

WASHINGTON, D.C.'S STREETCAR SUBURBS: A
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF BROOKLAND AND BRIGHTWOOD,
1870-1900

by

Thomas Eugene Prince

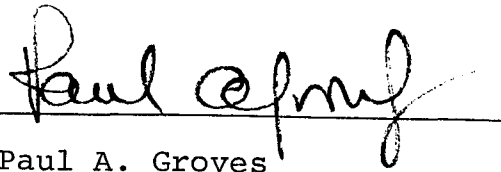
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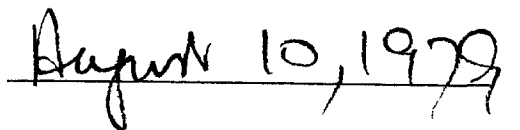
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ABSTRACT

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Thomas Eugene Prince, Master of Arts, 1979

Thesis directed by: Paul A. Groves
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The evolution of public transportation systems in the large American cities of the late nineteenth century culminated in the innovation of the streetcar. Such transportation changes affected urban structure and by the last quarter of the century had produced a distinctive residential area, the streetcar suburb. Washington, D.C. had a number of such suburbs, some the result of subdivision development associated with the extension of streetcar lines to link existing village suburbs to the downtown core, others the product of concurrent residential subdivision and streetcar development. Such suburbs were predominantly middle-class, white, residential areas.

An examination of two Washington, D.C. suburbs: Brightwood and Brookland, indicated distinct physical, social, economic, and demographic structures in these village suburbs in the early 1880's. After the subsequent introduction of streetcar links to downtown Washington--an employment core characterized by much white-collar government employment--the two suburbs became increasingly similar in terms of the chosen measurements. By the end of

the century, there was little in their structures to indicate the very different paths they had taken to the same end.

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To my wife, Deborah, who has endured while providing much needed moral encouragement, I would like to say thanks. In that same vein I thank Kevin Mills, who also provided the photographic skills for this thesis.

Finally, there is always one without whose aid the work perhaps would not have been completed. For this reason, I cannot adequately thank Janice Gibson for her editorial and research assistance, and plain old insistence in my completing this work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
List of Tables		
List of Figures		
Chapter I		
Chapter II	The Streetcar and the American City	8
Chapter III	Nineteenth Century Public Transportation in Washington, D.C.: A Case for the Unique	19
Chapter IV	Washington's Streetcar Suburbs in the 1880's	28
Chapter V	Brookland and Brightwood-- Examples of Village Town Changes, 1880-1900	36
Chapter VI	Conclusion	59
Bibliography		61

List of Tables

Table		Page
4-1	Population Growth of Washington Village Towns, 1892-1897	32
5-1	Occupations of Heads of Household in Brookland, 1880	40
5-2	Occupations of Heads of Household in Brightwood, 1880	41
5-3	Homeownership According to Occupation of Heads of Household in Brookland, 1900	45
5-4	Homeownership According to Occupation of Heads of Household in Brightwood, 1900	48
5-5	Building Permits Issued for Brookland, 1880-1900	51
5-6	Building Permits Issued for Brightwood, 1880-1900	55

List of Figures

Figure		Page
2-1	Generalized Sequence of the Expansion of Streetcar Networks in American Cities, 1850-1919	10
2-2	Nineteenth Century Omnibus	13
2-3	Nineteenth Century Horsecar	14
2-4	Nineteenth Century Electric Streetcar	17
3-1	Route of First Public Stage Line, 1800	20
3-2	Route of Initial Omnibus Line, 1854	22
3-3	Route of Horsecar Lines, 1862	25
3-4	Total Horsecar Track Mileage, 1887	27
4-1	Routes Linking Village Towns to Downtown, 1887-1892	29
4-2	Village Towns of Brookland and Brightwood, 1880	35
5-1	Typical Brookland Residences, c.1900	52
5-2	Typical Brookland Residences, c.1900	53
5-3	Typical Brightwood Residences, c.1900	56
5-4	Typical Brightwood Residences, c.1900	57

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The transformation of nineteenth century urban areas was associated with radical changes in population distribution patterns. Intrinsically linked to these changes was the development of the nineteenth century street railway system, the framework around which the cities of the period grew. "The adoption of these innovations radically changed the form and structure of the city, from one characterized by a large heterogeneity of land uses to a city with specialized districts and a strong core orientation."^{1/} During the period between 1830 and 1900, the urban public transportation system graduated from the horse drawn hackney coaches to electrically powered street-cars. The relationship between the development of the street railway and the initial suburbanization of American cities covers the last thirty years of this period. The growth of cities nationally can be studied in relation to transit growth and the evolution of urban areas of varying

^{1/} Association of American Geographers, The Relationship Between Transportation Innovation and Changing Spatial Patterns in Pittsburgh: 1850-1910, paper prepared for Association of American Geographers, by J.A. Tarr (Kansas City: Association of American Geographers' Convention, 24 April 1972).

proportions. City growth, on a local level, can be studied in relation to street railway innovations and the outward extension of the built-up area.

The overall relationship between transit growth and urbanization does not provide a uniform model applicable to all cities. The transformation from the walking city to the modern metropolis spans a period of rapid and dramatic transit growth. Consequently, this study - through a detailed examination of Brightwood and Brookland, two Washington, D.C. streetcar suburbs - examines suburban growth within the federal capital from 1870 to 1900, a period of rapid urbanization for this city.

