

[Milton Sladen was interviewed in 1974 to provide background for the application to create the Capitol Hill Historic District. The interview's purpose was to determine what residents perceived as the boundaries of "Capitol Hill." The interview was retyped by Bernadette McMahon in September, 2003, from a photocopy, and revised in 2009 when a better photocopy was found. Street names and house addresses have been edited to conform to the style used in Overbeck project transcripts.]

## CAPITOL HILL INTERVIEWS

Interview with William Milton Sladen  
by Suzanne Ganschietz, D.C. Historic Preservation Office  
and Hazel Kreinheder, Capitol Hill Restoration Society

August 28, 1974

Subject: Lincoln Park History  
William Milton Sladen, 120 11<sup>th</sup> Street SE

### SIDE A

I was born in 1900 at 203 C Street SE, where I lived until 1904, when my family moved to 24 Sixth Street SE. In 1907, we moved to 120 11<sup>th</sup> Street SE, and my family has occupied this house for 67 years.

I am going to talk about Lincoln Park. I will start at the northwest Corner and go around the Park talking about the buildings and the people who lived in them. Bernard Walls lived at the N.W. corner of 11<sup>th</sup> and East Capitol Streets in the four-story store and apartment building which he built in the early 1900's.

Walls was a grocer who also owned a liquor store. He sold "Lincoln gin" at 25 cents a pint. Many people came to buy this popular beverage. His store was next to the drug store in Walls' building operated by L. Hoyt Lamb. Walls also owned and built the Alcazar Apartments on the northwest corner of 11<sup>th</sup> and Massachusetts Avenue, an impressive building.

Across the street at 1100 East Capitol was the home of Charles F. Consaul, a well-known attorney whose wife was a woman of some means; they had two servants and a coachman, and a horse and carriage. The house is still standing. At 1116 East Capitol lived Mr. Beuchler, well-known for his tinning and heating business. One of his sons lived in the house for years; he died a few years ago and the house is now vacant. At 1124 East Capitol lived George W. Norris who was a member of the House of Representatives from 1909-1913, and who moved to the Northwest after he was elected to the U.S. Senate. At 1126 lived the Farnsworth family; Eunice is still there. Her brother Tom, who went to Eastern High School, was an aviator in WWI and was killed in France. He is buried in Arlington Cemetery, near the Tomb of the Unknowns.

Across 12<sup>th</sup> and Tennessee Avenue, at 1210 East Capitol Street, was the home of Cornelius Ford. He was Public Printer during the Woodrow Wilson administration and an important official. He had a family of boys, one of whom later became an assistant district attorney.

Just beyond the intersection of East Capitol and North Carolina, at 1226 North Carolina, lived the family of Stephen Early. Steve lived there when he was a newspaperman, but moved away when he became FDR's press secretary. He visited his mother a great deal, and a White House limousine was often parked in front of her house.

Epworth Lutheran Church, on the southeast corner of 13th and North Carolina, had recently moved from Seventh and A Streets NE. Chris Murphy, a well-known doctor who later became D.C. Coroner, lived at 1 13th Street NE. One of his brothers owned several motion picture theatres in Southeast, among them the old Carolina across the street from my house.

The W.A. Simpson house was at 1312 East Capitol. It's the one with the imposing white columns. Simpson owned the Walkcr-Hill Dairy on Seventh Street between E and G Streets SE. When he retired, the dairy was sold to Embassy Dairy. The four bay-window brick houses between the Murphy and Simpson properties were purchased by L.P. Steuart—the Ford dealer and coal man, and given to Epworth Church as a memorial to his mother.

At the southeast corner of 13<sup>th</sup> and East Capitol was Carlton Van Emmon's drugstore, a very popular one in the neighborhood. . This store and apartment building was also erected by Bernard Walls.

There was a fine hardware store at 106 13<sup>th</sup> Street SE, run by H. F. Walls (no relation to the grocer of the same name). H. F. Walls had been on Eighth Street near the Navy Yard, moving to 13<sup>th</sup> Street around the time of World War I. Ostrow's food store is now located in Walls' old store.

The home of L. Hoyt Lamb, the druggist, was on the southeast corner of Kentucky and East Capitol Street. It is the house with the round porch.

At the corner of 12<sup>th</sup> and East Capitol, 100 12<sup>th</sup> Street SE, was a house built by an architect named Bush, who lived there several years after its completion. It was next occupied by the Fluckey family. Isaac Newton Fluckey was a Government man; his wife, Lucia, was an artist whose specialty was painting on China plates. She had considerable reputation in this field in the Washington area. Their son, Eugene, was a Naval hero in WWII. He was a submarine commander who took a submarine into Tokyo Bay, a feat which won him the Congressional Medal of Honor. He was made a rear admiral and was later superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis. He is still alive.

