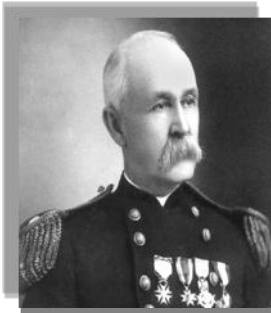


# DUNBAR SHAW COMMUNITY - HISTORIC PROFILE

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**Dr. George Miller Sternberg**



vintage photo—Kober, The History and Development . . . ; courtesy, Kober & Associates private collection.  
View of Bates Street, NW as seen shortly after the block was completed in 1901.

*The development of the Dunbar Shaw Community, between 1898 and 1901 represented a unique juncture in the city's architectural design period - one that brought together the architectural and scientific community, to address critical health and safety issues confronting society.<sup>1 2</sup> The community's infrastructure was planned and developed by Dr. George Miller Sternberg, winning a Gold Medal for Excellence, at the 1900 Paris Exposition. Appleton P. Clark was the architect, designing the pre-historic Sternberg Plan,<sup>3</sup> which is today, **the center of population for the District of Columbia<sup>4</sup>.***

**Written by:**

**Jennifer S. Johnson Ragins, M. S.**

Dunbar Shaw Historic Society

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Image, Bates Street in 1901: Cover Page Paul Kelsey Williams: InTowner "Scenes from the Past", May 2002

<sup>2</sup> Civic contributions were made by the following organizations: Bates Area Civic Association, Hanover Street Civic Association, Executive Board, Dunbar Shaw Homeowners Association, Dunbar Shaw Goggle Group, Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners 5C-01 & 5C-02, North Capitol Main Street and Shaw Main Street. In addition to the various civic groups, special acknowledgement to, Archivist Peter Sefton, and Historian Wetzel Hayden- for their images and historical findings.

<sup>3</sup> Source: Dr. George Martin Kober: The History and Development Of The Housing Movement In The City of Washington

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.neighborhoodinfo.dc.org/censustract/nbr\\_prof\\_trct67.html](http://www.neighborhoodinfo.dc.org/censustract/nbr_prof_trct67.html)



# DUNBAR SHAW COMMUNITY - HISTORIC PROFILE

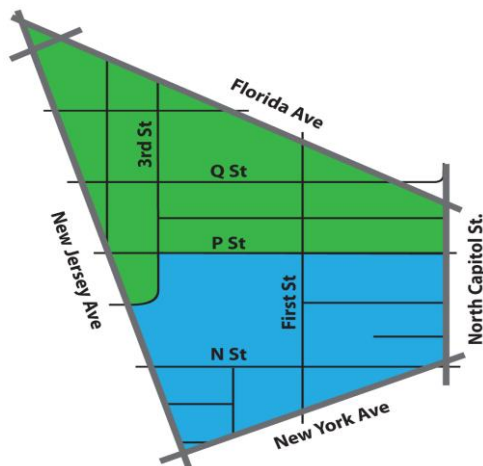
## INTRODUCTION

On January 24, 1791, President George Washington announced the congressionally designated permanent location of the national capital, a diamond-shaped ten-mile tract, at the confluence of the Potomac and Eastern Branch Rivers. Andrew Ellicott and Benjamin Banneker, a self-taught astronomer of African descent, undertook a survey of the area. In March 1791, the surveyors' roles were complemented by the employment of Major Pierre Charles L'Enfant, who was recruited to prepare the plan, which would become the District of Columbia, including a smaller area, the City of Washington.<sup>5</sup>

The City of Washington was the original designated geographical location for the nation's capital. It was a separate municipality within the Territory of Columbia until an [Act of Congress in 1871](#), which effectively merged the City and the Territory into a single entity called the District of Columbia.<sup>6</sup>

## GEOGRAPHY

The Dunbar Shaw community is a thriving residential **Old City neighborhood**, located in the northwest quadrant of Ward 5, Washington, District of Columbia. The community is part of the historic Shaw School Urban Renewal Area **that lies within L'Enfant's planned City of Washington.**<sup>7</sup> It is within, the borders of New Jersey Avenue to the east, Florida Avenue to the south, North Capitol to the west and New York Avenue to the north.<sup>8</sup>



The area is also geographically East Shaw, acknowledged for its tree-lined streets, with a rich collection of architectural styles, various building types and sizes, including two –story Victorian houses,