Scope and Objectives

Washington, while restricted in local decision-making as a result of its unique status as the nation's capital, nonetheless expanded as a result of transportation developments. Growth, however, was not uniform throughout the city. It appears to have been in response to special economic, social, and political interests operating on a local level. The primary objective of this study is to examine two streetcar suburbs of Washington located in different parts of the city to (1) ascertain the land use changes and types of construction associated with street railway service, and (2) examine selected demographic variables as a measure of social and economic changes in the village towns. It is possible that public transit development had a greater impact on land use changes and

and economic policy in those towns with early urban affiliation.

Methodology

This study ranges over the broad area of subjects affecting the city's physical growth while focusing primarily on a micro-study of the political, economic, social, and philosophical forces which shaped the urban environment of Washington.

Three areas of urban research - public transportation policy, land use change and construction activity, and demographic analysis - provide the necessary detail for the differentiation of local growth in Washington.

The early transportation policy promoted in Washington was derived from the laissez-faire attitude of Congress. This resulted in the proliferation of independently owned companies operating the public transport system. The establishment of economic and political ties often necessary when village towns established early links to the city, was the result of actions by independent entrepreneurs. These people were usually prominent real estate developers.

Land use changes and building activities, as documented by building permits, indicate the intensity and multiplicity of growth in these areas. A sample survey of permits for each area provides data relevant to the increase in urbanization beyond the city limit.

Expanded street railway service in Washington occurred after 1870. The U.S. Census of Population for 1880 pro-

vides information on the residential character and composition of the two village towns. The 1900 census yields data pertinent to the changes which transpired as the city approached the end of the street railway era. A ten percent residential sample of each community secured definitively from the 1880 and 1900 census served as a basis for the examination of demographic and economic changes.

National Growth Patterns

Most nineteenth century American cities that experienced pressures of increasing population density incorporated the street railway and related developments into their urban environment in an attempt to reduce congestion. These early efforts to alleviate the population density problem encouraged a reorganization of the urban environment.^{2/} Despite the financial benefits of street railway entrepreneurship, regional economic differences between cities resulted in a staggered rate of urbanization. Cities along the northeastern coast, with populations of 50,000 or more in 1830 - namely, New York, Philadelphia, and Boston - grew rapidly in the pre-Civil War era. These cities successfully adopted the street railway systems early, thus setting the trend for growth in cities throughout America.

^{2/}
G.M. Smerk, "The Streetcar: Shaper of American Cities", Traffic Quarterly 21 (October, 1967): 577.

"Changes in the internal structure of cities that used street railway systems resembled one another closely. In an elemental way, street railway service and urbanization moved together: the more street railway service provided, the faster the rate of suburban building. National periods of increased building activity during the nineteenth century were closely associated with improvements in the modes of public travel."^{3/} The entire urban environment of the large American cities - building types, residential and business locations, and the decentralization of downtown activities - assumed some measure of nationally uniform development in response to transportation development.

The distinguishing variable among cities during the span of public transit improvements is found in the initial implementation. A city's population size and its pre-industrial status were paramount in the early acceptance of transit improvement innovations. Washington, D.C.'s population did not rank among the largest of northeastern cities, and its pre-industrial economic base was decidedly inferior to most cities. Hence, many cities outside of the northeast corridor developed transportation systems comparable to those of New York and Boston, while Washington plotted its own course.

^{3/} S.B. Warner, Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1910, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 44-49.

Unique Transportation Growth Patterns of Washington

Very generally, the development of street railways in Washington followed the development of railway systems in America's larger cities. Closer examination of Washington's street railway history yields numerous examples of deviation from the general model of early utilization and improved technology.

In 1830, Washington was a relatively unimportant town economically, with a population approaching 50,000. There was no industry of importance to national growth; there were no financial institutions that shaped the national economy. Only through the administration of the national business by Congress did the federal capital find a significant place among American cities. This same feature should have allowed street railway development to parallel that of other cities; however, it did not. While state and local legislative bodies of other cities were granting charters and franchises for street railway systems, Washington's local railway development was determined by Congress.^{4/} Congressional inaction allowed development in Washington to lag behind cities of similar size and limited the city's innovative involvement in transportation usage. The legislative input on transportation franchises, alone, created diversification with respect to direction and intensity of

^{4/}
Laws Relating to Street Railway Franchises in the District of Columbia, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1905), 9.

local growth. The long period of inactivity by Congress in granting charters was later reflected in the disproportionate amount of growth in suburbs around the city.

As the intensity of transit innovation increased nationally, several cities maintained some initial advantages from early usage. The patterns of growth that developed in Washington after 1872, when Congress began to grant charters with some degree of regularity, can be viewed in the context of the national growth patterns. Those village towns with an early economic or political link to the federal city differed from those where this early link was absent. While adhering to the general pattern of transit innovations for cities of similar sizes, Washington - at the local level - exhibited a distinctly different pattern of growth.

CHAPTER II

The Streetcar and the American City

Process of Change

Historically, the processes involved in urban expansion have originated within the private sector. Activities associated with the growth of urban centers during the nineteenth century were similarly derived from the entrepreneurship of private citizens and cooperative business ventures. In his study of Boston, Sam Bass Warner observed that the municipal establishments did not build houses themselves, but rather avoided interfering with private profit-making processes as much as possible.^{1/}

These private citizens and cooperative groups frequently controlled the financial institutions and were thereby able to promote street railway lines and similar plans as a means of encouraging urban development.^{2/}

The original suburban image of pre-industrial America

^{1/} S.B. Warner, Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 32.

