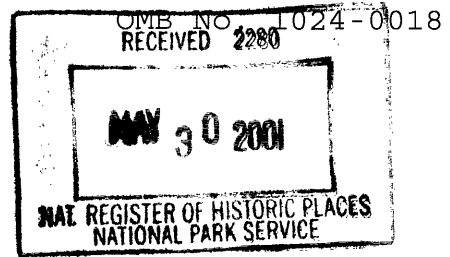


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Thaddeus Stevens School

other names/site number Thaddeus Stevens Elementary School

2. Location

street & number 1050 Twenty-first Street, N. W. not for publication N/A
city or town Washington vicinity N/A
state District of Columbia code DC county N/A zip code 20036

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally X statewide ___ locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] Signature of certifying official May 16, 2001 Date

State or Federal agency and bureau
In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

=====

6. Function or Use

=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: EDUCATION Sub: school

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: EDUCATION Sub: school

=====

7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS / Georgian Revival
LATE VICTORIAN / Romanesque
LATE VICTORIAN / Second Empire

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK
roof STONE: Slate
METAL
walls BRICK
other STONE: Granite
METAL: Iron

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

=====
8. Statement of Significance
=====

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- a owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- b removed from its original location.
- c a birthplace or a grave.
- d a cemetery.
- e a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- f a commemorative property.
- g less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE
EDUCATION
ETHNIC HERITAGE / black
SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance 1868 to 1954

Significant Dates 1868
1895-96

Significant Person

Complete if Criterion B is marked above) _____

Cultural Affiliation _____

Architect/Builder Office of the Building Inspector (1885, 1895-96)
Unknown / Alexander Pannell (1868)

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

=====

9. Major Bibliographical References

=====

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: Charles Sumner School Museum & Archives, Archives of the Architect of the Capitol, National Archives, Historical Society of Washington, D. C., and Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial Library.

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10. Geographical Data

=====

Acreage of Property 30,617 sq. ft. .702+ acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>18</u>	<u>322800</u>	<u>4307470</u>	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Tanya Edwards Beauchamp, Architectural Historian

organization Tanya Edwards Beauchamp, Associates

date May 10, 2001

street & number 930 Leigh Mill Road

telephone 703-759-3796

city or town Great Falls state Virginia zip code 22066
=====

Additional Documentation
=====

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage
or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====
Property Owner
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name District of Columbia Public Schools

street & number 825 North Capitol Street, N. E. telephone 202-724-4222

city or town Washington state D. C. zip code 20002
=====

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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The Thaddeus Stevens School is located on lot 844 (old lots 22, 23, 24) of Square 73, facing east on Twenty-first Street between K and L Streets, N.W. It was built in 1868, enlarged in 1885 and its original section largely rebuilt and extended in 1895-96. The design of the present building reflects this evolutionary process and has not varied in any significant manner since 1896. In 1931 adjacent lot 20 was bought for play space for \$13,625. In 1932 adjacent lot 832 was purchased for \$6,175 to further enlarge the playground. Although the original architect is unknown, the plans for the building and all subsequent alterations were under the supervision of Edward Clark, who served as Architect of the Capitol from 1865 till 1902. The alterations of 1885 and 1895-96 were designed and carried out by the Office of the Building Inspector under Thomas B. Entwistle. The 1896 drawings are signed "Approved, Edward Clark, Architect of the Capitol." Clark may also have been responsible for the drawing of 1870, which is the earliest known view of Stevens School.

The Thaddeus Stevens School today has the appearance from Twenty-first Street of a Georgian Revival building with a Palladian five-part plan. The red brick three-story and basement main block is taller than the other elements. It is brought substantially forward to the building line, dominating and adroitly integrating these earlier elements into a single composition. The two center facade bays project slightly and are crowned with a substantial roof-top pediment. The verticality of the facade composition is enhanced by a bold use of brick quoining at the corners of both the facade and the projecting central panel, creating a classical temple effect. Windows are flat-arched on the basement and third-story levels, segmentally-arched on the second-story level, and round-arched on the first story level. Sills are stone and sash 6/6. The slate roof is hipped with deck, eyebrow dormers and projecting flues. A modillioned, galvanized iron cornice with simple broad frieze crowns the main block.

The 1885 wings are transitionally Romanesque, red brick, three stories and basement high, with two bays facing Twenty-first Street. Hipped roofs project over a simple crowning cornice with doubled brackets. Windows are segmentally arched with 6/6 sash. String-courses at the sill level clearly define each story, and this detail is continued on the sides of the main block. Entrances are included in the connecting stair-towers. These are two and one half stories and basement with mansard roofs covered in hexagonal slate tiles. They reflect the Second Empire style of the original building and probably reused original materials removed when they were built. Two additional three-story wings were sited compactly at the rear of the building in 1896, providing six additional classrooms over basements which were used originally as boys' and girls' lavatories. A

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large central hall was left on each classroom floor and this has subsequently been partitioned on the first floor. The boiler room was placed between the rear wings and covered with a skylight. The original rear entrance of the building is preserved here. The blue-stone retaining walls in the front areaways date from Alexander Shepherd's 1873 regrading of Twenty-first Street and before the 1895-96 reconstruction of the original building these retaining walls extended to the property line along Twenty-first Street.

