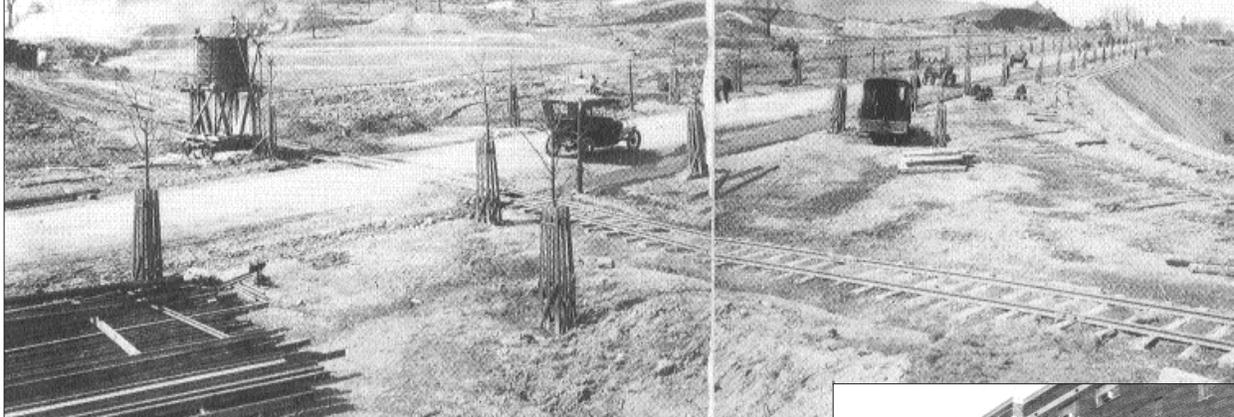


# Scenes from the Past...



photo—Library of Congress

When one travels a grand street such as Massachusetts Avenue west of Dupont Circle, one might be inclined to think that it was surely the central transportation route in and out of Dupont Circle, lined with huge mansions built over 100 years ago. The photograph above, however, proves otherwise, as it shows small sapling trees, construction railways, and a single lane, dirt-surfaced Massachusetts Avenue just northwest of Sheridan Circle—pictured not in the 1860s, but in 1911. It illustrates that this part of Washington was then still quite rural, where sportsmen often hunted small game. Today's priciest real estate along the Avenue and Embassy Row was then cut off from the rest of the city by the deep gorge of Rock Creek.



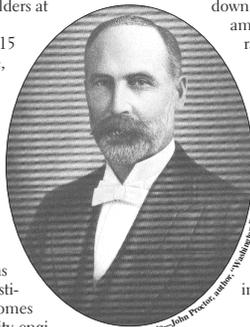
photo—The Evening Star, November 1946; courtesy, Washingtoniana Division, M.I.K. Library

Yet, closer to Dupont Circle, large homes had been constructed on huge lots beginning in the 1880s, when the real estate speculation of the area was recognized. Logan Circle had been the address of choice prior to 1890, as health concerns stemming from the swampy bogs in the vicinity of Massachusetts Avenue kept builders at bay.

Between 1884 and 1885, Anastasia Patten purchased lots 10 through 15 at what is today the corner of 22nd Street and Massachusetts Avenue, where Florida Avenue connects. On February 5, 1885, she obtained a Permit to Build for a grand brick residence, shown above, on just one of the lots, No. 13, to be surrounded by a large yard and gardens.

Anastasia was a native of Ireland, as was her husband, Edmond Patten, who both had made their way to California during the gold rush and were one of the fortunate ones to actually make a fortune there and in Nevada, mining the fields. He died shortly thereafter, and Mrs. Patten and her five daughters moved to Paris where the girls were educated at the Convent of the Sacred Heart before returning to the United States and settling in Washington.

She listed architect Robert Isaac Fleming, pictured to the right, as responsible for her new home's design. The house was built at the estimated cost of an impressive \$70,000, when most large elegant town homes in rows cost about \$5,000 to construct. Fleming had been appointed city engineer of Richmond following his service in the Civil War. He moved to Washington



photo—John P. White, author, "Washington Past & Present" (1930)

in 1867, and despite having no formal training, went on to become an architect for many of Washington's prominent families until his death in 1907. His son Robert V. Fleming followed in his father's profession.

After moving into the house at 2122 Massachusetts Avenue, each of the daughters held their debuts in there. Unfortunately, their mother Anastasia Patten died in 1888, but the daughters carried on the fine tradition of society entertaining at the residence. They included Mary, Augusta, Josephine, Edythe, and Helen. Like all socially prominent families, their personal woes often spilled out in the society papers, and the public soon learned that the sisters did not approve of John M. Glover, who had married Augusta. She was both estranged from the family, and accused of inheriting more of the estate of their mother than the other sisters had received. The Patten sisters sold lots 14 and 15 to Isabel Anderson for the erection of the mansion at 2118 Massachusetts Avenue, today the headquarters and museum of the Society of the Cincinnati. At the time, they received the tidy sum of \$93,000 for the two vacant lots.

Edythe married General Henry Clark Corbin in 1901, but the other sisters never married and remained at 2122 Massachusetts Avenue until the 1940s. They entertained many elite Washingtonians, including the Theodore Roosevelts, at their well-known Sunday parties. They added a tennis court to the grounds in 1913.

Josephine Patten died in 1945, and just a year later, the remaining sisters sold the house to Jerry Maiatico for a paltry \$165,000. It stood vacant until it was torn down beginning in November of 1947. Apparently, a spectacular blue and amber Venetian glass chandelier was sold to an Evanston, Illinois restaurant owner, and the other furnishings were auctioned off. An article in the December 26, 1947 Washington Daily News revealed a few interesting interior facts about the house, and the efforts it took to actually tear down the structure:

"The massive beauty of the old house is still visible—walls and ceilings of the downstairs rooms were paneled in oak or mahogany. Stained glass panels were in almost every window. A huge stairway with a beautifully carved balustrade twisted through the center of the house clear to the fourth floor. Wreckers have been working on the old house for nearly three weeks and scarcely have made a dent in it."

The house and its still large landscaped grounds were replaced a short time later by the erection of the State House Apartments, shown in the 1970 photograph above.



photo—Jack E. Bensch, 1970; courtesy, Library of Congress

—Paul Kelsey Williams  
Historic Preservation Specialist  
Kelsey & Associates, Washington, DC

## A NOTE ABOUT A CHANGE

Starting last month, readers will have noticed a new byline. It is that of Paul Williams, who has been reporting on historic preservation and historic district developments in this newspaper for several years. He has now assumed the pen so ably wielded for nearly 15 years by Jack Brewer, the knowledgeable Library Assistant at the Historical Society of Washington.

This change has come about largely because over these many years in producing approximately 175 of these features, we have effectively exhausted the Society's archive of images pertaining to the part of the city about which we report. We cannot say strongly enough how grateful we have been for the many years of unstinting cooperation accorded us by the personnel of the Society and for their graciousness in assigning this task to Jack Brewer. His contributions to this series has resulted in thousands upon thousands of our readers learning about their community. The Society has thus clearly enhanced its educational mission as a result, and our readers have been the beneficiaries, as will countless researchers in the years to come.