

by the speculative syndicates building quite creditable groups of buildings during the 1790's, on Capitol Hill, on Greenleaf Point near the old Arsenal, and on Pennsylvania Avenue out toward Georgetown. Even in 1814, when President and Mrs. Madison had to find shelter while their home was being rebuilt after the fire, the unfortunate incident of August of that year, the White House was still the only building on the square.

By the time President and Mrs. Monroe moved into the refurbished mansion in 1817, building had begun on the square and before the end of his administration it was well underway. Happily, the first was a church, St. John's Episcopal Church, built north of the square on the corner of H and 16th Streets in 1816. It was planned as a Greek cross, by Benjamin H. Latrobe, and by 1820 the nave had been extended to form the present Latin cross with portico. After the church, residences gradually filled all three sides of the square and up adjacent streets and avenues, and until the end of the century and beyond, the square lived a life of glorious historical record not matched by any other American community and few abroad. As an architectural heritage it offered a picture of development from the Georgian, the Early Federal, the Classic and Greek Revivals, up through the post-Civil War period, the early and late Victorian and at the last, an example of H. H. Richardson's best in residential design.

The "Diagram of Lafayette Park and Its Surroundings," from Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly of April 1891 (from the Library of Congress), is a valuable document, for every one of the buildings shown was in place and occupied at that time, except those absorbed by the construction of the Arlington Hotel after 1869. The "Key to the Diagram" reads like a biographical index of those prominent in this formative period. It also shows the fluid quality of American political life as changing administrations brought new residents, anxious to be near the home and office of their Chief.

Before outlining briefly the history of some of the important buildings, it is well to remember that Washington was really a Southern city, lying between two slave States, many of its residents slaveholders, with sentiment strongly divided and loyalties finally brought to a real test. From the very first it was a city of political and sometimes social antagonisms and these were nowhere more intense than around the square. Here there was no lack of drama nor of tragedy. The old houses had their share in these.

The buildings are listed below in approximate order of their age:

St. John's Church, 1816, often called the court church, as it was the parish church of the first Presidents, Madison to Buchanan, and frequently attended on special occasions by all the Presidents regardless of their denominational connections.

The Decatur House, 1819, the first residence. Built by Commodore Stephen Decatur on his return from his brilliant victories in the Barbary wars. This fine house, Latrobe its architect, with garden and dependencies, has been preserved almost intact. But Decatur and his lovely wife had not long to enjoy it, for in 1820 he returned to die here after his duel at Bladensburg with Commodore Barron—the square's first tragedy. Later came Henry Clay while Secretary of State to the second Adams. The year before he moved into the house a second duel occurred when he called his neighbor, the picturesque John Randolph of Roanoke, out to the Virginia hills, but this time with no physical injury. Later it was from here that Mrs. Clay and Mrs. Calhoun carried on their social vendetta against brilliant Peggy O'Neal Eaton, an innkeeper's daughter and wife of Senator John Henry Eaton, a special protege of Gen. Andrew Jackson, which almost disrupted his presidential administration. In 1836 John Gadsby, an Alexandria tavern keeper, took over the house and auctioned slaves in the high-walled garden. During the Civil War it was commandeered by the Government and later was bought by Gen. Edward Beale, under whose grandfather Decatur once served as ensign. Its last owner, Mrs. Truxtun Beale, restored it and deeded it to the Nation under the aegis of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Many of Latrobe's original drawings were available for the restoration. Some years previously, in a wise move to save it from threatened destruction by Government intrusion, Mrs. Beale provided for the use of the carriage house area by the Truxtun-Decatur Naval Museum.

The Dolly Madison House, 1820, was the second residence on the square. Built by Richard Cutts, brother-in-law of Dolly Payne Madison, a simple colonial-type townhouse, given to Mr. Madison in payment of a debt. It was never occupied by him but was the scene of Dolly's triumphant widowhood. From 1837 to her death in 1849 this was a center of the social and political life of the Capital. The house was then taken over by Commodore Wilkes who added a