In 1868 this West End site was in an African American neighborhood at the northwestern edge of development in Washington City near Rock Creek, Washington Circle and Georgetown. It was low-lying and swampy. Slash Run, infamous as an open sewer, touched the northeastern boundary of the Square near the 16,481 square foot school site. The latter was drained and filled for construction. A rectangular three-and-one-half story brick mansard-roofed building was erected. Seven bays long and four bays wide, its dimensions were 48' x 88'. It was sited perpendicular to Twenty-first Street with the narrow end, the principal facade, fronting mid-block on Twenty-first Street. An 1870 engraving shows that windows were 6/6 sash, shuttered, with flat decorative arches. Dormers with segmentally-arched simple barge-board detail occur in the fourth story. Doors are panelled with 4-lite transoms. Chimneys appear to be integral with the exterior walls, but are interrupted at the roof-line by a simple modillioned cornice with plain frieze. There is a suggestion in the drawing of a roof-top cupola.

The first story, fourteen feet high, was laid out with an entrance vestibule flanked by 15' x 16' rooms on either side and a 72' x 45' assembly hall. Used originally as a community meeting hall, it was accessed on Twenty-first Street by two doors. The upper stories, twelve feet high, were laid out with four 37' 5" x 23' classrooms separated by a central hall running the full length of the building, and a cross-hall at mid-building. Exterior wooden stairs with open porches accessed these halls at the second-story level. The front porch appears to be of cast iron with dual curving cast iron stairs descending to the sidewalk. The building was fitted with water and gas connections throughout. It had 750 sittings of Schermerhorn, Uhlinger, and Shattuck manufacture. The value of the school property was \$40,140 including site, \$8,240; buildings, \$29,000; and furniture, \$2,900.

The structural system included timber-framing, cast-iron, and brick masonry elements, allowing construction of the large, open assembly hall on the first floor level. The brick exterior walls were fourteen inches thick, supporting only half of the weight of the floors. A row of ten cast-iron

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columns in the first story assembly hall carried a wooden girder running longitudinally along the east-west axis of the building. Two wooden girders, one on each side of the north-south hallway, carried the weight of the center halls and stairs. The framing of the floors, partition walls, stairs, and roof was of wood supported by this first floor structural system.

In January, 1869, Architect of the Capitol Edward Clark had advised against acceptance of the building by the trustees, complaining, "The brick work is done in a disreputable manner; some of the chimneys above the roof being crooked and far from a vertical line, and the bricks on the front are not of a uniform color, as provided in the specifications." Clark promised to draw "...plans and sketches for the improvement and modification of Stevens."¹ Two coats of white paint quickly provided a practical solution to the problem of the mismatched brick.

At the beginning of the 1871-72 school year steam-heating and improved means of ventilation were introduced in Stevens school. Deficiencies in the installation resulted in some classrooms, particularly those on the north or girls' side, still being too cold. At this time also, the lot on the south side of the school was purchased, drained and graded to provide a boys' playground. The grading of Twenty-first Street by the Board of Public Works in 1873 required the erection of a substantial stone wall around the school building to preserve the use of the first floor. The first floor, now an English basement, was remodeled to provide two additional classrooms and accommodate the water-closets, furnace, and fuel room which had originally been located in the school-yard. This remedied to some extent the heating problems and increased the space of the play-yards. In remodeling the assembly hall for classrooms, the original structural system remained in place with a nine-inch thick non-load-bearing brick partition wall constructed along the line of the longitudinal wooden girder, enclosing the cast-iron columns. This was done to provide sound-proofing between the new classrooms.

In 1883 John H. Brooks submitted a report to the Board of Trustees on behalf of the Local Committee of the Seventh Division which itemized long-standing deficiencies in the Stevens School building and requested that the old building be razed and a new building provided. He complained that the combination of fourteen inch thick brick masonry outer walls, wood stud interior walls, and unsound foundations had caused the floors to sink two to four inches, carrying the floors out of level. He cited lack of

¹ Edward Clark, Letterbooks, Archives of the Architect of the Capitol.

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cloakrooms, poor ventilation, malfunction of the heating system, vibration of the roof during windstorms, inadequate sewerage, imminently dangerous arrangements for the storage of coal, and failure of the carriages of all exterior stairways. He noted that there were nine hundred students enrolled in fifteen classes and suggested that bringing the building up to present standards could best be done by demolishing the old building and constructing a new building in its place. He proposed using the old brick and stone to minimize the cost.

Thomas B. Entwistle, Inspector of Buildings, replied to the Engineer Commissioner that the condition of the building had not changed since it was first placed in his charge in 1879. The structure was sound and settling had taken place only in the first three years after construction. The problem with the floors reflected only shrinking of the wood members within the masonry outer walls. He stated that he had already undertaken all of the minor repairs necessary and commented--

As to the necessity for a new building on this site, upon the ground that the present one is unfit for occupancy, I do not think the necessity exists, as this building can be made both safe, sanitary, and convenient. It is rather an expensive arrangement to destroy buildings at the age, as in this case, of fifteen years, for the reason only that they are not up to the present improved standard.²

Entwhistle suggested replacement of the interior stud walls with brick together with construction of four brick ventilating shafts, registers, cast-caps, plastering and completing connections. In addition, the stairways inside and out on the sides of the building would be replaced with fireproof stair towers and cloakrooms placed within the halls where the interior stairs were formally located.

Brooks replied that there was not sufficient space within the outside walls of the building to remodel it and secure a properly-planned school-house of either eight or twelve rooms, with cloakrooms, proper height of ceilings and hallways, leaving sufficient remaining space to seat the classes. He complained of poor construction in the brick masonry walls, and again called for the demolition of the old school and its replacement with a new, up-to-date school of eight or twelve classrooms. In the end, a compromise solution was reached incorporating Entwistle's proposal and adding new

² Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Public Schools in and for the District of Columbia, 1883-84, 35.