^{2/} G.R. Taylor, "The Beginnings of Mass Transportation in Urban America," Smithsonian Journal of History, 36.

was an unattractive one. Areas around the city were often used for such nuisance activities as brothels, slaughter houses, and garbage dumps.^{3/} With the advent of reliable public transportation, the peripheries of the city began to experience some rejuvenation. The revitalized areas became the homes of artisans, professionals, and tradesmen who took advantage of building activity beyond the city limits.^{4/} The transformation of the city's surrounding areas, in conjunction with the development of the street railway, the invention of the elevator, and the introduction of the skyscraper hastened the transformation of the central business district. The number of affluent persons residing downtown decreased, as the city boundary expanded to accommodate the increased number of daily commuters. (Figure 2-1.)

The emergence of the street railway system as the prevailing mode of public transport increased the spatial activity of the city in terms of physical distance from the downtown core, while decreasing the relative distance to downtown from the periphery. This resulted in an increase in the size of activity zones throughout the city as pos-

^{3/} K.T. Jackson, "The Crabgrass Frontier: 150 Years of Suburban Growth in America". The Urban Experience: Themes in American History ed. R.A. Mohl, Jr. and J.F. Richardson (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1973), 198.

^{4/} S.B. Warner, Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 15.

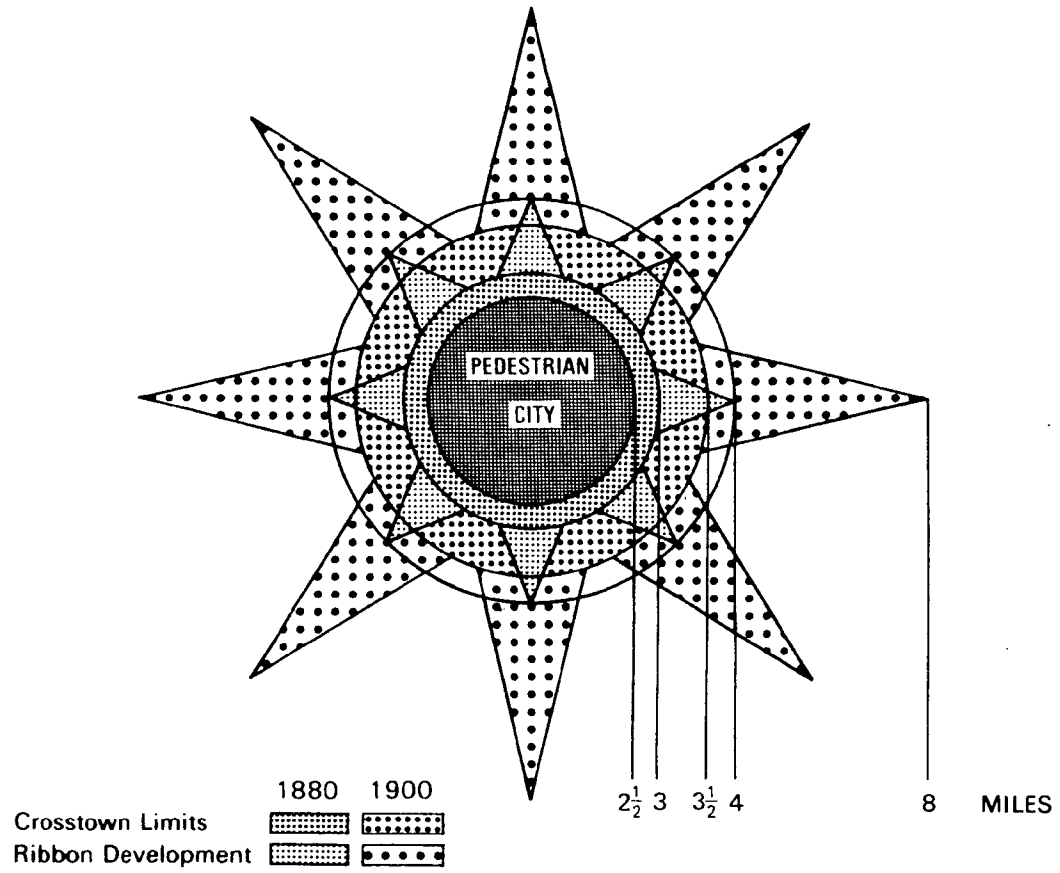


Figure 2-1. Generalized Sequence of the Expansion of Streetcar Networks in American Cities, 1850-1910

Source: D. Ward, Cities and Immigrants.

tulated in a study of Chicago.^{5/} The increase in the size of activity zones, the creation of amusement parks and public beaches, and the growth of village towns can be traced to the development of the urban transportation system.

Street Railways - Early History

The first version of the street railway appeared in America during the 1800's when an extension of a steam railroad serviced New York City.^{6/} This venture began an era of innovations in public transportation technology in America.

Two cities - New York and New Orleans - actually used this invention. From the introduction of the early steam railway until the horsecar upsurge during the 1850's, cities remained static in form and shape although the technology to alter existing patterns was available. Changes which did occur lacked impact. Suburbs, as such, did not appear until a later period - a period when practically all major cities began to implement public transportation systems.

The need for an urban transit system resulted from an increase in inner-city population and a decrease in available

^{5/} E. Burgess, R.E. Park, and R.D. McKenzie, The City (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925), 47-62.

^{6/} J.Boettjer, "Street Railways in Washington, D.C." (Master's thesis, Department of History, George Washington University, 1962), 13.

urban accommodations. The intricate relationship between mass transportation and residential congestion first surfaced in the cities of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, with the utilization of the French-made omnibus. This vehicle, a six-to-twelve seat horse-drawn coach, transported commuters from downtown to outlying areas. (Figure 2-2.)

