

## Washington: The City That Was Planned

Host City for the Seventh Annual Conference of Referees in Bankruptcy

By CURTIS HODGES, Executive Director of the Greater National Capital Committee

Washington, the National Capital, with its 668 parks, its broad tree-lined avenues and its magnificent public buildings has not been thrown together by chance. The entire development of the city has been along what is known as the L'Enfant plan. It is true that this plan has not been adhered to closely and continuously throughout the years, but in the main there has been adherence to it and it is the model that is being followed today. There have been deviations from it but Charles W. Elliott, 2nd, of the National Park and Planning Commission is authority for the statement that such deviations usually have caused trouble.

There was a time, for example, when Andrew Jackson, then President of the United States, in the midst of a discussion as to where the U. S. Treasury building should be, walked forth, stuck a cane into the ground saying, "The building shall be here." It was placed on the site designated by Jackson. Today with its Greek architecture it is one of the show places of Washington, but as a result of Jackson's impulsiveness it is so situated as to shut off the view of the White House from the Capitol, an obstruction that was not contemplated by L'Enfant and a blunder that can not be corrected.

The Mall, now one of the show places of Washington, existed as an idea in the mind of L'Enfant. But the development of this area was greatly neglected and only in recent years has it come into its own. The Mall extends from the Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial and takes in the landscaped areas of the Department of Agriculture, the seventy acres of the Sylvan Theater surrounding the Washington Monument, and the Smithsonian grounds. Undoubtedly L'Enfant, if he could now see the Mall with its two-million dollar Lincoln Memorial and great reflecting pool, would feel that his word had not been in vain.

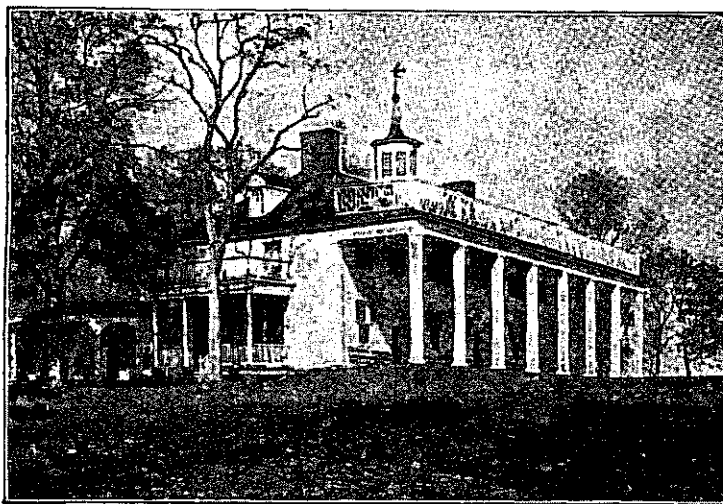
In Washington's term as president, the federal district, later known as the District of Columbia, was selected and laid out by Washington, Jefferson, then Secretary of State, and Major Charles Pierre L'Enfant, a highly capable French engineer employed by Washington for the task of planning the Federal City.

It is not possible to go into detail in regard to L'Enfant's ideas. It may be said however that he stressed the accommodation of his plan to the topography. L'Enfant, as nearly as can be determined, did not follow any precedents

in city building. Briefly stated, he devised an original plan entirely unique. He made his plans only after a careful study on the spot of the "best sites for principal buildings, allocated in the order of their importance and located with consideration of both prominence and outlook. He tied these sites together by means of a rectangular system of streets and again connected them by means of diagonal avenues," says William T. Partridge, consulting engineer of the National Park and Planning Commission.

As has been stated, the plan of L'Enfant has not been

followed closely and continuously through the years, but it has been revived from time to time and since its revival in 1901 with the appointment of the McMillan Commission headed by Senator McMillan, definite progress has been made. More park land has been acquired, a \$200,000,000 Federal Building program is being carried out, the Mall has been made the beautiful place that it was intended to be, and in fact many steps have been taken to place Washington at the

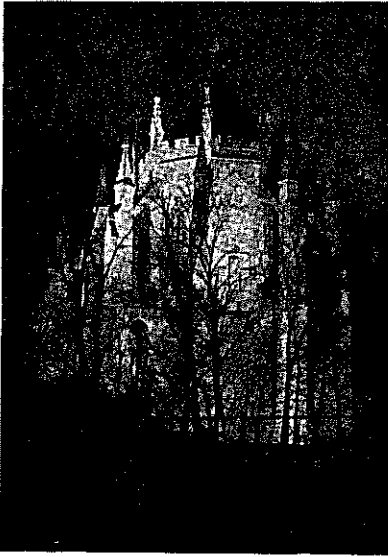


MOUNT VERNON

head of the most attractive world capitals.