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classroom wings on either side of the new fireproof stair-towers. Stevens students were relocated to another location in the fall of 1885 for the duration of the reconstruction.

In 1894 the original, central portion of Stevens was called "not only absolutely unfit for school purposes, but...menacing life and limb in its continued use."³ Poor construction materials, insufficient light and ventilation, and floors worn too thin to be safe were cited. Only eight classrooms were in use in the midst of a burgeoning school population where students had been placed on half-day shifts. The old first floor was now used only as a basement with playrooms, shop and cooking school, and the fourth floor had been entirely abandoned. Reconstruction of the central portion of the building would also bring the floors of the 1885 wing additions more nearly into correspondence with those of the main block.

In 1895-96 this work was carried out according to drawings prepared in the Office of the Building Inspector and approved by the District Commissioners and Edward Clark, Architect of the Capitol. Clark's signature is on the drawings. At a cost of only \$3,001.34, the outer walls of the main block were extended eight feet further on the 21st Street side and a new, taller facade built which was wider by four feet. The scale of the building was enhanced by the lofty new roof, although today, surrounded by high-rise office buildings, this has little visual impact. Interior deficiencies were corrected and the two new classroom wings were added at the rear. Eighteen classrooms were now provided at Stevens, with those on the second and third floors of the rear additions left unfinished for future expansion.

³ *Report of the Board of Trustees of Public Schools of the District of Columbia to the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, 1893-94*, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894, 138.

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The Thaddeus Stevens School was designated an Historic Landmark of the National Capital and listed in the District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Sites on June 20, 1972. Built in 1868, enlarged in 1885 and partially rebuilt and enlarged in 1895-96, it is the oldest surviving elementary school in the District of Columbia still in its original use as an elementary school. Named after Pennsylvania Congressman and abolitionist Thaddeus Stevens, it was built originally for African-American students as part of a racially segregated public school system. It was the first public school building in the District providing facilities for African Americans considered comparable to those being provided for white students. In 1871-72 it was the first public school building to house the newly founded Preparatory High School for Negro Youth, one of the first such schools in the nation. It became the M Street High School and, in the twentieth century, the prestigious Dunbar High School. Stevens School exemplifies the struggle for equal educational opportunities for African Americans in the District of Columbia after emancipation. It originally served a diverse West End community composed of both recently arrived freedmen and African Americans who had been free for generations. It continued in its nurturing role for both students and neighborhood throughout the long period of racial discrimination and inequality of opportunity prior to desegregation of the public schools in 1954. When office towers replaced much of its residential neighborhood in the 1950s and '60s, Stevens remarkably preserved its traditional role through an innovative extended day care program for the children of its new office-worker neighborhood. Students from all wards of the city attend Stevens today, many of them the descendants of earlier Stevens students whose parents are preserving a family tradition of educational excellence in an historic setting. The school today has an international character, serving a socially, economically, racially, and ethnically diverse population who come from many foreign countries. Stevens alumni have distinguished themselves both nationally and in their communities and include historian Rayford Whittingham Logan, Colonel Campbell C. Johnson, Dr. Charles R. Drew, singer Roberta Flack, television personality Ralph "Petey" Green, and actor Robert Hooks. Stevens is located only a few blocks from the White House, and President Jimmy Carter's daughter Amy attended Stevens when her father was in office.

Early Schools for African Americans in the District of Columbia

Schools for free African Americans in the District of Columbia were organized as early as 1807 under the sponsorship of private citizens and religious groups. The schools were quartered in churches and in other buildings that had been built for non-educational purposes. The development of black schools suffered a set-back between 1831 and 1835 in response to the Nat Turner uprising and the related "Snow Riots." The now fearful whites withdrew their support of black institutions. Relations between the whites and blacks was so bleak that, in

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1835, "most of the colored schoolhouses were burned or demolished, textbooks, apparatus, and furniture destroyed."¹ Later, many of the black schools were revived and reinstated. In 1851, Miss Myrtila Minor (1815-1864), an idealistic white teacher, established one of the nation's first high schools for black women, located three blocks from the future site of Stevens School on the square bounded by 19th, 20th, N, and O Streets, N. W. Miner had abolitionist support for this school which was to be a national model for the education of African American teachers.

By the onset of war in 1861, a rudimentary system of private day schools existed here which had been organized largely within the African American community. These schools served 45% of the free black children in the District of Columbia. Henry Barnard, Commissioner of Education, in his report, May 30, 1868, to the United States Senate respecting the condition and improvement of Public Schools in the District of Columbia, says of these early schools--

The colored people of the District have shown themselves capable to a wonderful degree of supporting and educating themselves, while at the same time contributing by taxation to the support of white schools, from which they were debarred, and that, too, when in numerous cases they had previously bought themselves and families from slavery at very great expense; their history furnishing an example of courage and success in the midst of trial and oppression scarcely equaled in the annals of mankind.²

The District's African American community underwent momentous changes during the Civil War, including an estimated tripling of its size due to the migration of former slaves from the South after emancipation. The freedmen settled in often substandard housing near the District's established close-knit free African American communities. Education was seen as a basic means of integrating this disadvantaged new group into society. On April 16, 1862, Congress enacted legislation abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia. On May 21, 1862, this was followed by an act requiring that "ten percentum of taxes collected from persons of color in Washington and Georgetown be set apart for the purpose of initiating a system of primary schools for the education of colored

¹ Winfield S. Montgomery, "Historical Sketch of Education for the Colored Race in the District of Columbia, 1807-1905," *Report of the Board of Education, 1904-05*, 104.