The James Colliflower family lived at 1127 East Capitol. He was president of a big coal business. In the 1920's the house at 1113 East Capitol was occupied by U.S. Senator Henrik Shipstead, of the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party. He was that party's first senator. He served 12 years. Hubert Humphrey was a member of that party in the early days.

I am now going to talk about the streets leading into the Park. At 130 12<sup>th</sup> Street NE lived Leonard P. Steuart, the coal and ice man. At that time Leonard and his brother Guy were running a small two-man business. Also, they had *The Evening Star* circulation routes for the Northeast section of the city. About 1910, they obtained a Ford car dealership. This was the beginning of their fortune. Later, they went into the heating oil business in a big way. A member of the family, Curtis Steuart, is still active today.

George Judd lived at 151 Kentucky. He was president of Judd & Detweiler, the printing firm which produced the *National Geographic Magazine* for so many years.

Milburn Donahoe, a well-known real estate man, lived at 159 Kentucky. His father, John F. Donahoe, was the leading real estate man on Capitol Hill around the turn of the century. Milburn Donahoe's son, Milburn, Jr., is still active in this field as an appraiser. He has an office of Seventh Street SE, opposite Eastern Market. [ed, 2003: these names should be spelled Donohoe]

The Wheeler family lived at 137 12<sup>th</sup> Street SE. One of their sons, Gilmore, known as "Buster," had a distinguished Army career, rising to the rank of general. He became chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a position which he held during the Vietnamese War.

After the Wheelers moved, Captain Taylor Branson, leader of the U.S. Marine Band in the 1920's and 1930's, lived at 137.

Across the street at 140 lived Glenn Taylor, a U.S. Senator from Idaho. He was known as the "cowboy" Senator and would play the guitar and sing western songs with his family on their front steps. He also conducted impromptu concerts on the steps of the U.S. Capitol. In 1948, he ran as the V.P. candidate on the Progressive Party ticket and was defeated. He went into obscurity, later emerging as proprietor of a wig company in New York, known as "Taylor Toppers."

Albert Carry lived at the northwest corner of 12<sup>th</sup> and Independence. He had come to the U.S. from Germany in the 1880's. He owned the National Capital Brewing Company which was located at 14<sup>th</sup> and D Streets SE, present site of a Safeway store. The brewery brought many Germans into the area. Carry's house was a dramatic, imposing three-story brick residence, with a magnificent carriage house at the rear. His family lived on the grand scale at a time when many area people were making around \$15 a week. It was said that Carry gave his wife \$500 a month for house expenses. They had several servants. German girls coming to the U.S. worked for \$5.00 a month and room and board while they were learning English. There were five Carry children. One of the girls married an architect named Albert Didden. Carry gave them the money to build a house 139 12<sup>th</sup> Street SE, now the rectory for St. Mark's Episcopal Church. There were connections between the yards to allow the Carry and Didden families to go back and forth.

One of their children, George Didden, became president of National Capital Bank. (He does not live on the Hill, however.) Albert Carry was a founder and Vice President of this bank.

At 131 12<sup>th</sup> Street is an apartment building now known as "Capital East." It was originally built by Albert Carry and was called the "Lincoln." Some of the Carry children lived in it. It had five floors with 4 large six room apartments on each floor. This building was in the Carry estate for many years and was sold about 15 years ago. It is now subdivided into 60 units.

There was also on 12<sup>th</sup> Street, the "Lincoln Park Apartments" built by a Civil War retiree named Captain Israel Stone. Stone's own home adjoined the apartment then known as "The Stonehurst." The apartment house was four stories high and contained spacious six room apartments. When Captain Stone retired, he planned to live in the big house, but he didn't live to do this. The property is now greatly changed. There are 21 apartment units in both houses.

At 117 11<sup>th</sup> Street lived Margarite Runbeck, who went to Eastern High School in the pre-World War I days. She became a well-known writer whose novel "Hope of Earth" was a bestseller in the early 1950's.

At 1008 North Carolina lived Jim Lucas, the famous United Press correspondent, who covered WWII.

At 119 12<sup>th</sup> was the Metzgeroth house which was built in the early 1900's. Metzgeroth was a lithographer at the U.S. Weather Bureau at 27<sup>th</sup> and M Streets NW. he walked to and from work. He had two children, Eric (a Col. in the U.S. Army) and Margaret (a schoolteacher, now retired). Margaret sold the house about a year ago. It was supposedly designed by the same architect who did the Library of Congress; it is an exceptionally fine house. St. Mark's Episcopal Church tried to buy the house for its rectory about ten years ago.

