

On this self-guided walking tour of Shaw, historic markers lead you to:

- Home of Carter G. Woodson, originator of Black History Month
- Site of former FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover's high school
- "Boss" Shepherd's tragic mistake
- Roots of Arena Stage
- Site of the city's first convention center
- Alley life in Washington
- Origins of DC's Jewish Community Centers
- Sites of the 1968 riots provoked by the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



Cultural Tourism  
DC



# Midcity at the Crossroads

## SHAW HERITAGE TRAIL



Shaw, the crossroads neighborhood at the edge of downtown, has been home to the newcomer and the old timer, the powerful and the poor, white and black. Follow this trail to discover Shaw's scholars, politicians, alley dwellers, activists, barkeeps, merchants, artists, entertainers, and spiritual leaders.



# Welcome.

Visitors to Washington, DC flock to the National Mall, where grand monuments symbolize the nation's highest ideals. This self-guided walking tour is the sixth in a series that invites you to discover what lies beyond the monuments: Washington's historic neighborhoods.

The Shaw neighborhood you are about to explore is one of the city's oldest, where traces can be found of nearly every group that has called Washington home. Shaw was partly disfigured by the riots following the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1968. Yet much of its rich past remains for you to see. This guide points you to the legacies of daily life in this Midcity neighborhood between downtown and uptown.

*Dance class at the YWCA, around 1940.  
Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University*

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As you walk this trail, please keep safety in mind,  
just as you would while walking in any city.

# • Midcity at the Crossroads Shaw Heritage Trail

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# Introduction

SHAW HAS ALWAYS BEEN “a place between places,” where races and classes bumped and mingled as they got a foothold in the city. The neighborhood is situated just north of what were downtown’s federal offices and largely white-owned businesses, and south of the African American-dominated U Street commercial corridor and Howard University. The neighborhood has been home to the powerful seeking a convenient location, immigrants and migrants just starting out, laborers in need of affordable housing, men and women of God — and people living on luck, both good and bad.

In the early 1900s, Seventh and Ninth streets north of Mount Vernon Square offered bargain-rate alternatives to downtown’s fancy department stores. There were also juke joints, storefront evangelists, and dozens of schools and houses of worship. Longstanding local businesses took root here. Today’s Chevy Chase Bank, BF Saul Company, and Ottenberg’s Bakery all got their starts along Seventh Street.

Shaw’s name comes from the area’s junior high school, named for Robert Gould Shaw. The Civil War hero was the white commander of the 54th



Sen. Blanche K. Bruce and Josephine Bruce.



Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., spoke at Shiloh's Men's Day in 1960.

Massachusetts Regiment of Colored Soldiers (portrayed in the movie *Glory*). In 1966, when city planners used Shaw Junior High's attendance boundaries (including Logan Circle, U Street, and Midcity) to create the Shaw School Urban Renewal Area, the name Shaw came into common use.

Before the Civil War, the area was still mostly rural. But running through it was Seventh Street, one of the city's earliest roads. Seventh Street connected Maryland farms to Center Market on Pennsylvania Avenue and the docks in Southwest Washington. Early on, merchants set up shop on Seventh between Center Market (begun in 1802) and Mount Vernon Square, just south of the Shaw Heritage Trail route. The completion of the Northern Liberty Market on Mount Vernon Square in 1846 led merchants and tradesmen to build houses nearby. Doctors and shopkeepers occupied three-story buildings, doing business on the street level and living above. The Civil War (1861-1865) expanded the federal government, adding government clerks to the mix. The war also brought three Union Army camps to the area. These installations attracted formerly enslaved men and women seeking jobs and shelter. After the war ended, many remained.



Andrew Carnegie

The Historical Society of Washington, D.C.

By 1880 sturdy houses faced Shaw's streets, while simple dwellings, stables, and coal sheds filled the back alleys behind them. Poor African Americans and whites created communities in the alleys. As improvements in transportation



Architect T. Franklin Schneider's  
Sixth St. square of rowhouses, 1950.

Selling fish, O Street Market, 1980



Washingtonian Division DC Public Library

opened up new areas of town for fashionable but racially restricted development, white people of means moved north and west of Shaw. This area was not restricted and offered the mostly black-owned business district on U Street plus a concentration of excellent "colored" schools. In fact M Street High School, founded in 1872 as the nation's first high school for African Americans, operated at 128 M Street (now Perry School). African Americans migrated from the South just to attend Shaw's schools. By 1920 Shaw was majority African American.

Religious expression flourished in Shaw, as you can see in its many historically black churches. Immigrant whites (German, Irish, Italian, Greek, Eastern European Jewish) also built sanctuaries here. Within walking distance of the old Northern Liberty Market site (Mount Vernon Square) were three major synagogues and more smaller ones. When the Nation of Islam came to Washington, it opened a mosque on Ninth Street. And tiny storefront churches and traveling preachers found ready congregations within the alleys or on street corners.