² George F. T. Cook, "Historical Sketch of the Colored Schools, Past and Present," *First Report of the Board of Trustees of Public Schools of the District of Columbia, 1874-'75*. Washington City: M'gill & Witherow, Printers and Stereotypers, 1876, 92.

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children"³ in the District. On July 11, 1862, Congress created the three member "Board of Trustees for the Colored Schools of Washington and Georgetown" and transferred control of these schools to this board. Oversight of the board was delegated to the Department of the Interior, with building construction approval from the Architect of the Capitol. Despite Congressional actions, the funds provided for the schools were too limited to permit the establishment of a single school.

In the absence of adequate funds from the public sector, the private sector continued to support black schools. Following emancipation on January 1, 1863, new organizations in the District took up the cause of education of the black population. Slaves had almost universally been denied education and adults as well as children needed to learn to read and write. The National Freedman's Relief Association set up night schools to accommodate those who worked during the day. The Association established schools in former temporary barracks structures and also built school houses for day students. The New England Friends Association and other relief organizations also supported this work.

The Congressional provision for African American students of 1862 was followed in June, 1864, by additional legislation that provided for a fairer distribution of funds. The first black public school began in 1864 in a room in the Ebenezer Church. The first public schoolhouse for black students was a frame structure built in 1865 at Second and C Street, S. E. (razed).⁴ In 1866 two additional two-story schoolhouses were built from the lumber of barracks--the Eliza Chamberlain School on East Street in Georgetown, and a school at Seventeenth and M Streets, N. W. Chamberlain School was abandoned in 1892-93 and razed in 1902-03. The temporary M Street School was demolished in 1872 to make way for the Charles Sumner School.

This modest beginning was followed by the construction of several substantial school buildings for black students when funds were finally made available at the close of the 1866-67 school year. In 1867 two two-story brick schoolhouses were erected--the \$9,000 John F. Cook School at Fourth and O Streets, N. W., and the \$10,000 Anthony Bowen School at the corner of Ninth and E Streets, S. W. The Cook Schoolhouse was abandoned in 1926 and razed in 1936, and the Bowen Schoolhouse was abandoned in 1941 and subsequently razed.

In the following year, the three and one-half story brick Thaddeus Stevens

³ William J. Rhees, *Twenty-Second Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Public Schools of the City of Washington*, Washington, D. C.: McGill & Witherow, Printers and Stereotypers, 1867, 55.

⁴ Winfield S. Montgomery, *op. cit.*, 118.

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School was erected on Twenty-first Street between L and K Streets, N. W. The building had twelve school rooms and a large assembly hall as compared to the eight-room Cook and Bowen Schools, and cost three times as much to build. It was considered the first public school building constructed for African American students which could be considered the equal of those being constructed for white students. It was followed by the construction of the Abraham Lincoln Schoolhouse at Second and C Streets, S. E., in 1871 (abandoned in 1947 and no longer standing), and the Elijah P. Lovejoy Schoolhouse, Twelfth and D Streets, N. E., in 1872 (razed 1901). A third story was added to the Cook School, also in 1872. The crowning glory of the black schools of this period was the Sumner School, constructed 1871-72, on the site of the earlier Freedmen's barracks school. The Sumner School was the flagship school of the black school system, and, like the prototypical white schools of the period, was designed by German-American architect Adolf Cluss.

In 1870 a preparatory high school was created for advanced African American students in the various grammar schools. At first it was located in the basement of the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church. It was housed in Stevens School in 1871-72, then moved to Sumner School in 1872. The first graduation of a black high school class was held at the Charles Sumner School in 1877. The high school was moved to the Miner Building from 1877-1891. The first black public high school building, the M Street High School, was completed in 1891. In 1916 the school moved to the newly completed Dunbar High School. Dunbar High School became a prestigious preparatory high school for African Americans, receiving students from all over the country and placing its graduates in the best colleges. This institution, founded in 1870 and located in Stevens School in 1871-72, was one of the first high schools for African American students in the nation.

Stevens School

The Board of Trustees for the Colored Schools of Washington and Georgetown contracted with Alexander Pannell, carpenter and builder, in June, 1868, for the construction of a new schoolhouse on Twenty-first Street between L and M Streets, N. W. On March 2nd, 1869, the trustees informed the Secretary of Interior that the building was complete and that they had submitted the contractor's plans and specifications to Edward Clark, Architect of the Capitol, and requested his inspection and approval before accepting the building. The building had cost \$26,000 and the trustees felt that it was "quite handsome." They observed, "In the choice of its name the trustees have sought to offer an humble tribute of grateful remembrance to the late Honorable Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania, the earnest champion of free and equal school privileges for all classes and conditions of the children of men." In recognition thereof 'The Stevens School House' had been inscribed on a marble slab on the front of the

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building.⁵ The following week, six classes of students who had been occupying army barracks in Farragut Square under the jurisdiction of General Howard of the Freedmens Bureau, proudly marched the four blocks to the new Thaddeus Stevens School House. It is said that Fountain Peyton, who later became an attorney in the city and served two terms on the School Board, broke out of line, ran up the steps, and was the first child to enter the building.

