large playroom, culinary departments, offices, museum, and study hall.<sup>20</sup> When the orphanage opened, it served as the home for hundreds of girls ages six to 14 and for the nuns who looked after the girls.

St. Vincent's Orphanage remained operational until 1968.<sup>21</sup> When it closed, it was the oldest institution of its kind in Washington. It was demolished shortly after its closure.

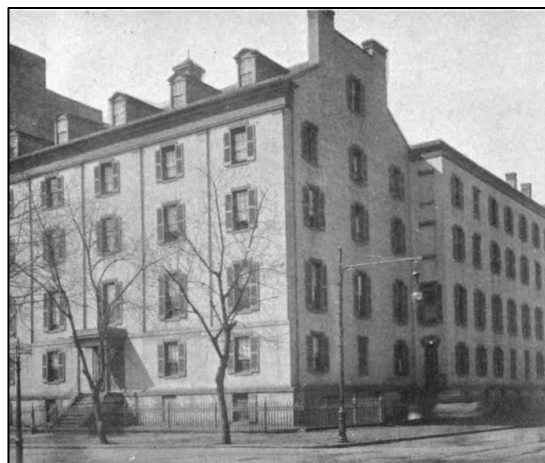


Figure 18. Photograph of St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum on the southeast corner of Tenth and G Streets. (Library of

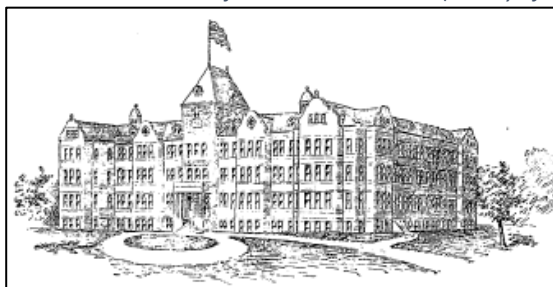


Figure 19. Drawing of proposed St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum.



Figure 20. St. Vincent's Orphanage in the 1920s. (Catholic University of America)

<sup>19</sup> "Plans of St. Vincent's," *The Washington Post*, March 14, 1900. 10.; "Part of 'Edgewood' Sold," *The Washington Post*, April 12, 1900. 11.

<sup>20</sup> "Laying of Corner Stone," *Evening Star*, May 24, 1900. 16.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Malesky. Turn of the Century, End of an Era: The story of Metropolis View and Edgewood (Part 3).; "Part of 'Edgewood' Sold," *The Washington Post*, April 12, 1900. 11; Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington, DC, retrieved from <https://libraries.catholic.edu/special-collections/archives/collections/finding-aids/finding-aids.html?file=ccdc>.; "St. Vincent's Orphanage, at 100-Year Mark, Oldest Institution of Its Kind in City," *Evening Star*, November 15, 1925. 6.

## Development of Eckington

In 1815, Joseph Gales, Jr. purchased the 112-acre parcel that would later become Eckington. Gales was the co-owner of the *National Intelligencer*, the city's most prominent newspaper of its time, and the mayor of Washington from 1827 to 1830. Born in Eckington, England, Gales named the estate as an homage to his birthplace. He went on to build a large house at the top of a hill at the approximate intersection of what is today Third and T Streets, NE.

Gales died in 1860 and his house was appropriated as a hospital for Union soldiers during the Civil War. After the Civil War, the property, referred then as "Gale's Woods," became a popular place for picnics.<sup>22</sup>

In 1873, the B&O Railroad opened its Metropolitan Branch between Point of Rocks, Maryland, and Washington, DC. When the railroad tracks were laid for the Metropolitan branch, they bisected the Eckington estate. Following the construction of the railroad tracks, a station was opened in the neighborhood, aptly named "Eckington".

In 1887, the residential subdivision of Eckington was platted by developer George Truesdell. Truesdell was born in New York city, and obtained a degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Michigan. At the beginning of the Civil War, he enlisted as a private with the Twelfth New York Volunteers and was later promoted to lieutenant and captain in 1862. After leaving the army, he served as a civil engineer in New Jersey before coming to Washington in 1872.<sup>23</sup>



Figure 21. Portrait of Joseph Gales, Jr., circa 1844.  
(United States Senate)

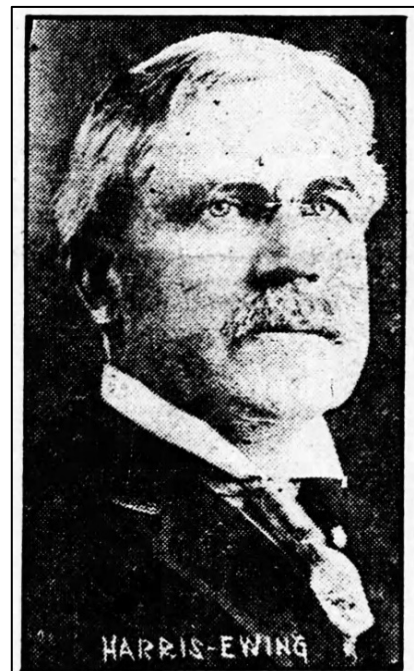


Figure 22. Portrait of Colonel George Truesdell. (Evening Star, 1921)

<sup>22</sup> "History," Eckington Civic Association, <https://eckingtoncivicassociation.com/eckington/history-3/>. "Clagett Proctor, "Famous Excursion Resorts," *The Evening Star*, July 11, 1937. 46.