J. Edgar Hoover,  
Central High  
School's most  
noted graduate  
(1913), and the  
debate team.

Paul K. Williams, Kelsey & Associates Collection

By Gordon Parks, Library of Congress



The all-black company of the R St. fire house respond to an alarm.

The housing pressures brought by World War II led Shaw landlords to convert rowhouses into apartments and rooming houses. The post-war suburban housing boom and the outlawing of racial restrictions allowed the affluent to move on. Housing, now mostly rental, became crowded and dilapidated. In the 1960s local churches led urban renewal planning to improve the community while preventing the displacement of low-income residents. Then in April 1968, the riots following the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., devastated Shaw. Centuries-old commercial/residential buildings were looted and burned. A few businesses survived, but most never reopened.

After a number of years, during which Shaw was noted for its burned-out streetscapes, community members, churches, and government agencies have succeeded in creating today's mix of new and historic. With the arrival of Metro's Green and Yellow lines, and the Washington Convention Center, Shaw continues to hold its own as a city crossroads and a welcoming place to live.

Washingtonian Division, D.C. Public Library



Rioters responding to Dr. King's assassination reduced Seventh and P to smoldering ruins.

# 1

## Words and Deeds

SEVENTH STREET AND MT. VERNON PLACE NW



Checking out books, Carnegie Library, around 1935.

*Washingtoniana Division, D.C. Public Library*

WEALTHY INDUSTRIALIST ANDREW CARNEGIE donated funds to build the city's first public library here on Mount Vernon Square. The Beaux-Arts style Central Library opened in 1903 with 12,412 books donated by its predecessor, the private Washington City Free Library.

Central Library, located in a racially mixed area, welcomed everyone at a time when the city was generally segregated. The widely beloved library hosted public lectures by such speakers as Civil Rights leader Mary Church Terrell. Edith Morganstein, raised nearby in the 1920s, called the "beautiful building with magnolia trees all around" her "second home."

The library's square was part of Pierre L'Enfant's 1791 plan for Washington, but it remained undeveloped until 1846, when Northern Liberty Market opened there. A decade later, the market became notorious. During a citywide election, members of the anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant "Know-Nothing" party attacked opponents as they arrived to vote at the market's polling station. Mayor William Magruder appealed to President James Buchanan, who dispatched 110 Marines to restore order. When the Know-Nothings refused to disperse, the Marines fired. Six protesters were killed, and 21 were injured.

A second notorious incident occurred in 1872, when Territorial Governor Alexander "Boss" Shepherd demolished the deteriorating market at night and without warning, accidentally killing several market workers who were inside.

Nearly a century later, when parts of the city were burned and looted in the wake of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, assassination, this neighborhood was badly damaged. Order was finally restored with the arrival of U.S. Army troops and National Guardsmen.

# 2

## For the Working People

NINTH STREET AND MT. VERNON PLACE NW



Samuel Gompers breaks ground for the American Federation of Labor's headquarters, 1915.

*The George Meany Memorial Archives*

THE LARGE OFFICE BUILDING across Ninth Street from Sign 2 opened in 1916 as the headquarters of the American Federation of Labor. When the 2.5 million-member organization moved in, it was the nation's largest and most powerful labor union. The building's design by Milburn, Heister & Co. symbolized the union's maturity and strength.

The AF of L's first president was London-born Samuel Gompers (1850-1924). Gompers immigrated to New York in 1863, became a cigar maker and, in 1875, president of Cigar Makers Union Local 144. When a number of unions formed the American Federation of Labor in 1886, they elected Gompers president. He remained president until his death. A memorial to Gompers is nearby at Tenth Street and Massachusetts Avenue. The AFL-CIO relocated to 16th Street in 1956, and the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipefitters Industry took its place here.

The current Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church was completed in 1917 for a congregation dating from 1869. In 1935, as the population of nearby Chinatown was peaking, the church invited the Chinese Community Church to share its space. A year later, the church developed the Mount Vernon Players. This drama group presented secular plays and welcomed racially integrated audiences when most Washington theaters did not. Under Managing Director Edward Mangum and Assistant Managing Director Zelda Fichandler, the group evolved into Arena Stage. In 1950 Arena's first production opened in the former Hippodrome movie theater at 808 K Street (since demolished).

# 3

## Power Brokers

NINTH AND M STREETS NW



In 1983 the Convention Center site was a mix of cleared land and parking lots. L St. is seen at center.

*The Washington Post*

A POST-CIVIL WAR BUILDING BOOM brought grand new houses and important people to Midcity.

By 1881 Blanche Kelso Bruce, the first African American to serve a full term in the U.S. Senate, lived on this block. Born enslaved in Virginia, Bruce (1841-1898) escaped from slavery, attended Oberlin College, and then became rich buying abandoned plantations in Mississippi after the Civil War. Elected to the U.S. Senate in 1875, Bruce worked to aid destitute African Americans and improve government treatment of Native Americans. Later he served as register of the U.S. Treasury and recorder of deeds for Washington, DC.

Bruce and his wife, Josephine Willson Bruce (1852-1923), a founder of the National Association of Colored Women (1896), lived in the Second Empire French style house at 909 M Street.