Although Stevens was considered a 'first class school' and was more nearly the equal of white schools built during the Reconstruction period, there were important differences. The assembly hall, the first included in a public school built in the District for African American students, was located on the ground floor rather than the top floor where a free span, sufficient height, and a raked floor would have been structurally possible. While placement of the hall on the ground floor facilitated its use for community events, a line of cast iron columns running the length of the hall was structurally necessary, obstructing sight lines. The height of the hall was only 14' or the height usual for classrooms, not public assembly halls. There was no basement for indoor play areas, no cloakrooms, no provision for steam heat, no ventilation other than the windows. Entrances to the classroom floors were from exterior stairs, and these were of wood, both inside and outside. The interior framing was of wood and not fireproof, while the exterior brick masonry walls were only 9" thick. The classrooms themselves, 37.5' x 23' x 12', were somewhat smaller than those in most white schools--especially so when the lack of cloakrooms is considered. Nevertheless, Stevens School represented a great step forward in the construction of public school houses for African American children in the District of Columbia. In the years to follow, these deficiencies were dealt with one by one. Alterations and rebuilding were carried out economically by ingeniously using and adapting as much of the existing structure and materials as possible. [See section 7]

At the time Stevens School was built, urban public schoolhouses were new to both blacks and whites in the District of Columbia. Advice was sought nationwide. Organization and teaching methods in multi-class schools were scrutinized as well as the design and construction of school buildings. Before the Civil War public schools were one or two room structures or were located in makeshift quarters such as church basements and converted stables. In the new buildings individual classes were still referred to as 'schools.' Sixty pupils were assigned to each teacher, and only gradually did the true needs of an effective urban public school system evolve. In 1878 the Office of the Building Inspector was created under the new Commission form of government. Building Inspector

⁵ The National Archives, R. G. 233, Records of the U. S. House of Representatives, Committee on the District of Columbia (HR40A-F7.6).

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Thomas B. Entwhistle inspected all of the existing facilities and made recommendations for their improvement. Stevens School, though only ten years old, was one of those for which major up-grading was necessary.

In the 1871-72 school year, there were twelve classes at Stevens serving grades 1-8. The majority of these were in the primary grades (1-4), reflecting the needs of the transient population of freedmen. The school served a very large and diverse school population and was greatly over-crowded. Its insufficiency increased during the 1870s causing doubling of classes and, finally, by 1879, half-day classes. At the end of the school year in 1874 George F. T. Cook, Superintendent of the Colored Schools of Washington and Georgetown, reviewed the progress made since the public education of African American children was first addressed in 1862. He reported increasing success in all areas but noted that public education was still not available to more than half of school age blacks in the District. He noted in conclusion--

In the inability to embrace every child of school age the work is far from complete. What has been done shows what can be done. Four thousand have been gathered into the schools, and from the enjoyment of their benefits are growing up into useful citizens.

To what source shall the five thousand yet in compulsory illiterateness, by want of means for provision, look to avert a future dark in fearful consequences to themselves and society?⁶

Stevens, Cook, Syphax, and others concerned for the rights of African Americans were disappointed in their hope for an integrated public school system, admission to which would be based on 'humanity rather than accident of descent.' Turning adversity to advantage, Cook created an autonomous public school system for African Americans which, in spite of unequal funding, provided rich and unique educational opportunities to its students. In this he had the cooperation of parents and guardians, teachers, and the students themselves. Oral history interviews with students who attended Stevens in the 1920s-40s afford a glimpse of an institution which nurtured a close-knit African American neighborhood whose disadvantaged residents often led lives of great hardship. In many cases, Stevens was the only formal educational experience for children who were forced to leave school at an early age to help support their families. Others recalled mothers and fathers who started their education at Stevens and went on to graduate from the M Street High School, Miner Teachers' College, or

⁶ George F. T. Cook, *Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of Public Schools in and for the District of Columbia and Superintendent of Colored Schools of Washington and Georgetown, 1873-'74*, Washington, D.C.: National Republican Job Office Print, 1875, 31.

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Howard University and become teachers, doctors, and other professionals. Cook credited an administrative and teaching staff which was almost entirely African American with the success of the segregated colored schools, commenting--

To such an alliance of inseparable interests is largely due the success of the schools. Thus standing alone among the other public school systems of the country, it has presented to the colored man the only opportunity to show that he can direct in public education as well as receive it. The fruits of the opportunity are apparent in the fullest evidence that statistics can give, a healthy and rapid growth in every essential indicative of school success.⁷

Early teacher-principals of Stevens School include Annie E. Washington (1870-71), Genevieve I. Fleet (1871-72), Mary J. Patterson (1872-73), Susan P. Vashon (1873-74), Mary V. Datcher (1876-88), and E. W. Brown (1888-96). J.B. Clark served as the first male principal (1897-1900), followed by John C. Nalle (1901-1903). Mr. Nalle was born in Culpeper, Virginia, in 1858, and educated in the public schools of Troy, New York, and Washington, D.C. He studied also at Howard and Columbia Universities. He began his career in the D. C. Public Schools as a teacher in 1873 and subsequently served as principal of Lincoln, Jones, Logan, and Stevens Schools. He left Stevens to become supervising principal of Division Ten, which included Stevens. He served in this position until his retirement in 1926. He has been described as earnest, ingenious, and progressive--a practical man who was guided by principles slowly evolved through the application of sound judgment to school situations. He was succeeded at Stevens by Dr. Mildred Gibbs (1904-1935) who was educated in the schools of the District of Columbia and held a medical degree from Howard University. Dr. Gibbs introduced the project method, socialized recitation, use of visual aid, departmentalization classes, atypical classes, ungraded classes, a school lunch service and an open window class.

Dr. Gibbs, through her innovative and progressive programs, developed Stevens into a place of esteem in the community and in the city. She was poignantly aware that many of the Stevens students were lacking sufficient nourishment, and had little or substandard education. Consequently, Dr. Gibbs started an atypical class for students with learning disabilities and initiated a lunch service to provide assured minimal nutrition for her students. Her programs were appreciated throughout the city.⁸

Migration from the South continued long after the Reconstruction era, as racial

⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁸ *Stevens on Stevens, A Community Perspective: an Oral History of Stevens School*, 1984, 6.