At 132 11<sup>th</sup> Street SE lived the family of Samuel Roy Beard, a neighborhood resident who achieved a great deal of notoriety. He started out as a bread wagon driver and in the course of his deliveries became familiar with Bland's Lunch at 14<sup>th</sup> and East Capitol, which was a hangout for gamblers. Beard became subsequently one of the most notorious gamblers on the Eastern seaboard, and as "Sam" Beard was alleged to be a member of the Costello syndicate in New York. He served a term in the '30's for income tax evasion. He testified before a Senate Committee Investigating gambling in D.C. in the early 1950's. He had an office on Ninth Street N.W. between D and E Streets; as a front he operated a pickle business.

At 131 11<sup>th</sup> Street is the Mattingly Funeral Home which was built by a grocer named Campbell in the 1890's. He had a grocery store at 230 11<sup>th</sup> Street SE. At the rear of his house is a fine carriage house. There was a white tile walk alongside the house with the name Campbell in blue tile. An attorney named

Fields next lived in the house. Fields had a number of Indian clients, and I remember seeing Indian Chieftains coming to the house. Mr. Fields always wore Indian moccasins.

The Waters organ factory was located in the 200 block of 10<sup>th</sup> Street SE. It has been made into two houses. The Waters house is on 10<sup>th</sup> Street and the factory itself, at the rear, has been made into a private home. Waters was a well-known organ maker; he made the organ for Keith's Theatre at 15<sup>th</sup> and G Streets NW. and for many churches in the area.

At 11<sup>th</sup> and C Streets NE were located the Herdic Stables. A Herdic was a horse-drawn omnibus in which patrons sat facing each other. It was named after the Austrian inventor, Peter Herdic. My grandfather was a blacksmith who worked for the Herdic Company, my mother told us that when it snowed, he would have to work all night putting rough shoes on the horses.

Lincoln Park provided summer attractions in the form of band concerts. In those days there was the U.S. Marine Band. Also the Engineer's Band which was stationed at the Washington Barracks in those days (now Ft. McNair). The U.S. Marine Band and the U.S. Engineer's Band alternated. The Park was safe in those days and there were large gatherings of families at night to attend the concerts. These concerts were great neighborhood events and afterwards, people would go to the drugstores such as Lamb's at 11<sup>th</sup> and East Capitol and Van Emmon's at 13<sup>th</sup> and East Capitol for sodas and sundaes and ice cream cones.

The first motion picture house in Southeast was at the southeast corner of Fourth and East Capitol and was owned by Harry Crandall. He owned a number of movie houses; some of the best-known were the Ambassador at 18<sup>th</sup> and Columbia Road, the Tivoli at 14<sup>th</sup> and Park Road, the Metropolitan on F Street NW. between Ninth and 10<sup>th</sup> Streets, and Crandall's at Ninth and E Streets NW. The Senate Theatre was located on the north side of the 300 block of Pennsylvania Avenue and the Avenue Grand was in the 600 block of Pennsylvania Avenue (now a vacant lot)—this was a deluxe movie house which opened in 1910 with a six-piece orchestra. On Eighth Street was the Navy Theatre at 410 and in the next block, just above G Street on the west side, was Meador's, also a popular house. A block below this opposite the Marine Barracks was the Zenith. The Carolina Airdrome at the southwest corner of 11<sup>th</sup> and North Carolina was opened in 1908. A second open air theatre was opened at 12<sup>th</sup> and C Streets NE. Both theatres were owned by the same man. One set of films was shared by both theaters. A popular job for a boy was "rushing the reels" from one house to the other between showings.

The drugstore at the northwest corner of Fourth and East Capitol was Powell's. Another well-known drugstore at Fifth and East Capitol was operated by a man named Sprucebank. It was later taken over by Henry Werner. Fuhrman had a drugstore at the northwest corner of Eighth and East Capitol. At 11<sup>th</sup> and East Capitol was Lamb's drugstore and Van Emmon's drugstore was at 13<sup>th</sup> and East Capitol. The oldest

drugstore on East Capitol was run by Demoll & Helmsen at Ninth Street, on the southwest corner. The building still stands. The drugstore dated from Civil War days. It had one of the first soda fountains set up in the City of Washington and was in use as late as 1920's.

#### Side B

German settlement in area. In addition to the Metzeroths, the Rossback family lived in the first house on the south side of Independence at 12<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Rossback worked for Carry as a brewmaster; there were three children in the family.