Major John Wesley Powell (1834-1902) and his family moved to 910 M Street (since demolished) in 1881 after he took over the U.S. Geological Survey. Powell had lost his right arm during a Civil War battle. Nonetheless he led the first official survey of the Grand Canyon in 1869, and promoted Native American rights.

After 1910, small houses, commercial buildings, apartments, and immigrant churches developed here. The affluent gradually moved on, and their mansions were divided into apartments or rooming houses. So long as racially restrictive housing covenants limited opportunities, Shaw was a mixed-income, black neighborhood. Then in the 1960s, with new “open housing” laws, many people of means left, bringing a temporary decline to the area.

In the 1960s many buildings on the east side of Ninth Street were cleared for urban renewal, but the resulting lot remained empty. In 2003 the Washington Convention Center opened on the site.

# 4

## Alley Life

O STREET AT NAYLOR COURT NW



The entrance to Naylor Court,  
around 1936.

*The Historical Society of Washington, D.C.*

THE LANES OF NAYLOR COURT, laid out in the 1860s, were among hundreds of intersecting alleys that were hidden behind DC houses, especially in Shaw. Stables, workshops, sheds, and cheaply built two-story houses filled these alleys. While many of Naylor Court's original dwellings are gone, a few remain. Naylor Court's alleys form half of today's Blagden Alley-Naylor Court Historic District.

Starting with the Civil War housing crisis, builders crammed scores of dwellings into tight spaces such as these. Most dwellings lacked running water, plumbing, or electricity, and they quickly became dilapidated. Yet the need for shelter was desperate. In 1908 more than 300 people filled 50 Blagden Alley dwellings, averaging seven per household and paying \$6 a month in rent.

In 1900 Nochen Kafitz, a Lithuanian immigrant, opened a grocery in his house a few blocks away on Glick Alley. (The alley, now gone, once lay between Sixth, Seventh, and S streets and Rhode Island Avenue.) His son, Morris (1887-1964), changed his name to Cafritz and became a key DC real estate developer and philanthropist.

New alley dwelling construction was outlawed in 1934, and many alleys were cleared of housing. But some hidden alleys lingered, attracting prostitutes, gamblers, drug dealers, and speakeasies. Others, though, were tightly knit communities, where people who just happened to be poor looked out for one another.

Since the 1980s, the alley's small dwellings, former carriage barns, and horse stalls have housed artists' studios and residences as well as working garages. In 1990 the city moved its archives to the former Tally Ho Stables, built in 1883.

# 5

## Spiritual Life

NINTH STREET BETWEEN P AND Q STREETS NW



Shiloh Baptist Church Sunday  
School students pose in front of  
the old L St. church, 1919.

*Collection of Shiloh Baptist Church*

WASHINGTON'S FIRST BLACK MUSLIM TEMPLE opened in 1940 when the Nation of Islam established Temple No. 4 at 1525-27 Ninth Street. The Nation of Islam's second national leader, Elijah Muhammad (1897-1975), presided over the event. Founded in Chicago in 1931 by Wallace Fard, the Nation of Islam advocates discipline, racial pride, respect for women, Allah and the Qur'an, justice, pacifism, and the separation of African Americans from white society.

In 1960 the temple, re-named Masjid Muhammad Mosque, moved nearby to 1519 Fourth Street, where Malcolm X (1925-1965) briefly served as its leader.

The story of Shiloh Baptist Church began during the Civil War. The Union Army, poised to attack Fredericksburg, Virginia, offered safe passage to Washington for enslaved or free blacks wanting to flee the Confederacy. Some 400 members of Fredericksburg's Shiloh Baptist Church accepted the offer, and in 1863 founded Washington's Shiloh Baptist Church on L Street, NW, west of 16th.

In 1924 Shiloh Baptist moved here to what had been Hamline Methodist Church. When some white neighbors objected, the donor of Hamline Church's organ arranged for a janitor to set fire to his gift, damaging the building. Unbowed, Shiloh members repaired the church and flourished. The church was rebuilt after another major fire in 1991. Like many churches in Shaw, Shiloh, with its Family Life Center, serves as a social gathering place. Shiloh Baptist is especially known for its Civil Rights work, housing assistance, and music ministry. Soprano Marian Anderson, the "Wings Over Jordan" gospel singers, and many others have performed at the church.

# 6

## Working for the Race

NINTH AND Q STREETS NW



Members of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History pose in front of the Whitelaw Hotel, 1925. Next to the lady in white at right, Mary Church Terrell, is Carter G. Woodson.

Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University

CARTER G. WOODSON, the “Father of Black History,” worked and lived at 1538 Ninth Street from 1922 until 1950. The son of formerly enslaved people, Woodson received a Ph.D. from Harvard, and became an acclaimed scholar, educator, and advocate. He founded the Association for the Study of Negro (now African American) Life and History and the Associated Publishers, and organized Negro History Week (later Black History Month). He wrote *The Mis-Education of the American Negro*, the landmark textbook *The Negro in Our History*, and other important works. Because he often walked through Shaw carrying stacks of books, local schoolchildren dubbed Woodson “Bookman.”

