

Chapter 3

Georgetown Neighborhood

Washington's history began in Georgetown, a busy eighteenth-century shipping port city where fleets of locally owned ships conducted trade worldwide. The bustling town had numerous inns and taverns. Conestoga wagons rumbled past the shops that lined the streets, and on the heights were fine country estates and scattered farms.

In 1622, Captain Henry Fleete first discovered the port, which was an Indian village named Tohoga, where he established a fur trading business. By 1703, the village was abandoned, but the surrounding land was granted to Ninian Beall, who named his property the Rock of Dumbarton. The name survives through the old estates, Dumbarton House (site 3) and Dumbarton Oaks Estate (site 4). By mid-century, several aristocratic families operated very large plantations. They built mansions in town, like Halcyon House (site 12), from which to conduct their business. In 1751, the "Town of George" was officially named in honor of King George II of England.

In 1789, George Washington considered Georgetown to be the greatest tobacco market in the United States. The next year, Georgetown became a part of the District of Columbia. With the arrival of Congress in 1800, Georgetown's economy began to falter. Local businessmen who had invested in the new city of Washington were soon overextended and lost their fortunes. The Potomac River silted and became difficult to navigate. The Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Canal was a financial disaster for investors, though