Lincoln Park was a family gathering place with meandering walks and many benches. It seemed an escape from the city and I used to read Horatio Alger and G.A. Henty books there in the summertime. There was no ball playing in the Park. It was a pleasant oasis, and there was, at that time, no violence or vandalism in the area. Once or twice a year there would be a black ceremony at the foot of the Lincoln Statue. D.C. officials were seldom seen in the Park or in the neighborhood. One dramatic event occurred when the WWII Germans who were captured in a submarine off Long Island were tried in the D.C. Courts; they were incarcerated in the D.C. Jail. There was a great show of military force when they were transferred from the jail to the courts and all the neighbors turned out to see the Army trucks and jeeps as they sped around the park.

Mr. Sladen. I was born at 203 C Street SE, about a block from the construction site of the Library of Congress. My mother would take me as a child to see the construction. This area was the center of Capitol Hill life in the early 1900's. I lived across the street from the Lincoln School at Second and C Streets; this was a black school. In heavy snows, a chain gang wearing convict stripes with guards and dogs from the D.C. Jail would come to clear the snow away—this made a great impression on me as a child. I first went to school at the old Dent School at Second and Garfield Park. When we moved to Sixth Street SE, I went to the Hilton School (which is now razed) on Sixth Street NE between Constitution and C Street, and then to the Towers School and the Wallach School, and finally to the Old Eastern High School, all of which are now demolished. I received my B.A. from George Washington University. I planned to go on to graduate school and was studying shorthand at Strayer College when I received a call for a part-time job in the office of Dr. Stanley Rinehart in the Munsey Building. Dr. Rinehart was the husband of writer Mary Roberts Rinehart who also had an office in the Munsey Building. Dr. Rinehart had retired from medicine and acted as his wife's business manager until he died in 1932. At that time, I took over the operation. In 1935 I moved to New York with Mrs. Rinehart, and I became a member of the book publishing firm of Farrar and Rinehart which later became Rinehart and Company. I was Secretary and Assistant Treasurer of the Corporation. I worked with Mrs. Rinehart until her death in 1958. I stayed with the company until 1962. In 1960 we merged with Henry Holt and Company and the John C. Winston

Company to form Holt Rinehart and Winston. In 1962, I retired and came back to Washington. I have lived 47 years in D.C. and 27 years in New York.

The Carry Properties. Albert Carry had many small properties throughout the city of Washington. He would buy a building, put a saloon in the first floor and have apartments above. One piece still standing is the property at the northwest corner of Seventh and Independence. He founded the German American Building Association which in WWI became the American Building Association. He also owned property at 13<sup>th</sup> and K Streets, on the southwest corner. He owned property on G Street NW. east of the Epiphany Church; this is now demolished. In those days brewers would own saloons like franchises so that they could control the beer going in. Albert Carry was one of the biggest brewers in the city. The other big brewers were Abner Drury and Christian Heurich.

When prohibition took effect in the 1920's, Carry went into the ice cream business and became very successful. He made a real cream ice cream, called "Carry's Special" for the B&O Railroad dining cars.

#### Lincoln Park Boundaries

Lincoln Park is a phrase coined by real-estate men. Lincoln Park had considerable prestige. I would say Lincoln Park could be defined as 10<sup>th</sup> Street to 14<sup>th</sup> Street and from Constitution to Independence Avenues. Capitol Hill is from First and East Capitol to 14<sup>th</sup> Street and south on 14<sup>th</sup> Street to Independence and east [ed: west] on Independence to First and up First to East Capitol. There was no name to the area south of Independence, although many said it was part of Capitol Hill. Kentucky Avenue was a dirt road when I moved into this house, and the area below D Street was known as "cowtown". East of 13<sup>th</sup> Street the area was known as "The Commons" and was open country with few buildings. We would wander through the paths of weeds much like cutting trails through a jungle. Between 13<sup>th</sup> Street and the D.C. Jail there was practically nothing there. It was mostly relatively cheap farm land. On the north side was a big dairy farm where we used to watch the cows and buy milk in a bucket. Out North Carolina Avenue at 16<sup>th</sup> Street was a big lumber yard owned by a man named Taplett. North of Constitution was pretty much unsettled. There was the big car barn at 13<sup>th</sup> and D Streets NE and south of it was a baseball field. The East Washington Sunday School league played there, and a feat of left-handed batters was to knock the ball across the block into the car barn door. Another baseball field at 14<sup>th</sup> and A Streets NE was used by another Sunday School league. There was a baseball field at 17<sup>th</sup> and D Streets SE.