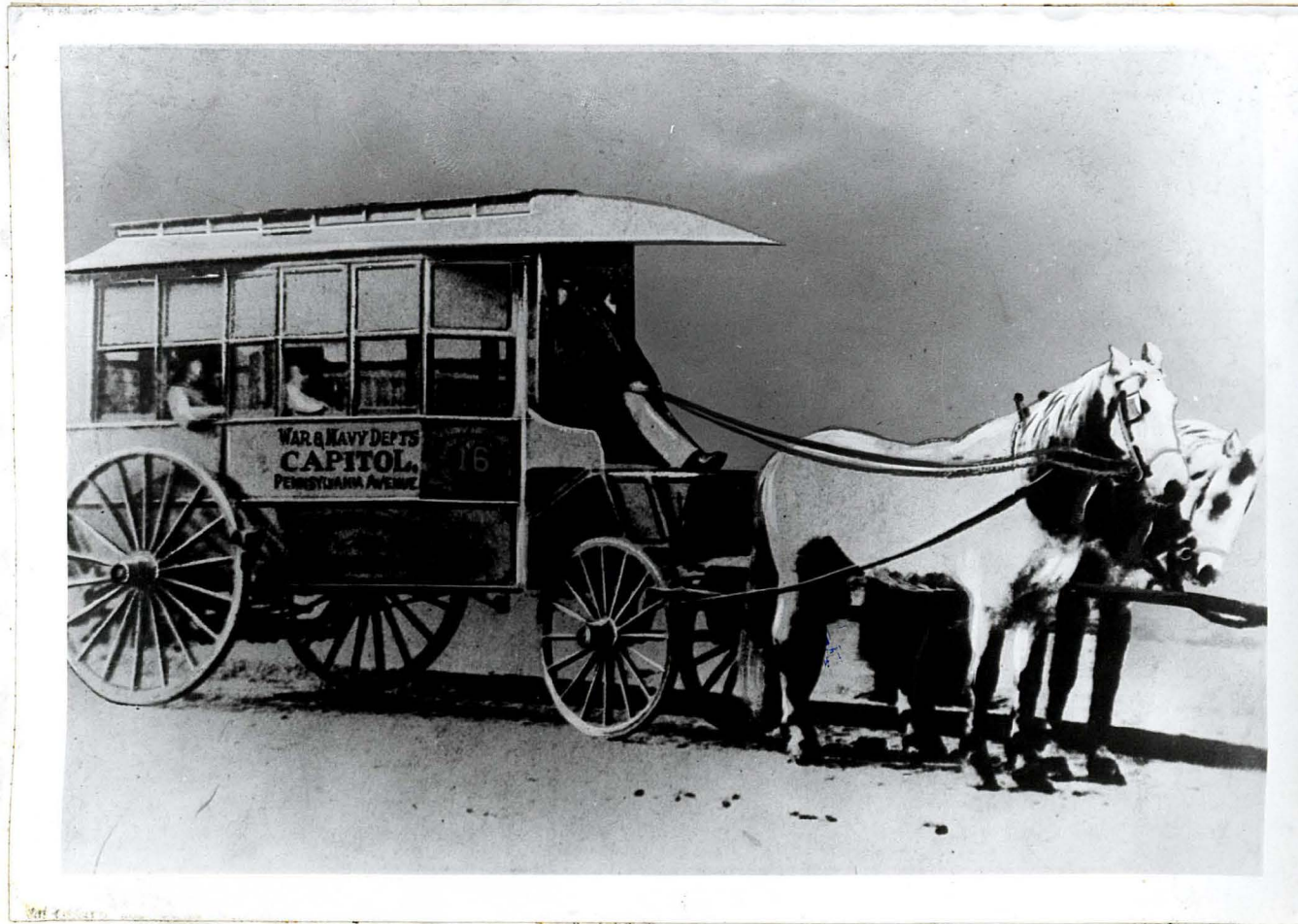
During the decade of the 1830's, Boston, New York, and Philadelphia operated lines to the suburbs. Boston had lines to Needham, Waltham, and Dorchester; New York operated lines to Harlem, Manhattanville, and Yorkville; and Philadelphia ran lines to Germantown, Darby, and Frankfurt. Through the urbanization of surrounding areas, an attempt to alleviate residential congestion was developed. Other American cities devised similar transportation frameworks and implemented the omnibus to facilitate urban growth.

The Era of the Horsecar

The horsecar, a horse-drawn coach on rails, followed the omnibus as a major mode of public transportation used in suburbanization. (Figure 2-3.) By the 1850's, horsecars appeared in Chicago, New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Buffalo, and many other urban areas. The rise of the horsecar significantly contributed to the spatial structure of nineteenth century cities. The uniformity of building patterns among cities that initiated omnibus transport became more observable with the advent of the horsecar.