After a very careful and intensive study, the McMillan Commission reaffirmed the soundness of the L'Enfant plan and recommended its extension on a scale more adequate to the greater capital of a greater country and in a manner inspired by its spirit. The McMillan report, a reaffirmation of the plans of L'Enfant, has been the basis of all major projects initiated since that time. Among these are the development and beautification of the Mall; the enlarged Capitol Plaza, a \$5,000,000 development that is just now reaching completion; the Lincoln Memorial with its gigantic reflecting pool, and many others.

Soon Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House almost to the Capitol Grounds is to be bordered on one side by the greatest array of public buildings in the history of the world — the "\$200,000,000 worth of government buildings in the Federal Triangle." Here again is a tribute to L'Enfant and his capabilities. His idea was to have the mile stretch between the White House and the "hill" a scene of great beauty with mansions of foreign ministers, gardens, sloping lawns and a great religious temple. These will not rise, but in their place and following in a way his suggestion, will be the massive government buildings heralded by the seventeen million dollar Department of Commerce home already completed.



WASHINGTON CATHEDRAL

- So after the vicissitudes of the years, after dismissal from his position and twenty-five years of a bitter life in the city he created, the memory of L'Enfant lives.

The site of the federal city when L'Enfant began his work was not magnificent. It consisted of a group of farms and two villages. But it had possibilities apparent to the imagination of the French engineer. It had attractive sites for large buildings and that

was the feature that interested L'Enfant. These early settled river lands exhausted by intensive tobacco cultivation and in many instances abandoned and heavily overgrown took on a new appearance in the imagination of the engineer. As is true of all those who are gifted with the ability for creative work, he did not see the comparatively minor defects, or if he saw them he viewed them as impediments that might easily be cleared away. L'Enfant's enthusiasm is best denoted in his own description of the building sites:

\*\*\* but most particularly on the part terminating on a ridge to Jenkins Hill and running in a parallel with a half a mile off from the river Potomack, separated by a low ground, intersected with these grand streams—many of the most desirable positions offer for to erect the Publique edifices thereon— from these heights every grand building would rear with a majestic aspect over the country all around and might be advantageously seen from twenty miles of.\*\*\*

This man, endowed with the creative instinct, in one short year completed the basic plans for the capital of the greatest nation in the world. That he disagreed with Washington; that his soul was torn asunder when an inferior building was erected on one of his chosen sites; that he finally was discharged by Washington; that he spent the last years of his life in moody rambles about the city always carrying a roll of papers as though ready to appear before a Congressional commission; that only recently he has won a last resting place in Arlington—these things are not important. It is the creation, not the creator that counts. L'Enfant's federal city, in the days of Washington a scene of mud, marsh, hut and hovel; at the end of the Civil War a group of 60,000 souls dependent on local springs for water, dim streets lighted only with oil lamps, parks unimproved and neglected and its streets playgrounds for urchins is coming into its own. After all despite the dissensions and irritabilities of the early days, it is so far as planning is concerned the federal city of George Washington and L'Enfant.

## THE WILLARD

The Willard, a world renowned hotel selected as headquarters for the annual Conference of Referees in Bankruptcy, is located on the famous Pennsylvania Avenue at Fourteenth and F Streets, two blocks from the White House and one block from the Treasury, facing the handsome group of new Government buildings. It is in the center of all points of interest and convenient to the financial, theatrical and shopping districts of the national capitol. From the bedroom windows there are beautiful views of the Potomac Parkway, the River and the Lincoln Memorial with the Virginia Hills, Arlington and Fort Myer beyond. The cuisine of the Willard is internationally famous and is in charge of a chef formerly at the Ritz Hotel in London. The formal Crystal Room and the quaint Coffee Shop each has its own distinctive appeal. The room tariff, as stated in the announcement, is \$4.00, \$5.00 and \$6.00 per day for single rooms with bath, and \$6.00 and \$7.00 per day for



THE WILLARD

double rooms. Room reservations should be made directly with the hotel specifying accommodations desired, the composition of the party, the day of arrival and identifying this Conference. Such reservations should be made as promptly as possible and those planning remaining for the American Bar Association convention should so advise. All Referees are urged to select the Willard as their headquarters during the Conference as it will prove most convenient.