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discrimination intensified, and the resulting inequality of opportunity for African Americans persisted. The alley behind Stevens was filled with the makeshift housing of the disadvantaged well into the twentieth century, and was known as Stevens' Court. Students also came from nearby Snow's Court, Johnson's Court, and Alexander's Court as well as from more prosperous, conventional homes. Some employment was found in and near the neighborhood. In the early twentieth century the Stephens neighborhood included such businesses as Western Market, Chestnut Farms Dairy, ice houses, coal yards, and wood yards. The Georgetown industrial waterfront was nearby. The West End had developed into a fashionable white residential neighborhood above M Street, and, together with Georgetown, provided opportunities for employment of domestic workers. In 1910, Dr. Walter Simmons opened his drug store near the school, one of the few black-owned businesses in the area.

Churches formed an important part of community life and included Union Wesley Church, 1123 Twenty-third Street, N. W.; the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church, 826 Nineteenth Street, N. W.; and Metropolitan A. M. E. Church, Fifteenth and M Streets, N. W. The Bethel Literary and Historical Association was located nearby. Organized by A. M. E. Bishop Daniel A. Payne in 1881, the original seventy-five member group met in Bethel Hall adjacent to the Charles Sumner School at Seventeenth and M Streets, N. W., before moving to the newly completed Metropolitan A. M. E. Church in 1886. Here issues concerning African Americans were fiercely debated at weekly meetings. Frederick Douglass first delivered his notable address, "The Self-Made Man" here in 1882. John Mercer Langston, Mary Church Terrell, Kelly Miller, Chief Justice John Harlan, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Presidents McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, and Taft addressed the Bethel literary society meetings.

The mission of Stevens School and its place in the community remained very much the same through the years as it continued a stabilizing and nurturing presence in its neighborhood. Dr. Gibbs was followed as principal (1935-53) of Stevens by Lillian S. Malone. Mrs. Malone held a master's degree in education as well as a law degree from Howard University. She instilled community pride in the students, initiating many school projects to beautify the neighborhood. Trash was cleaned out of the alley and flowers planted in front of the alley dwellings. Students recall that May Day was memorably celebrated. Dogwood and other plant materials were gathered in Rock Creek Park to decorate the May pole, and members of the community came to watch the students demonstrate their skills. During World War II Stevens was the neighborhood center for draft registration and food ration stamps. The students contributed to the war effort by saving to purchase war bonds and collecting scrap metal. The school bell was also donated. Stevens was one of the top two schools in the District in the purchase of savings bonds. During this period white-collar job opportunities

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with the federal government began to open up for Stevens graduates.

Desegregation of the schools in 1954 passed without incident at Stevens. Norman Anthony succeeded Mrs. Malone as principal in 1953 and in 1958 he was succeeded in turn by Dr. Stanley Jackson. Development of the area with high-rise office buildings displaced many long-time Stevens residents. Enrollment at Stevens dropped significantly, and the principal was assigned also to near-by Sumner and Grant Schools. A fire damaged first floor classrooms in 1958. The subsequent renovation included removal of exterior fire escapes and painting the facade. The school continued its tradition of introducing innovative programs to the community. In 1963 Stevens was selected to introduce the National Reading is Fundamental program. In 1964, Stevens was selected as the first school to implement a program through which severely mentally retarded students were included in a regular classroom program.

In 1966 Dr. Jackson was appointed Director of Special Education for D. C. Public Schools and was succeeded as principal of Stevens by Mrs. Lydia Williams. An enrollment of more than 400 students in the early 1950s declined to under 300 in 1966, and to approximately 200 in the early 1970s. Sumner and Grant were closed as elementary schools and students were bussed to the empty classrooms at Stevens from an over-crowded school in southeast Washington. Stevens was in danger of being closed when an innovative extended day program was introduced, reaching out to its new neighborhood of office workers and providing professionally supervised care for students before and after school. Stevens School gained national attention in 1977 with the enrollment of President Jimmy Carter's daughter Amy. A mini-park was created in front of the school and dedicated to Colonel West A. Hamilton, a former Stevens student and teacher, businessman, and member of the Board of Education. The park was a welcome relief to the new asphalt, concrete, steel, and glass infrastructure and became a community focus for both parents and office workers.

Juanita Wormley Braddock was appointed principal of both Stevens and Ross Elementary Schools in 1979. Mrs. Braddock vigorously continued Stevens' innovative programs, including a strong English as a second language program. During her tenure, Stevens developed an international atmosphere with students from many countries including Russia, China, Romania, Brazil, Yugoslavia, Malaysia, England, Iran, Viet Nam, Germany, France, Pakistan, India, Turkey, Indonesia, and many of the African and Latin American countries. The present principal, Gloria Henderson, succeeded Juanita Braddock in 1995. The English as a Second Language program has continued with a teacher who can speak to parents in five different languages. Spanish is taught through a partnership with the Department of Agriculture Graduate School in the pre-kindergarten through third grades. An exceptional instrumental music program is in place with harp instruction a specialty. Inter-action with the community now includes lunch-

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time partnering with volunteer tutors from the American Bar Association in the S. T. A. R. S. program, development of peer mediation skills with volunteers from the Department of Justice, the Western Presbyterian Church's Project Create after-school program in dance, theater, and the visual arts, the Everybody Wins volunteers who come at lunch to read with second and third graders, and the national Co-nect program to increase technology skills. Gloria Henderson has been a strong proponent of the cultural heritage of the Thaddeus Stevens School.