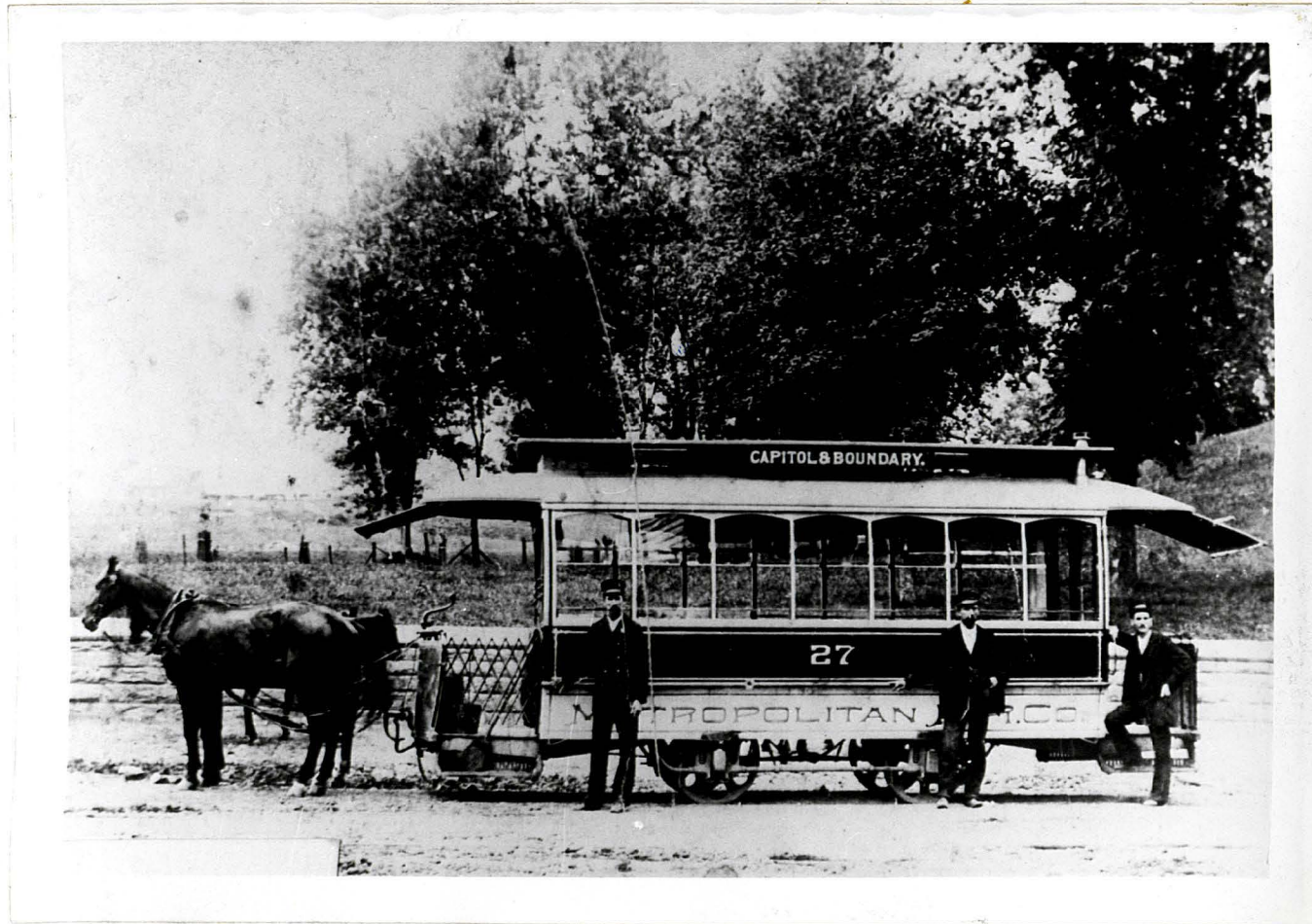
A group of cities including Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Jersey City, and Washington were not among the early public

Figure 2-2 Nineteenth Century Omnibus



Source: MLK Washingtonian Collection

Figure 2-3 Nineteenth Century Horsecar



Source: MLK Washingtonian Collection

transit users. While the size of their populations and their former importance in pre-industrial America rendered these areas likely users of the horsecar, other variables intervened. The terrain of Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and Jersey City were not conducive to horsecar usage. In Washington, congressional authority to legislate city affairs greatly hampered horsecar implementation.

The resulting spatial growth of these areas reflected individual public transit utilization patterns. Nevertheless, by 1880, the horsecar system was the mode of transportation in these areas and in many cities with a population as low as 50,000.^{7/}

With the widespread use of the horsecar, village towns around cities began to experience the types of building activities that initiators of the omnibus lines enjoyed during an earlier era. A general pattern of urban growth was developing nationally in close conjunction with transportation developments and subsequent use.

Cable Cars

In 1872, further advancement produced the cable car. With the initial success of the cable car on steep Nob Hill in San Francisco, the general pattern of transportation technology expansion became applicable to other areas, like Washington, which utilized cable cars during the 1890's.

^{7/}
B. McKelvey, The Urbanization of America, 1860-1915
(New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1963), 76.

The San Francisco venture spurred the development of similar vehicles. The first cable car that turned corners was built in Chicago in 1882.

Most cable car success during the 1880's were concentrated in cities with populations over 25,000.^{8/} These were primarily municipalities with an early history of public transportation use and suburban development.

Electrification of Horsecars

The invention of a practical means of electrified transportation, the electric trolley in 1887, began the final phase of the horsecar era. (Figure 2-4.) Originally used in Richmond, Virginia, the trolley was adopted by twenty-five cities within a year. Towns which had previously failed to implement the cable car, or other early public transportation innovations, used the electric trolley. Building activity related to the electric streetcar resulted in the suburbs becoming an alternative residence for a broader segment of the core population.

The electrification of the streetcar brought with it an economic boom to nineteenth century America. Electrification initiated a corporate ownership policy that lasted until the inception of public control of transit systems. Investments in transportation franchises and old horsecar lines soared. Building activity beyond the core also

^{8/}
Ibid., 67.