Poet Langston Hughes briefly worked here for Woodson, and many of his poems of street life were inspired by the neighborhood. In *The Big Sea* (1940), he wrote: “I tried to write poems like the songs they sang on Seventh Street.”

The house at 817 Q Street was once the Washington headquarters of the International Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Founded in 1925 by A. Philip Randolph, the IBSCP was the nation’s first and largest black trade union. Some 12,000 members — highly skilled porters, attendants, and maids — all worked for the Pullman Palace Car Company, then the nation’s largest employer of African Americans. The IBSCP published *The Messenger*, battling discrimination practiced by most American labor unions. In 1938 female relatives of union members founded the International Ladies' Auxiliary.

Much of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom was planned at 817 Q Street.



A Phyllis Wheatley YWCA social event,  
around 1940.

*Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University*

THE BUILDING AT 901 RHODE ISLAND AVENUE is the city's first Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) for African Americans. It honors Phyllis Wheatley (1753-1784), considered America's first published black poet.

The Wheatley YWCA was organized in 1905 by the Booklover's Club, a black women's literary club, to provide housing, recreation, and vocational and Christian guidance to women. The Y opened in Southwest Washington, then relocated to this larger facility in 1920 to accommodate the hundreds of young women drawn to Washington during World War I. Carter G. Woodson frequently lectured and took meals here. Sororities met here. During World War II, when the Y became a social center for servicemen and women, Civil Rights leader Dorothy Height served as secretary general. Recently renovated, the building provides accommodations, day care, and meeting spaces.

Business High School for whites, and then Cardozo Business High School for African Americans, once occupied the 800 block of Rhode Island Avenue. Business High School became part of the new Roosevelt High School in 1931. Cardozo moved to its current 13th Street hill site in 1950.

The original rowhouse at 901 R Street once housed the Clef Club (later Lewis Thomas Cabaret). The façade of the current house recreates the look of the original. The popular nightclub presented Duke Ellington and Bricktop and, despite its residential location, proudly advertised that it was open from dusk to dawn. At 913 R Street is the former Engine Company No. 4 fire house. In 1919 Company 4 (then located in Southwest) became Washington's first all-black company after black firefighters requested a separate facility run by African Americans.

# 8

## Reading and 'Riting and 'Rithmetic

SEVENTH AND R STREETS NW



Armstrong Technical High School students  
learn to draft architectural plans.

*Library of Congress*

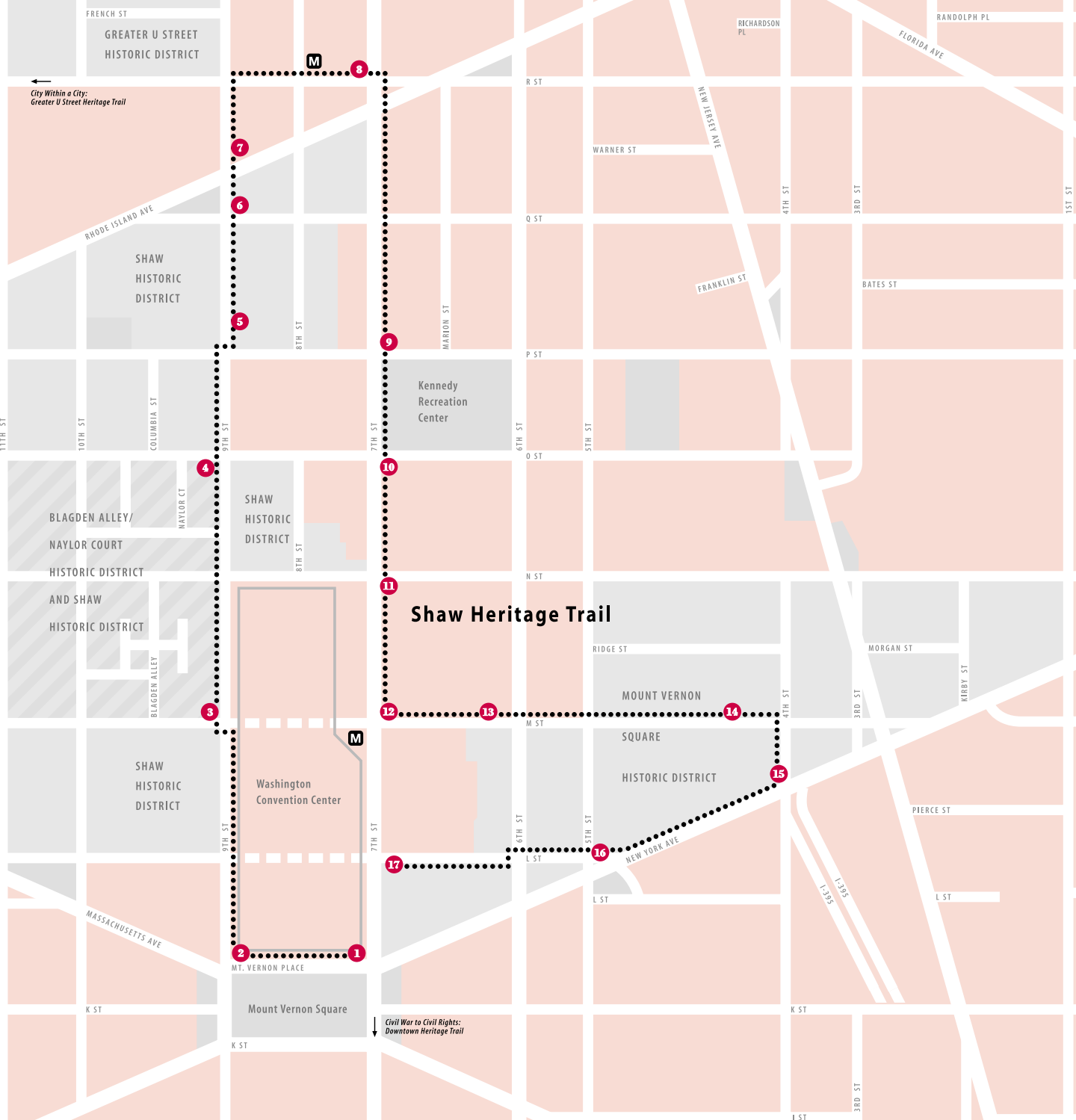
WRAPPING THE CORNER of Seventh and Rhode Island is Asbury Dwellings for senior citizens. In 1901 the building opened as the city's white-only McKinley Technical School, memorializing slain President William McKinley (1843-1901). In 1928 the "colored" school system took over the building for a new Shaw Junior High, honoring Robert Gould Shaw. Shaw was the white commander of the Civil War Union Army's 54th Massachusetts regiment of black soldiers.