The season ran from early June to mid-August. Union League Park was at 15<sup>th</sup> and H Streets NE. High School and semi-professional teams such as Rex Athletic Club played there. Union League Park was moved from the west to the east side of Bladensburg Road. The site is now occupied by Sears Company;

Sears built there in 1927. The old Benning racetrack was on Benning Road near the Pepco power plant. It was a very social racetrack. Edward McLean was active there. After racing was banned in the District in the early 1900's, it was used as a training ground, until the track was destroyed by a large fire in 1910.

On the Eastern Branch, there were marshes which were used for shooting birds during the hunting season, and when September 1<sup>st</sup> came around, I would awaken to the crackling of guns.

Stanton Park. Stanton Park had the same kind of activity as Lincoln Park—band concerts and so on.

H Street. H Street was a popular shopping area, but it was never considered a part of Capitol Hill. Nothing north of Constitution would be considered part of Capitol Hill. Capitol Hill was a very restricted area in the early 1900's.

The Navy Yard area was considered separate. It was south of Pennsylvania Avenue at M Street. Men in our area who were employed in the Navy Yard would ride their bikes to work. The Navy Yard at that time was open and anyone could go in. I was a pigeon fancier, and I would take my crates of pigeons there to the Naval tug which left everyday for Indian Head. The sailors would release the birds and they'd fly home. In the evening I would go down and pick up the empty crates. I used to watch the men at work in the shops; some of them would make toy brass cannons for the neighborhood boys. The father of one of my friends was Steward on the Presidential yacht Mayflower, and we would spend hours wandering around on it. The Naval Gun Factory Band gave concerts once a week in Leutze Park. Leutze Park was named after Cap. Emmanuel Leutze who was Captain of the yard. His son was a famous naval artist.

Southeast. Everything south of East Capitol was thought of as southeast; this included Lincoln Park. Now you think of Southeast as across Anacostia River.

Car tracks went first only to Ninth Street (there was a turn-table there), and later to the car barn at 14<sup>th</sup> and East Capitol. They were discontinued in the early 1960's.

I would like to read from a letter that I wrote to Michael Franch. Mr. Franch had asked me about well-known people who had lived on the Hill. In 1893 there were 37 members of the House living on Capitol Hill, most of them unknown to me with one exception: as a young member of the House, William Jennings Bryan lived at 131 B Street SE. This house was torn down when this block was demolished for the Madison Library Building. Some well-known men who lived on Capitol Hill in 1893 were the following: William H. Marlow who lived at 310 B Street NE. Marlow was a large landowner in D.C. and Maryland and was in the coal business. His office building at Eighth and E Streets NW was demolished a year or two ago. He owned all the land in what is now known as Marlow Heights. John G. Nicolay lived in 212 B Street SE in a cream-coloured brick house.

As you know, he was Lincoln's secretary and, with John Hay, wrote an authorized biography of Lincoln. Miss Helen Nicolay, his daughter, lived in this house. She was the author of a biography of her father. Dr. George Custis lived at 110 East Capitol Street; Dr. Samuel Chew lived at 226 East Capitol Street, and Dr. Wm. P.C. Hazen lived at 511 East Capitol. George M. Oyster lived at 210 East Capitol Street; he was the founder of the Chestnut Farms Dairy, the leader in that business around the turn of the century. It was located on Connecticut Avenue where Sloan's now is. Henry P. Blair lived at 213 East Capitol Street in Grant Row. His father was a member of Congress, and Blair, an attorney, was one of the Hill's most prominent citizens. In the early 1900's, he was president of the Board of Education. Mayor and Mrs. G. C. Cornish lived at 224 Fourth Street SE. I can't identify him, but he may have been the Mayor of the city before Shepard. In 1909 there were 78 members of Congress living on the Hill. Knute Nelson, Senator from Minnesota, lived at 647 East Capitol Street, J. T. Robinson lived at the old Congress Hall Hotel on New Jersey Avenue SE, William Sulzer, a New York Democrat in the House, lived at 131 B Street SE, where Bryan lived. He served in the House from 1893 to 1912 when he ran for and was elected governor of New York on the Democratic ticket. In 1913 he was impeached for irregularities in his campaign expenditures. William Levering DeVries lived at 327 East Capitol Street. He was a prominent Episcopal clergyman of Capitol Hill, rector of St. Mark's Episcopal Church, and later was elected one of the canons of the Washington Cathedral. Dr. Charles Luce, lived and practiced medicine at 215 Second Street SE. He was one of the District's World War I heroes—on his return, the grateful citizenry presented him with a horse named "Ypres" after the much fought-over town in Belgium. John Donahoe [ed, 2003: Donohoe] lived at 220 Second Street SE—he was Capitol Hill's largest and best-known real estate dealer. He was the man whose son Milburn lived on Kentucky Avenue.

/s/ Milton Sladen

November 25, 1974