<sup>23</sup> "Colonel Truesdell Dies at Home Here," *Evening Star*, May 13, 1921. 1-2.

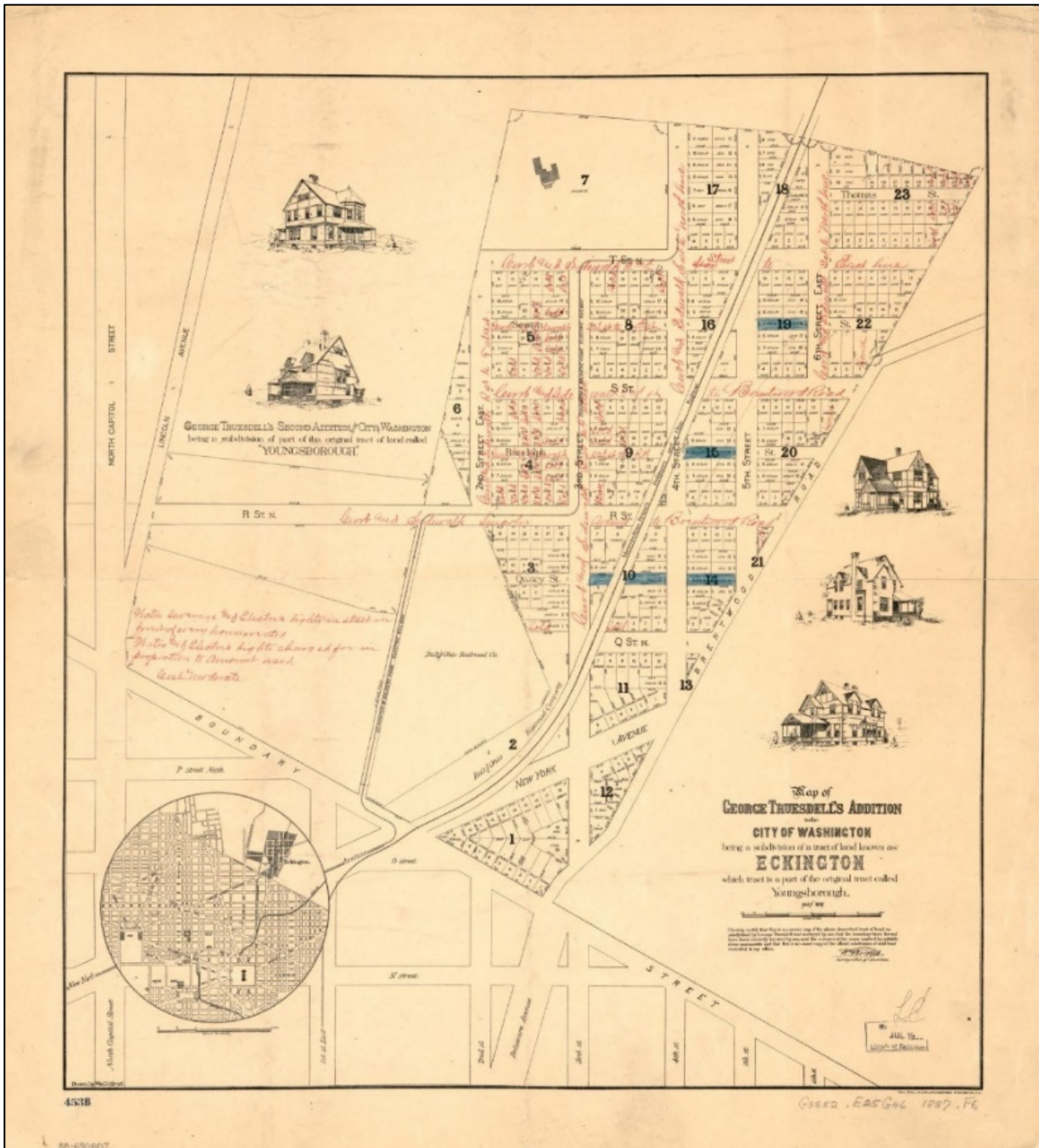


Figure 23. Plat of George Truesdell's Addition to the city of Washington called "Eckington," 1887. (Library of Congress)

For his Eckington subdivision, Truesdell laid the streets and provided the initial infrastructure for the neighborhood, most notably the Eckington and Soldier's Home streetcar line. Not only did the introduction of the streetcar provide the rapid transportation that was crucial for the success of any nineteenth century suburban community, it also provided the power for electric lighting for the streets and

individual residences.<sup>24</sup> The Eckington subdivision was an immediate success; thus Truesdell expanded his vision and platted West Eckington in 1891. By 1900, Gales' once rural estate had been completely subdivided and developed.