Shaw's acclaimed faculty included abstract artist Alma W. Thomas (1891-1978), who taught there from 1924 until 1960. Today her paintings hang in renowned art museums worldwide.

As time passed, the school became overcrowded and rundown, and parents protested for better accommodations. Finally in 1977 a new Shaw Junior High opened on Rhode Island Avenue. Asbury United Methodist Church opened the rehabilitated Asbury Dwellings for senior housing in 1982.

During the segregation era (1880-1954), the Shaw neighborhood was a center of black education. M Street High School, the nation's first high school (1870) for black students, operated nearby. Three important high schools succeeded M Street — Cardozo (business), Dunbar (academic), and Armstrong (technical). Thousands of southern families migrated here specifically for the schools, where teachers with advanced degrees found work denied them by discriminatory colleges and universities.

The library building at Rhode Island Avenue and Seventh St. honors plumbing businessman Watha T. Daniel (1911-1973). Daniel was a leader of the Model Inner City Community Organization, an early 1960s coalition founded by Revs. Walter Fauntroy and Ernest Gibson to ensure that the poor would have a say in the urban renewal of Shaw.



**The Shaw Heritage Trail, Midcity at the Crossroads,** is composed of 17 illustrated historical markers, each of which is capped with an . You can begin your journey at any point along the route. The entire walk should take about 90 minutes.

Sign 1 stands at the corner of Seventh Street and Mount Vernon Place, a two-block walk from the Mt. Vernon Sq/7th St-Convention Center station on Metro's Green and Yellow lines. Sign 8 is next to the Shaw-Howard U station.

# 9

## The Fires of 1968

SEVENTH AND P STREETS NW



A mother and daughter walk past the wreckage of Seventh St. on Easter Sunday, one day after the riots following Dr. King's assassination subsided.

*The Washington Post*

THE ASSASSINATION of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on Thursday April 4, 1968, changed this neighborhood forever.

When word of Dr. King's murder spread that evening, Washingtonians gathered along busy 14th and U streets, NW; H Street, NE; and here on Seventh. At first distraught residents simply demanded that businesses close to honor the life of Dr. King, but soon angry individuals began smashing storefronts and taking merchandise. Fury over Dr. King's death, combined with local black resentment of some white business owners who treated their patrons as second-class citizens, fueled the rage and destruction.

Stores were firebombed and looted. Firefighters could not do their jobs because rioters cut their hoses. Police were outnumbered. On April 5, National Guardsmen and U.S. Army troops arrived to restore order.

When the smoke cleared, the community discovered that 10 people had died in fires. Many were elderly and disabled, living above the storefronts. Businesses, owned by blacks and whites alike, were ruined, never to reopen. The riots unfortunately succeeded where urban renewal planners had failed, demolishing many of the area's oldest buildings. Shaw experienced years of boarded-up windows and vacant lots. By the 1980s, housing complexes stood where stores and taverns once did business.

One building destroyed in the fires was a grand house built on this corner sometime before 1874 for fruit grower William F. Thyson. It became a hotel for farmers selling goods at the O Street Market, and from 1920 until 1950, a Salvation Army training center.