Stevens alumni have distinguished themselves both nationally and in their communities and include historian Rayford Whittingham Logan, Colonel Campbell C. Johnson, Dr. Charles R. Drew, singer Roberta Flack, television personality Ralph "Petey" Green, and actor Robert Hooks.

Thaddeus Stevens

Thaddeus Stevens (1793-1868) graduated from Dartmouth College in 1814 moving then from his Vermont birthplace to Pennsylvania to study law. In the 1830s Stevens, serving in the Pennsylvania legislature, played a leading role in the establishment of a public school system in Pennsylvania. He early concerned himself with the rights of African Americans. Elected to Congress from Pennsylvania in 1848, he quickly became a leader of radical anti-slavery forces. A bill advocating abolition of slavery was introduced by him at the beginning of the second session of the thirty-seventh Congress. Though unsuccessful, it stirred up controversy which led directly to Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. Stevens clearly saw the need for radical social and political reconstruction in the South. He fought for legislation which would guarantee blacks equal rights with whites. He advocated confiscation and reallocation of Confederate lands, proposing that each freedman be given forty acres. In his will, Stevens bequeathed funds for the establishment in Pennsylvania of an orphanage for both black and white children. After an elaborate state funeral, during which his body lay in the Capitol rotunda on the same catafalque as Lincoln's had, he was buried in a humble black cemetery in Pennsylvania. His epitaph, written by himself, was as follow--"I repose in this quiet and secluded spot, not from any preference for solitude, but finding other cemeteries limited by charter rules as to race, I have chosen it that I might be enabled to illustrate in my death the principles which I have advocated through a long life--the equality of man before his Creator."

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STANDING FILES

Charles Sumner School Museum & Archives
District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office
Historical Society of Washington, D. C.
Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library, of the District of
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The Thaddeus Stevens School is located at 1050 Twenty-first Street, N. W., facing east midway between K and L Streets. It is situated on lot 844 (old lots 22, 23, 24) of Square 73. The play ground is located on adjacent lots 20 and 832.

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DRAWINGS

Engraving of Stevens School Building.
1870.

*Annual Report of the Superintendent of Colored Schools at Washington and
Georgetown, 1871-72.*

Charles Sumner School Museum & Archives.

Perspective view looking southwest from Twenty-first Street.

Sixteen architectural drawings which appear to date from the 1895-96 reconstruction are on file at the Engineering Archives Section, D. C. Office of Property Management. This series includes elevations, sections, and floor plans and is signed "Approved, Edward Clark, Architect of the Capitol."

PHOTOGRAPHS

Tanya Edwards Beauchamp, photographer

04-01-2001, date of photograph

Tanya Edwards Beauchamp, Associates / 930 Leigh Mill Road
Great Falls, Virginia 22066 / 703-759-3796

1. Front Facade. Perspective View Looking Southwest from Twenty-first Street, N. W.

2. Front Facade. Perspective View Looking Northwest from Twenty-first Street, N. W.

3. Rear View. Perspective View Looking Southeast from L Street, N. W.

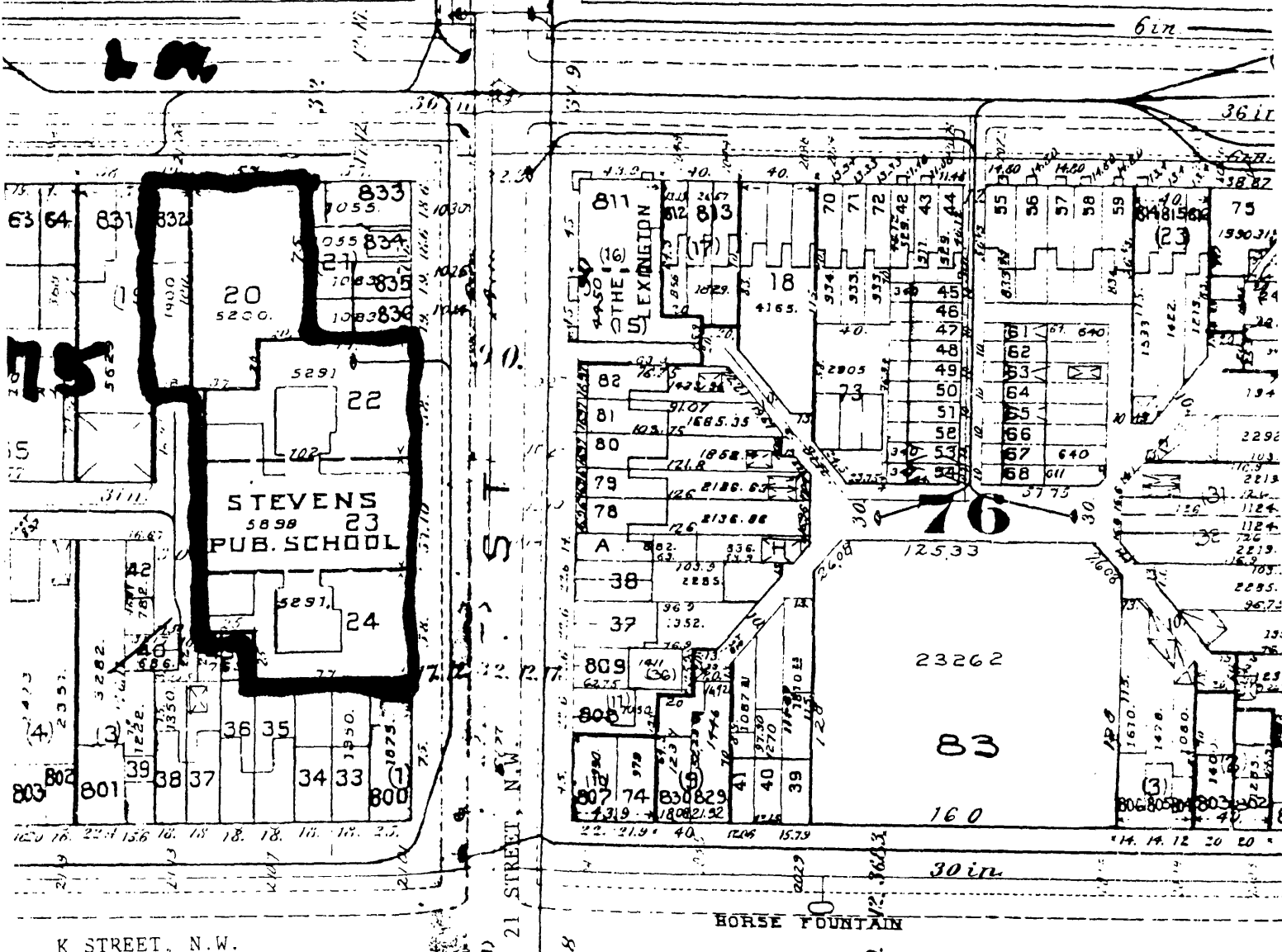
Note: Entire building cannot be shown in a single photograph because of its size and height and the size and height of its high-rise office neighborhood, and the comparatively narrow width of Twenty-first Street.