In 1901, under the McMillan Plan, the construction of a new "union" station was planned for the city whereby the individual Congress authorized railroad lines would enter the city at a single station to be built on Massachusetts Avenue and North Capitol Street. As part of the plan, the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Company, whose metropolitan line ran through Eckington, to expand its holdings in the neighborhood and building an extensive freight yard and depot. When completed in 1907, the Freight Yard and Depot had obliterated the eastern section of the original Eckington subdivision. While this was detrimental to the neighborhood's residential growth, it promulgated the area's industrial growth, and soon became home to a variety of factories that housed a wide array of industries.<sup>25</sup>



*Figure 24. Photograph of Eckington Yards, operated by the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, 1923. (Library of Congress)*

<sup>24</sup> "Eckington: A Neighborhood History," Eckington Civic Association (Washington, DC: Historic Preservation Office).

<sup>25</sup> "Eckington: A Neighborhood History," Eckington Civic Association (Washington, DC: Historic Preservation Office).

## Late Twentieth-Century Development

One of the largest pieces of development that took place during the late twentieth-century was the construction of the Rhode Island Avenue Mall. In 1983, plans were announced to build a \$20-million shopping center to contain dozens of stores including those associated with popular national retail chains Safeway, Peoples Drug Store, and a Zayre department store to be built at the corner of Rhode Island Avenue and Fourth Street, NE. At the time, the Edgewood, Eckington, and Brookland neighborhoods were generally lacking any grocery or drug store.<sup>26</sup> Construction began the following year, financed through a \$4.25 million federal Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG). At the time of construction, the shopping center was the second-largest UDAG grant that the District had ever seen and contained the first Zayre department store in the district.<sup>27</sup>

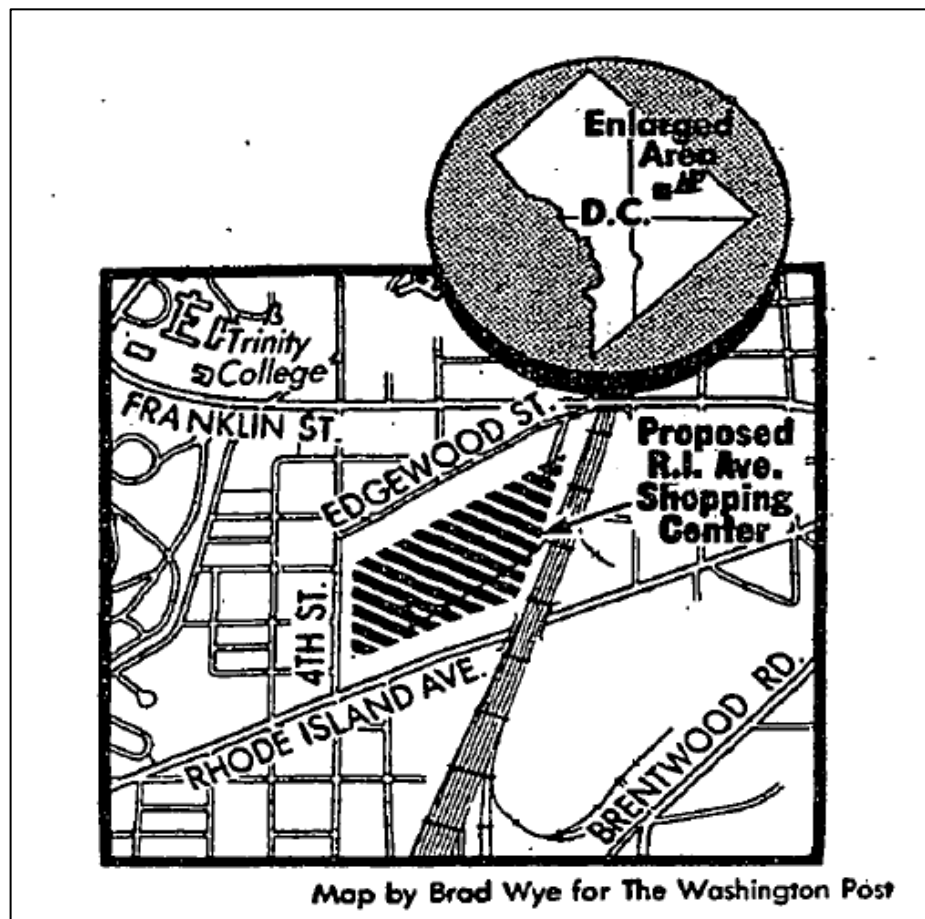


Figure 25. Map of development featured in Washington Post Article.  
(Washington Post, June 18, 1984)

<sup>26</sup> Anne Chase, "Mall Plan Gets Mixed Reviews in Northeast," *The Washington Post*, September 29, 1983, DC1.

<sup>27</sup> Gayle Young, "D.C.'s New Rhode Island Plaza Shows Value of UDAG Program," *The Washington Post*, June 18, 1984, 31.