# 10

## Community Anchors

SEVENTH AND O STREETS NW



At the center of the first Kennedy Playground was a soapbox derby racetrack, 1964.

*Washingtoniana Division, D.C. Public Library*

AT SEVENTH AND O STREETS stands the tower of the O Street Market. When the market opened in 1881, and refrigerators had not yet been invented, people shopped here daily for everything from live chickens to fresh tomatoes. At first the vendors were German immigrants. By the 1960s, most were African American. Damaged in the riots of 1968, the market was restored in 1980 but lost its roof in a 2003 snowstorm.

On the east side of Seventh, landscaper John Saul began planting fruit trees in 1852. His son, B. Francis Saul, later opened a real estate business that became the B.F. Saul Company and Chevy Chase Bank. During the Civil War, the Union Army camped here at Wisewell Barracks and Hospital.

Rowhouses facing Sixth Street eventually replaced Wisewell Barracks, sharing the square with the Henry, Polk, and Central High schools for white students. Former FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, class of 1913, is Central's best-known graduate. Central High School moved in 1916 to a grand new facility astride the 13th Street hill (now Cardozo High School).

In the 1950s, the entire block was leveled for a playground. Completed in 1964, the playground was dedicated to the memory of President John F. Kennedy. Kids eager for play space clambered on its 1888 steam locomotive, a tugboat, and two surplus Air Force jets. But after the riots of 1968 burned neighboring buildings, much of the playground's equipment was removed, and the facility became crime-ridden. Friends of Kennedy Playground led clean-up efforts in the 1990s, and a new recreation center opened here in 2003.

# 11

## Seventh Street Develops

SEVENTH AND N STREETS NW



A Church of the Immaculate Conception altar boy, 1937.

*The Washington Post*

IN 1864 ST. PATRICK'S PARISH opened a new mission church — Immaculate Conception Church — for Catholics living far from St. Patrick's downtown F Street home. The current imposing, Gothic style building opened a decade later. Renowned actress Helen Hayes was baptized here in 1900. Immaculate Conception's community work included its *Washington Catholic Hour* radio show on WOL (1921-1962). For 99 years, until 1964, the church operated Immaculate Conception School for boys at 711 N Street. It is now an elementary school. Girls attended Immaculate Conception Academy nearby at Eighth and Q streets until 1954. After much of this area was destroyed in the 1968 riots, Monsignor Joshua Mundell of Immaculate Conception worked to stabilize the neighborhood, encouraging church and federal government collaborations to build modern apartments.

The Seventh Street Savings Bank building is a remnant of the block's business era. The combination bank/residential building opened in 1912. After many mergers, it closed for good in 1983.

Seventh Street developed as a business street because of good transportation. Back in 1810, Congress chartered the Seventh Street Turnpike from Pennsylvania Avenue to Rockville, Maryland. At first omnibuses (horse-drawn wagons) carried passengers along Seventh. Then in 1862 Congress chartered street railways, with a Seventh Street line. Leading abolitionist Senator Charles Sumner made sure that the charter prohibited segregation on the streetcars. The first electric streetcars (1888) ran along New York Avenue to Seventh, but in 1962 were replaced by buses. The latest innovation, Metro's Green and Yellow lines, opened in 1991 after seven disruptive years of construction.

# 12

## Reaching for Equality

SEVENTH AND M STREETS NW



The Broadway Theater, seen in 1937.

*Scurlock Studio Records, Archives Center,  
National Museum of American History*

FOR MUCH OF THE 1900S, inexpensive entertainments lined Seventh and Ninth streets, from D to U streets. Vaudeville houses, pool halls, record shops and taverns made for a busy night life. And everyone went to the movies. Two small theaters once operated on this block, the Alamo (1203) and the Mid-City (1223). Seventh Street also boasted the Happyland (1020), Gem (1131), and Broadway (1515), with the Raphael nearby at 1409 Ninth.

Until 1953 Washington's movie houses were segregated by seating or by theater. By 1927, five of the city's 13 "colored" theaters were found near here. Some were white owned. Others were not, such as the Mid-City, owned by African American vaudeville star Sherman H. Dudley.

The Washington Bee newspaper, a booster of black-owned businesses, encouraged boycotts of white-owned theaters. In 1910 the Bee targeted the Happyland, which segregated its auditorium with a low partition. Theater historian Robert Headley noted that children often hurled hard candy at each other over the wall.

In 1919 a race riot came to this area. It was one of a number that struck U.S. cities that summer. Heroic black veterans of World War I's battles for freedom had come home demanding first-class citizen rights, and their actions threatened some white DC residents. In July reports of an incident in Southwest Washington sparked white mobs that rampaged through black neighborhoods, including Shaw. In turn armed black men defended their communities. Over five days, more than 30 white and black residents were killed and hundreds were injured.

# 13

## “Sweet Daddy” Grace

SIXTH AND M STREETS NW



Bishop “Sweet Daddy” Grace and a mass baptism in the Potomac, 1934.