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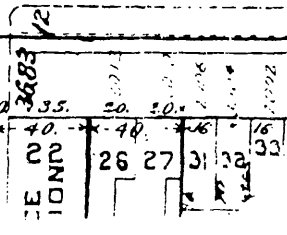
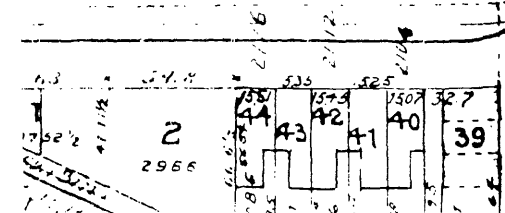
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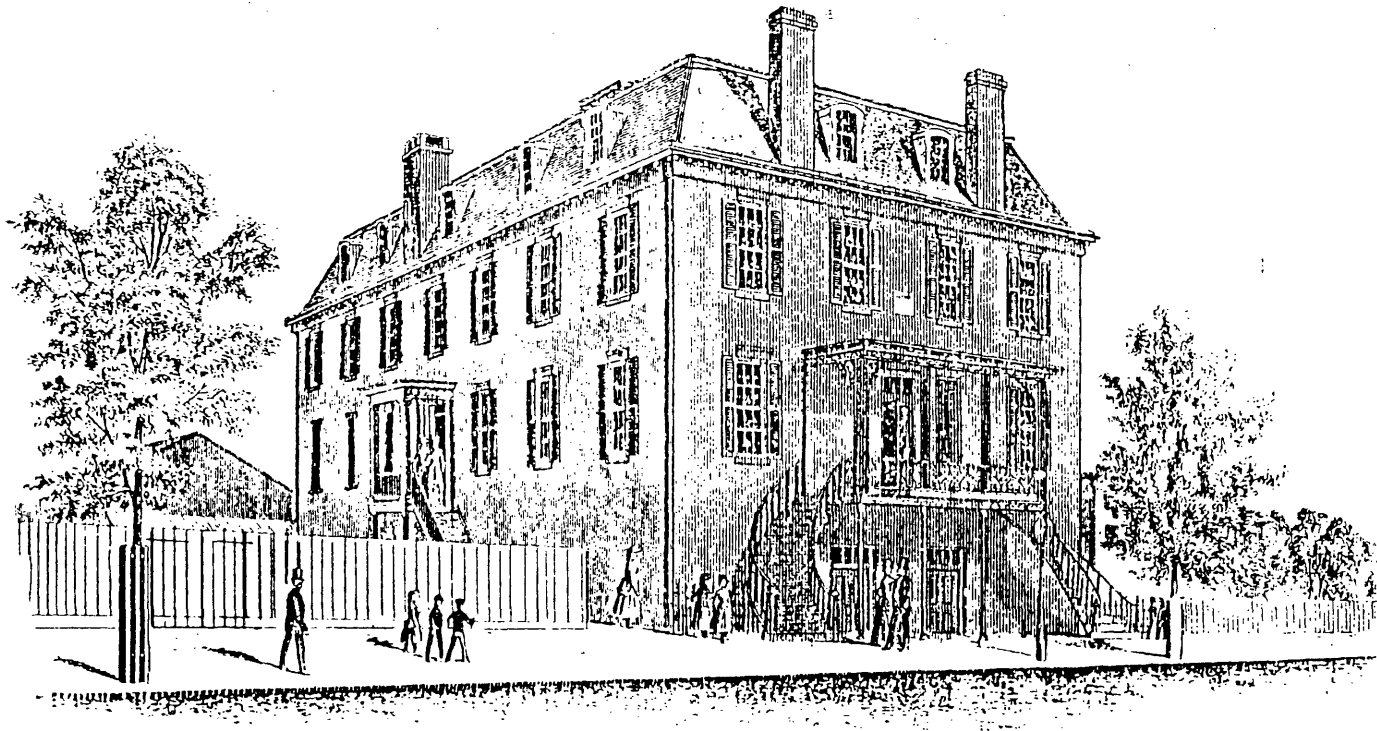
K STREET, N.W.

21 STREET, N.W.

HORSE FOUNTAIN

MARKET HOUSE





STEVEN'S SCHOOL BUILDING.