Figure 2-4 Nineteenth Century Electric Streetcar



Source: MLK Washingtonian Collection

also increased with the trolley system. The spatial structure of cities began to assume a more definitive form. The once haphazard structure and form of early cities and suburbs were replaced by a temporal framework of growth based on consistent improvement in urban transportation development. The impact of the street railway's progress on the city from horsecar to electric trolley is best expressed in the urbanization process of American cities when related to utilization patterns of public transportation developments. Building activity resulting from early street railway usage allowed cities like New York, Boston, and Philadelphia to experience advanced suburban growth.

CHAPTER III

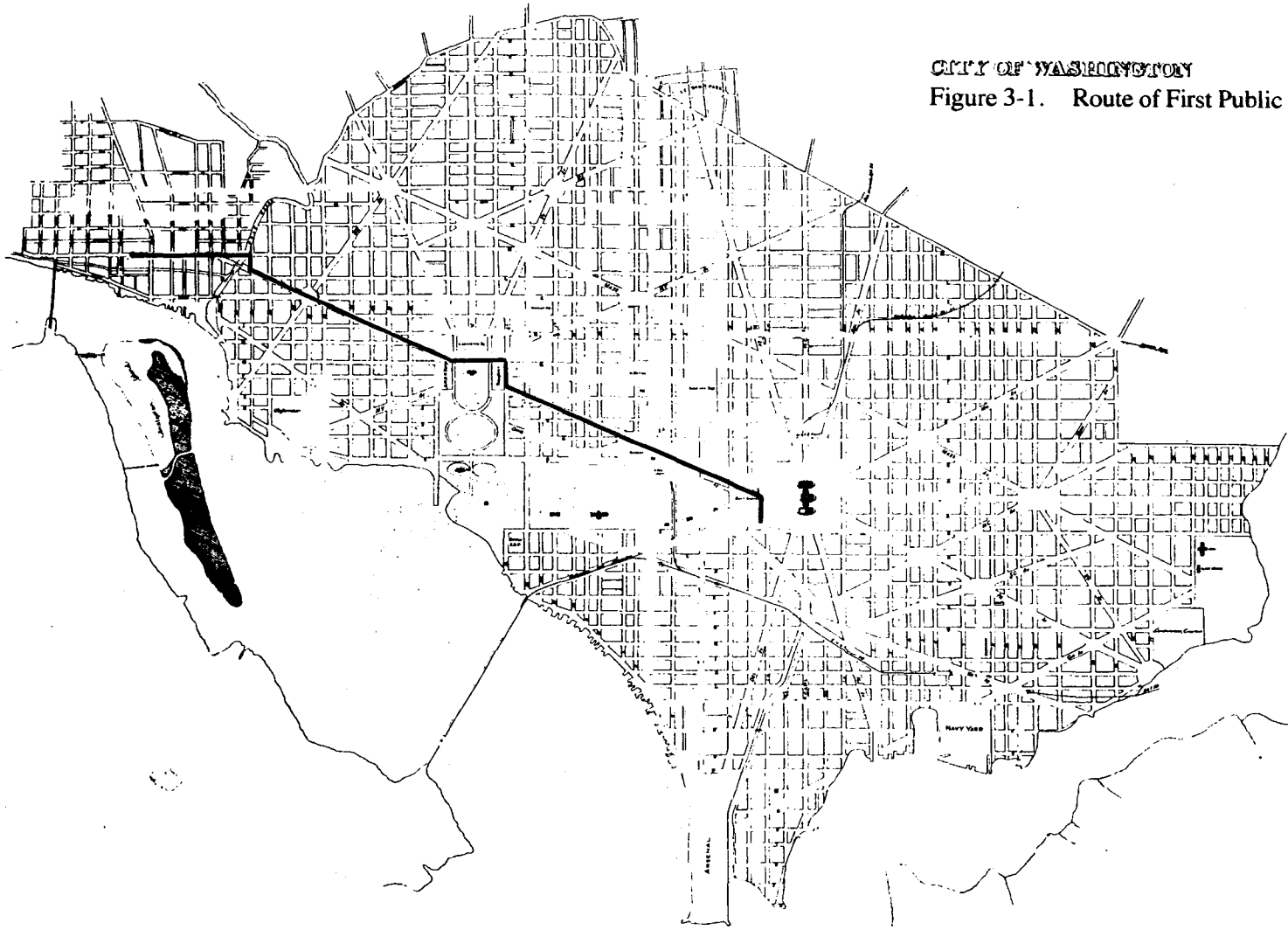
NINETEENTH CENTURY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IN
WASHINGTON, D.C.: A CASE FOR THE UNIQUEPre-Horsecar Transit History

In contrast to the national trend of increased urbanization through the use of a public transport innovations upon inception, Washington, D.C., experienced a later suburban development. This delay in growth was caused by deferred utilization of practically all the major public transport innovations. The initial use of later innovations began an earnest effort to solidify the "stop and go" methods of nineteenth century public transportation in Washington.