*Photograph by Scurlock Studio for United House of Prayer*

ALONG THIS BLOCK IS THE WORLD HEADQUARTERS of the United House of Prayer for All People. Founded in 1919 in Massachusetts by Charles M. “Sweet Daddy” Grace, the church moved its headquarters to Washington in 1926. Soon after, it purchased a mansion where the church is today. The mansion had housed Frelinghuysen University, a night school headed by noted African American educator Anna J. Cooper.

Bishop Grace’s mass baptisms were legendary. One year he baptized 208 people in front of 15,000 onlookers here on M Street, with water provided by local fire fighters. At the time of the flamboyant, charismatic evangelist’s death in 1960, his church claimed three million members in 14 states and the District. Bishop Grace was succeeded by Bishop Walter McCollough, who expanded the church’s political influence. Under McCollough, the church purchased and built hundreds of units of affordable housing in Shaw and Southeast, as well as in North Carolina and Connecticut. The church is also known for its Saints Paradise Cafeteria, music, community service, and outreach to the poor.

Over time nearly two dozen religious congregations have settled in Shaw. Congregations often traded spaces as their numbers grew or shrank, or they followed their membership to the suburbs. As you walk the trail you will see current and former houses of worship for A.M.E. Zion, Baptist, Catholic, Christian, Christian Evangelical, Greek Orthodox, Islamic, Jewish, and other faiths.



Athletes of the Young Men's Hebrew  
Association, 1913.

*Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington*

IF A HOUSE COULD TALK, what tales would it tell? The private residence at 415 M Street would tell of hundreds of Shaw residents who came here to play and worship.

The house at 415 was built in the 1860s for Joseph Prather, a butcher at nearby Northern Liberty Market. After Prather the house became the first DC home of the Young Men's Hebrew Association (1913-1914), serving the recreational and spiritual needs of young local Jews. The YMHA evolved into today's Jewish Community Centers (DC, Fairfax, Virginia, and Rockville, Maryland). Next came the Hebrew Home for the Aged (1914-1923), which still operates in Rockville.

Shomrei Shabbos, an Orthodox Jewish synagogue, occupied 415 for about 20 years. Then, in 1947, the Church of Jesus Christ moved in, remaining until 1980. Mother Lena Sears founded the church after nearby Bible Way Church refused to let women preach. Next came the Metropolitan Community Church, a Christian church with a special ministry to the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered community. It is now located one block north of here on Ridge Street.

A quick detour to Ridge Street reveals a rare row of small, wood-frame houses from as early as the 1860s. (Shaw housing generally is brick.) At number 448, the Northwest Settlement House has provided social and day care services since 1934. The Tuesday Evening Club of Social Workers, a group of African American women, founded the center "to extend a helping hand to friendless girls, deserted women and neglected children."



The Anti-Saloon League distributed this flyer to persuade people to vote for Prohibition.

Westerville (Ohio) Public Library

THE UNUSUAL WOODEN CHAPEL at Sign 15 was completed in 1857 as a mission of the McKendree Methodist Church. Known as Fletcher Chapel, it may have been a stop on the Underground Railroad.

Washington's Anti-Saloon League began meeting at Fletcher Chapel in 1893 and later merged into the National Anti-Saloon League. The League helped persuade Congress to pass the 18th Amendment prohibiting alcohol sales and consumption in 1920. Two years earlier, though, Congress imposed Prohibition on Washington as a test case. Local and national Prohibition ended with the 18th Amendment's repeal in 1933.

In 1905 Fletcher Chapel was purchased by First Tabernacle Church of God and Saints of Christ.

Across New York Avenue is Bible Way Temple. Founder Rev. Smallwood E. Williams began his preaching career outdoors on Seventh Street. At the time of his death in 1991, Williams led the more than 300 churches of Bible Way Church World Wide. Active in civil rights and city politics, Williams saved his church from demolition for highway construction in 1963. Today Interstate 395 bends around its site.

Just up Fourth Street at the corner of N and New Jersey is the site of the first pharmacy opened by Roscoe Pinkett. The family's businesses went on to include John R. Pinkett, Inc., a real estate and insurance company based in Shaw from 1932 until 1992.

Along the walk to Sign 16 is the Yale Steam Laundry at 437-443 New York Avenue. The building was designed in 1902 to complement its residential neighbors. Yale's state-of-the-art machinery washed, dried, and ironed Washingtonians' uniforms, tablecloths, and linens.

# 16

## To Market, To Market

FIFTH AND L STREETS NW



Two days after fire nearly destroyed the market in 1946, farmers set up outdoor stands.

*Washingtoniana Division, D.C. Public Library*

After this neighborhood's original Northern Liberty Market on Mount Vernon Square was razed in 1872, a new Northern Liberty Market was built along Fifth Street between K and L. When the market's owners saw that farm products weren't drawing enough customers, they added a massive second-floor entertainment space. This was Convention Hall (1893), the city's first convention center, seating 6,000. While provisions changed hands on the first floor, the second floor hosted balls, banquets, and even duckpin bowling tournaments. Soon the building was called Convention Hall Market.