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Washington Through Two Centuries A History of Maps and Images, Joseph R. Passonneau: 2004

<sup>7</sup> Shaw Urban Renewal Plan, 1968 (Shaw community development plan) Washington 's History Weekly

<sup>8</sup> Shaw Urban Renewal Plan- Note: The boundaries are not political boundaries. The map provides a geographical profile of the area. In May 1966, The National Capital Planning Commission established the boundaries for the **Shaw Urban Renewal Area, 1968** The plan included an outlay for the construction and development of a new Dunbar Senior High school building. It also included the reconstruction of Bates Street and its adjacent area. Note: The development and creation of the Shaw Urban Renewal Plan, involved former District of Columbia Congressman Walter Fauntroy, deceased Mayor Walter Washington, leading to former mayors, Marion Barry, Sharon Pratt, Anthony Williams and councilmember Jack Evans, each having a significant role in the historic redevelopment of District's center city. Note: Current Mayor, Vincent C. Gray announced the development of a new Dunbar Senior High School, replacing the current location with a state of - the- art building.



# DUNBAR SHAW COMMUNITY - HISTORIC PROFILE

bay - fronted row houses, flat - fronted row houses, and small apartment buildings. Houses in the community were constructed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

*Finally, the community acquired its neighborhood designation in May 1966, when the National Capital Planning Commission designed the Shaw Renewal Plan. The Plan was established in 1968, adopted by the Commission, January 9, 1969, and approved by the District of Columbia Council, January 28, 1969. It includes a large heterogeneous area that was named after Robert Gould Shaw, a civil war hero, who was colonel in command of the all African American, 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry. The Plan is based on a commitment involving former **congressman Walter Fauntroy** and the late **mayor Walter E. Washington**, to rebuild the center of our city, virtually destroyed during the 1968 riots.*<sup>9</sup>

## COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

*There are approximately 3,028 residents living in the area, including some of the city's most progressive citizens.*<sup>10</sup> *Demographic analysis suggests that within the next decade, this community will continue to increase in diversity, income and economic markets.*<sup>11</sup> **Additionally, the community is the center of population for the District of Columbia.**<sup>12</sup>

### Demography<sup>13</sup>

Population 3,028 65% Black-non Hispanic 23% White - non Hispanic 7.3% Hispanic 4.0% Asian/P.I. non-Hispanic Avg. Family income (2010), 2005-2009: \$72,528
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## DUNBAR SHAW SETTLERS

*The first settlers in the area were Irish, living in what was called Swampoodle. According to historians, "Swampoodle" was truly a shanty town, with ramshackle single-family housing and tenements, housing some of the poorest laborers of Washington. It was a rough area, with street gangs, a common phenomenon. "Oddly, the community was a hot-bed of secessionist sentiment during the 1861-65 Civil War, with two other predominantly "sesesh" Washington populations, the city's Episcopalians, and the local upper classes as a whole."*<sup>14</sup>

**Note:** In 1850, buying and selling slaves in Washington, D.C. was outlawed, however, the people living in the city could still own slaves, but could not buy or sell new ones. On April 16, 1862, slaves were emancipated.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org/censustract/nbr\\_prof\\_trct67.html](http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org/censustract/nbr_prof_trct67.html)

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. An analysis of population-and economic data dating back to 1990, showing trends of income growth and changes in the area's demographics and socio-economic profile.

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org/censustract/nbr\\_prof\\_trct67.html](http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org/censustract/nbr_prof_trct67.html)- The Census Bureau determines centers of population. ref. 2010 Census

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org/censustract/nbr\\_prof\\_trct67.html](http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org/censustract/nbr_prof_trct67.html)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.theusgenweb.org/dcgenweb/history/irish.shtml>



# DUNBAR SHAW COMMUNITY - HISTORIC PROFILE

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## AFRICAN -AMERICAN HISTORY IN SHAW

*Before the Civil War, the black population was concentrated north of the central city, southwest of the central core; in an area known as the Island, because Tiber Creek separated the island from the rest of the city.<sup>15</sup>*

*Other findings suggest that during the Civil War, African Americans came to Shaw and its eastern borders for health care that was offered by Civil War encampments, at the Wisewell Barracks, located at Seventh and P Streets NW, and Campbell Hospital, on Boundary Street (now Florida Avenue), between Fifth and Sixth Streets NW.<sup>16</sup> They also sought services offered by the few black churches in Shaw and social welfare agencies, such as the Freedman's Bureau. The majority of blacks in Shaw, during the Civil War era, were soldiers, refugees or labor workers, whose settlement patterns included living in shacks, located in back alley dwellings.<sup>17</sup>*