Public transportation in the District of Columbia, from the arrival of the federal government until its initial venture into the horsecar system consisted primarily of a series of failures. The public stage lines, the operation of hackney coaches, and the use of omnibuses were all unsuccessful in establishing reliable efficient transport. The first attempt to provide public transportation came in the spring of 1800 with a two-horse stage line operating from Georgetown, then a suburb of the city, to the United States Capitol grounds in downtown Washington. (Figure 3-1). This effort failed because of poor ridership. The trip from Georgetown to downtown was too expensive for the

CITY OF WASHINGTON

Figure 3-1. Route of First Public Stage Line, 1800



Source: L.O. King, 100 Years of Capital Traction.

ordinary working man, and those who could afford the fare used private carriages. Failure of the stage line relegated passenger service in the city to hackney coaches, the forerunner of present day taxicabs. However, the employment of hackneys for public travel was no more successful than the stage line. The cost was just as expensive and the trip was more hazardous. The hackney drivers competed fiercely for the same fares, thereby reducing the riders' safety while charging as much as possible.^{1/}

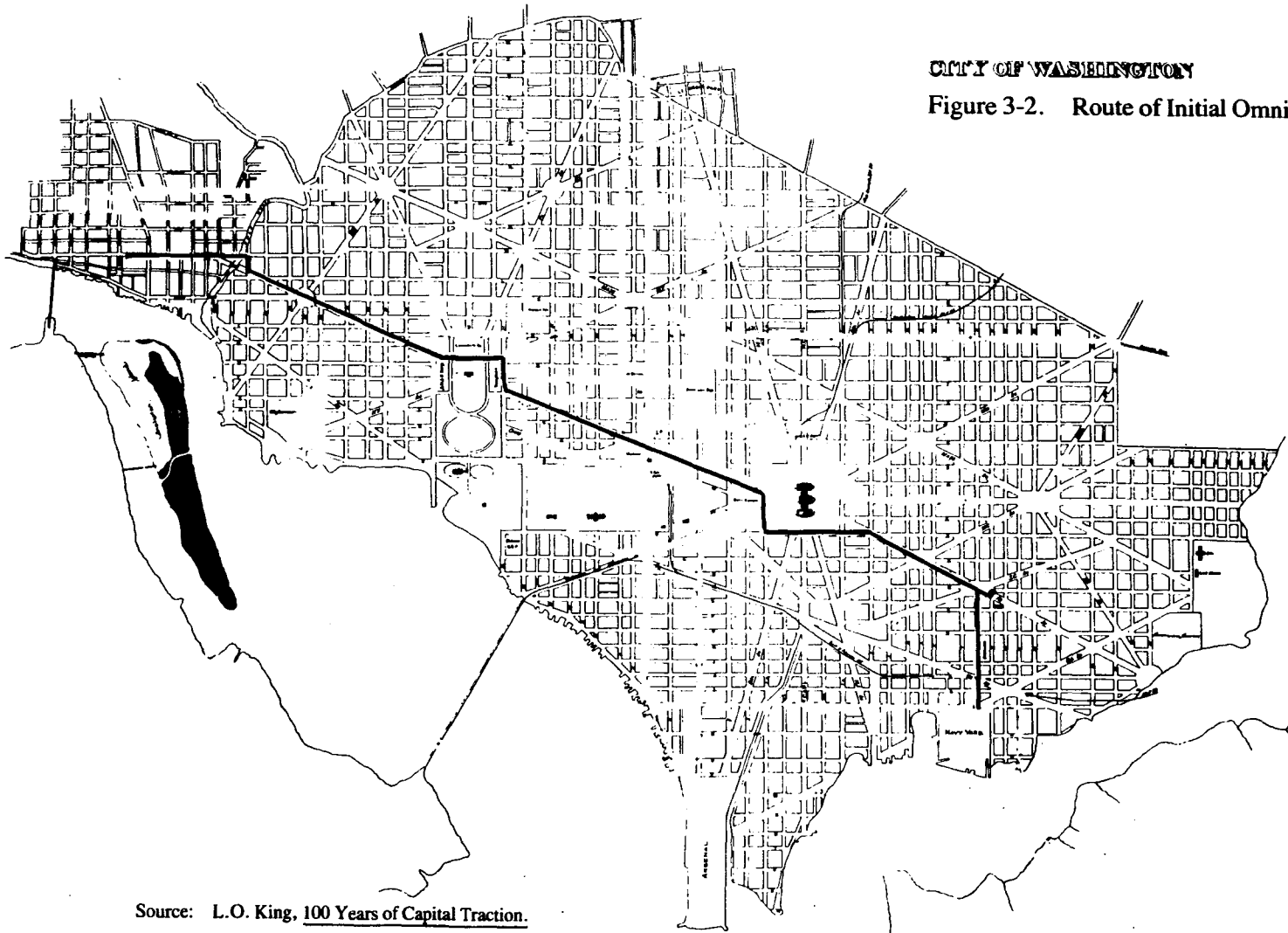
The void created in public transportation with the demise of the stage line and failure of the hackneys was partially filled with the implementation of the omnibus in America. The advantages of fixed routes, reduced fares, and increased carrying capacity led to the 1830 beginning of omnibus service in Washington. This was less than ten years after the introduction of the system to America. The first line of omnibus service in Washington was an extension of the old stage line. (Figure 3-2).

Omnibus service in Washington stimulated residential and business decentralization in much the same manner as in other cities throughout the nation. Reduced fares and increased carrying capacity made those parts of the city being serviced by the omnibus more attractive for residential living. With initial omnibus service, Washington urban zone

^{1/} J. Boettjer, "Street Railways in Washington, D.C." (Masters thesis, Department of History, George Washington University, 1962), p. 11.

CITY OF WASHINGTON

Figure 3-2. Route of Initial Omnibus Line, 1854



Source: L.O. King, 100 Years of Capital Traction.

assumed a measure of structure in growth comparable to that of other cities that had begun using the omnibus.