When the Center Market downtown on Pennsylvania Avenue was razed in 1931 to build the National Archives, many vendors moved here. Convention Hall Market became New Center Market. Then in 1946 the building burned in a spectacular fire, visible for miles. Partially rebuilt with a low, flat roof, it continued to sell foodstuffs despite the arrival of modern supermarkets. By 1966 the vendors were gone, and the building became the National Historical Wax Museum. When the museum closed, rock 'n' rollers flocked to "The Wax" for concerts. The Convention Hall was succeeded by the new center that opened in 1983 at Ninth and H streets, NW, and two years later the Wax Museum was demolished.

The 53 handsome rowhouses on the square bounded by New York Avenue, Fifth, Sixth, and M streets were designed and built in 1890 by the prolific architect T. Franklin Schneider. Developing an entire square, though common in most city neighborhoods, was unusual in Shaw, where most houses were built individually.

# 17

## The Place to Shop

SEVENTH AND L STREETS NW



M. Frank Ruppert, son of the founder of Ruppert's Hardware Store, poses in the doorway around 1920. The name of the gentleman at left is not currently known.

*Collection of Paul Ruppert*

WHEN NORTHERN LIBERTY MARKET OPENED ON Mount Vernon Square in 1846, small businesses soon followed. By 1900 they catered to everyday needs and formed a bargain district in comparison to downtown's fancy department stores.

Many stores were owned by immigrant families who lived upstairs. It was not unusual to find side-by-side an Irish funeral home, a Chinese restaurant, a German hardware store, a Jewish delicatessen, and an Irish saloon. In the 1920s, Henrietta Zaltrow's father ran a small grocery next to a Chinese laundry. "My father used to borrow money from them all the time," she recalled. Shopkeepers frequently extended credit and more to their clientele.

The commercial section here and closer to F Street attracted so many Jewish business people that by 1900 three synagogues – Washington Hebrew, Adas Israel, and Ohev Sholom – were located just south of Mount Vernon Square.

German immigrants Henry and Charlotte Boegeholz opened their saloon and restaurant at 1139 Seventh around 1874. The 1900 Census counted five adults, six children, and a servant, all living on the two upper floors. In 1911 K.C. Braun retired as head butler of the German Embassy and bought the business.

The descendants of hardware store founder Henry Ruppert have operated businesses continuously on the 1000 block of Seventh Street since 1885. The hardware store closed in 1987, a casualty of Metro construction and changes in hardware retailing.

Most of the blocks to the north were devastated in the riots of 1968. They remained a sad reminder for nearly a decade until nearby churches collaborated with the federal government to build the apartments you see today.

# Sources

THE PROCESS OF CREATING a Neighborhood Heritage Trail begins with the community, extends through story-sharing and oral history gathering, and ends in formal scholarly research. For more information on this neighborhood, please consult the resources in the Kiplinger Library of The Historical Society of Washington, D.C., and the Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library. In addition, please see the following selected works:

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[www.culturaltourismdc.org](http://www.culturaltourismdc.org)

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## Trace the Footprints of History


Take Metro to explore the city's other Neighborhood Heritage Trails:

- *City Within a City: Greater U Street Heritage Trail*, U St/African-Amer Civil War Memorial/Cardozo
- *Civil War to Civil Rights: Downtown Heritage Trail*, Archives-Navy Mem'l/Penn Quarter or Metro Center or Judiciary Square
- *Tour of Duty: Barracks Row Heritage Trail*, Eastern Market
- *River Farms to Urban Towers: Southwest Heritage Trail*, Waterfront-SEU
- *Roads to Diversity: Adams Morgan Heritage Trail*, Woodley Park-Zoo/Adams Morgan to Adams Morgan shuttle or Metrobus 42 from Dupont Circle

For more information, please call 202-661-7581 or visit [www.CulturalTourismDC.org](http://www.CulturalTourismDC.org).

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Carter G. Woodson in his study.  
*Scurlock Studio Records, Archives Center,  
National Museum of American History*



The first convention hall was large enough for a track meet, 1912.

*The Historical Society of Washington, D.C.*

**Cultural Tourism DC (CTdc)** strengthens the image and economy of Washington, DC, neighborhood by neighborhood, by linking more than 170 DC cultural and neighborhood member organizations with partners in tourism, hospitality, government, and business. CTdc helps residents and tourists discover and experience Washington's authentic arts and culture.

**The National Trust for Historic Preservation** is a privately funded nonprofit organization that provides leadership, education, advocacy and resources to save America's diverse historic places and revitalize our communities. [www.nationaltrust.org](http://www.nationaltrust.org)

**Shaw Main Streets** is the commercial revitalization and historic preservation organization serving the Seventh and Ninth street commercial corridors, dedicated to making Shaw a better place to live, work, shop, play, and pray. [www.shawmainstreets.com](http://www.shawmainstreets.com)

For more information about CTdc's Washington, DC Neighborhood Heritage Trails Program and other cultural opportunities, please call 202-661-7581 or visit [www.CulturalTourismDC.org](http://www.CulturalTourismDC.org).