**Note: African - American slaves who lived in Shaw and its eastern borders were included in the population of 3,100 slaves who were emancipated on April 16, 1862, when President Lincoln signed into law the District of Columbia Emancipation Act, which prohibited slavery in the City of Washington.<sup>18</sup>**

*Finally, by the mid-1880s to the early 1900s, African Americans in Shaw formed building associations such as the Industrial Building and Savings Company, Oak Park Realty Company and the Capital Savings Bank of Washington, the first African - American –owned bank in the United States.<sup>19</sup>*



First African - American Baseball Team in the District of Columbia

## EARLY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

*The development of Shaw continued to grow between 1871 and 1874. However, under Boss Shepherd, there was very little housing construction along the freight and small alley dwellings in eastern*

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<sup>15</sup> The Anacostia Museum Illustrated Chronology, The Black Washingtonians 300 Years of African - American History, 2004.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Source: "Washington Through Two Centuries A History of Maps and Images", Joseph R. Passonneau: 2004.

<sup>18</sup> African Americans who lived in the city of Washington, located south of Boundary Avenue, were emancipated.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.



## DUNBAR SHAW COMMUNITY - HISTORIC PROFILE

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*Shaw and North of the Capitol.*<sup>20</sup> These overcrowded alley dwellings, with out door privies, caused various diseases infecting the population of residents living in unsanitary conditions. The severe health crisis prompted a group of prominent Washington, District of Columbia citizens, including Dr. George M. Sternberg, and Dr. Robert Kober, to form the Washington Improvement Sanitation Company (WISC).<sup>21</sup>



**Brig. General Delevan Bates** of land and development of houses along the 100-300 blocks of Bates Street NW. It was then a vacant two-block street surrounded by North Capitol, 3rd, P and Q Streets.<sup>22</sup> The nine lots were purchased on May 28, 1897 from Oscar M. Bryant. **Dr. Sternberg**, a member of the company's Board of Directors drew up plans for the first nine houses "in which no detail was omitted" from the standpoint of hygiene.<sup>23</sup>

### RECENT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Today, after experiencing decades of urban decay, the community is the center of historic neighborhood stabilization initiatives. It is an epic of rich **American history, African-American<sup>24</sup> heritage** and cultural **diversity**.

During the last five years, more than forty- housing units were renovated and sold. Additionally, the community is benefiting from commercial development that is taking place in Shaw's thriving U Street and 9<sup>th</sup> Street business and artistic districts. Concomitantly, the community is expecting continual growth as a result of its- pre-historic typology – to **Shaw's Logan Circle**, and the city's North of Massachusetts Avenue (NoMA) plan.

Additionally, the area has seen economic enhancements, resulting from the new convention center, an international market, Bus Boys and Poets, and the restoration of the O Street Market. This economic expansion also includes a Harris Teeter and the opening **of the United States Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms (ATF).**<sup>25</sup>

Finally, the above initiatives - along with rehabilitation of the historic **Armstrong school building-** will help restore the community's authenticity. Additionally, the projected development of the Slater, Langston, M. M. Washington, John F. Cook, and **Dunbar school buildings**, will help preserve the community's history.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Source: Washington Through Two Centuries A History of Maps and Images, Joseph R. Passonneau: 2004.

<sup>21</sup> In Towner Behind The Scenes Paul Kelsey Williams Historic Preservation Specialist, Kelsey & Associates, Washington DC, May 2002.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Kelsey & Associates "Shaw East Survey". May 2002

<sup>24</sup> African Americans, refers to the black population in the city. (Hyphen and non hyphen excerpts)

<sup>25</sup> The city is investing millions of dollars into the restoration of the historic O Street Market, in Shaw.

<sup>26</sup> The District of Columbia government Office of Economic Development recently put out bids for the development of Slater and Langston school buildings. Additionally, DC Public Schools Master Facilities Plan includes provisions and funding for the modernization of the Dunbar Senior High School Building.



# DUNBAR SHAW COMMUNITY - HISTORIC PROFILE

## LANDMARKS

Name	Location	Historic Designation
Armstrong Building	100 Block P. Street N.W.	Historic
Slater Building	Unit Block P. Street N.W.	Recommended
Langston Building	Unit Block P. Street N.W.	Recommended
MM Washington	Unit Block O. Street N. W.	Recommended
Art Studio	Unit Block O. Street N.W.	Recommended
New York Avenue Playground	New York Avenue N.W.	Recommended
O Street Market	7 <sup>th</sup> Street. N.W.	Historic

## HISTORIC SCHOOLS

### OLD CENTRAL SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL 1882

The old Central Senior High School was built in 1882 at 7<sup>th</sup> and O Streets, NW. It was originally called Washington High School and was at the time, the only high school for white students. It was renamed Central in 1890, when a growing enrollment prompted the city to open additional white schools- Eastern, Western and the Business High School. Central remained at 7<sup>th</sup> and O Streets until 1950. White students who lived in the Dunbar Shaw Community attended Central.<sup>27</sup> **J. Edgar Hoover also attended Central High School.**<sup>28</sup>

Central Senior High School



Finally, “the first commencement exercises took place in the building on June 12, 1883. **Architect Appleton P. Clark**, who designed several of the houses in East Shaw, was part of the graduating class that year. He and his wife met in the school, and she resided that year at 1410 6th Street NW, with her father, Waldo C. Perry, a chief clerk of the Dead Letter Office for the Post Office Department.”<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> DC Public Schools

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

<sup>29</sup> Paul Kelsey Williams: Kelsey & Associates “Historic Survey Of Shaw East” 2002





# DUNBAR SHAW COMMUNITY - HISTORIC PROFILE

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## HISTORIC AFRICAN - AMERICAN SCHOOLS



Paul Laurence Dunbar

Dunbar Senior High School - 1916



*The original Dunbar Senior High School was built in 1916. The school was located on First Street, between N and O Streets, NW. The school replaced the old M Street High School, the first permanent African – American high school in the country.<sup>30</sup>*

*Dunbar Senior High School was named for the famous **African- American poet, Paul Laurence Dunbar**. According to Mr. Dunbar’s letters, on several occasions he lectured at the M Street High School.<sup>31</sup> As noted previously, the current Dunbar will be replaced with a state-of-the-art building.*

*Finally, many famous African Americans attended Dunbar Senior High School, including our current Mayor, **Vincent C. Gray**, **Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton**, former Congressman **Walter Fauntroy**, and Senator **Edward Brooke**. **Dr. Charles Drew** and **Carrie Thornhill**, a former member of the District of Columbia Board Of Education, also attended Dunbar Senior High School.<sup>32</sup>*

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<sup>30</sup> Source: DC Public Schools

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> Source: Special thanks to Dunbar Senior High School Alumni Association.



# DUNBAR SHAW COMMUNITY - HISTORIC PROFILE

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## Dunbar Senior High School -2014



*The development and implementation of the Shaw Urban Renewal Plan has prevented the wholesale destruction of a great community. As a result of the plan, Shaw and its eastern section retains its historic legacy, culture, African - American heritage and community diversity. To that end, the continual rehabilitation and adaptive use of this community's history- is critical to the preservation of great streets and neighborhoods, in Old City, Washington, District of Columbia.*

## "Dunbar Shaw Historic Society"



**Robert Gould Shaw**





# DUNBAR SHAW COMMUNITY - HISTORIC PROFILE

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## Appendix



*Armstrong Manual Training School (First and P streets, NW) was built in 1901-1902 and named for Samuel Chapman Armstrong, a white general who commanded a black regiment during the last two years of the Civil War. General Armstrong was also founder of Hampton Institute.*

*White architect Waddy B. Wood designed the building in the Renaissance Revival style. The school taught practical, manual skills, following the educational philosophy identified with Booker T. Washington, founder of Tuskegee Institute. Mr. Washington is highly acknowledged for his eloquent speech that was given at the dedication ceremony, of Armstrong Manual Training High School.<sup>33</sup>*

*Finally, the Veterans High School Center operated from 1946 until 1964 at the old Armstrong building. The building was also listed on the **District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Sites** and the National Register of Historic Places, in 1996. Today, the building is totally rehabilitated, maintaining its original architectural design, while the old Armstrong, receives acknowledgement for its famous students, including Duke **Ellington and Billie Eckstine**.*

**Note: The old Armstrong building is currently an educational campus for the Community Academy Public Charter School, which is owned by Kent Amos, a native Washingtonian.**

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<sup>33</sup> DC Public Schools, Image : Peter Sefton