During the 1830's the omnibus extended the urban zone, but the congestion created by the proliferation of lines did little for the downtown core of the city. The fierce competition between privately-operated companies led to an 1850 city ordinance that subjected drivers to fines for irresponsible acts.^{2/} During this period (1830-1850) of competition between omnibus lines in Washington, the horsecar--a more efficient system--was introduced to American cities.

The Coming of the Horsecar

In 1854, a consolidation of omnibus lines began the first phase of Washington's shift to the horsecar. This was twenty years after the inception of the horsecar and ten years behind most cities. The thrust of this effort resulted in a less congested downtown zone, as duplication and competition between lines were decreased. Efforts were rewarded in 1859, when Congress approved a charter to construct a horsecar line along the same route as the earlier stage and omnibus lines. Public pressure against horsecars prevented early construction of the system. Only the start of the Civil War, coupled with the city's strategic location, expedited the horsecar installation; even then, it was only an effort to aid the war. The primary

^{2/} Ibid., 18.

beneficiaries of the new public transport would be the surrounding villages. Previous ties would now prove instrumental for northwest village towns in the horsecar era.

While setting the framework for unification of the city, the merger of omnibus lines did very little to alter the direction growth of the city. Commencing with the early stage line, through the use of omnibus, growth had become concentrated in the northwest section of the city. Each successive innovation helped to maintain this pattern by following the established routes of a previous period.

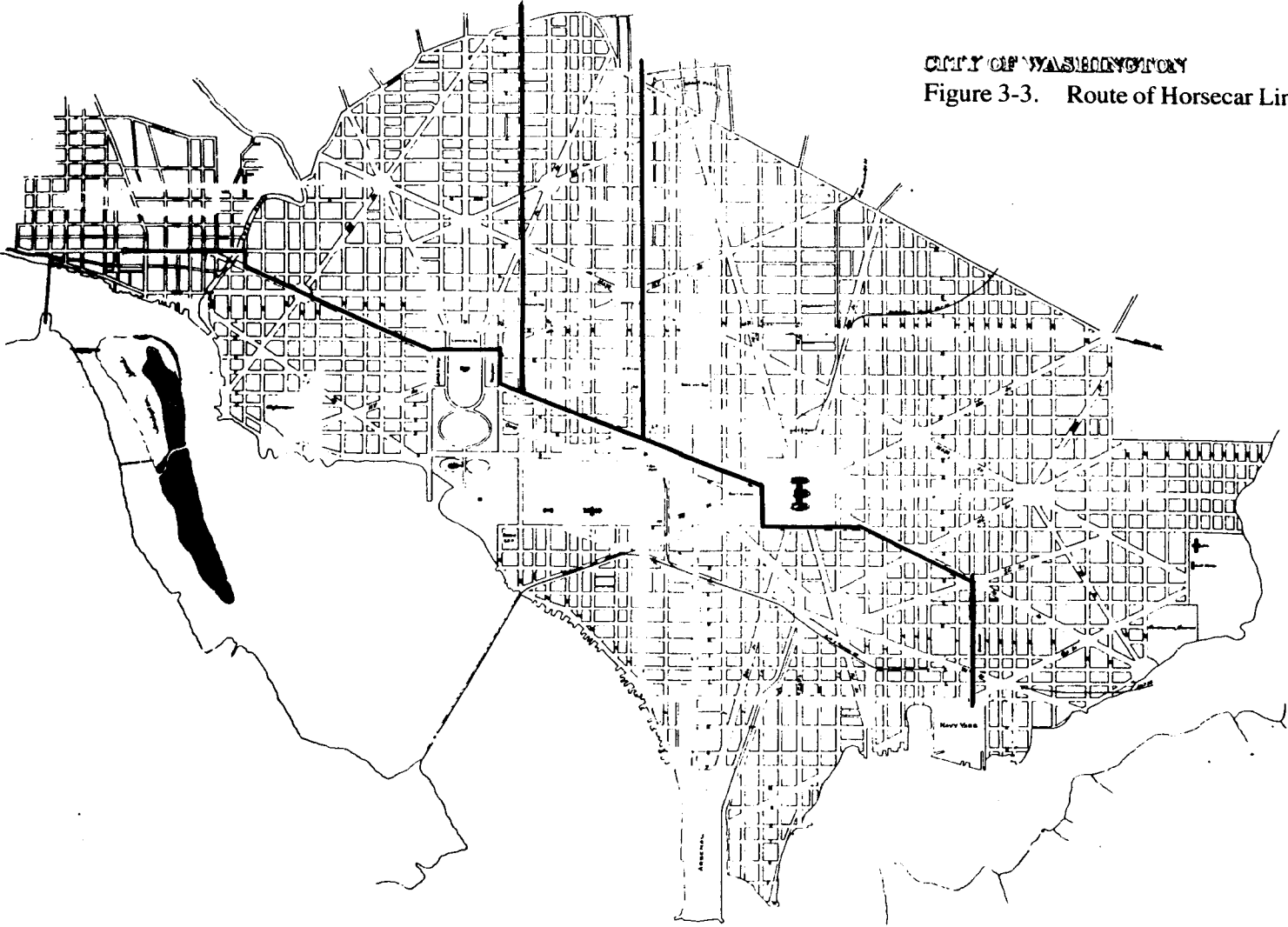
The arrival of the horsecar and its subsequent improvements began a forty-year period of spreading the directional growth of the city, while reducing the initial advantage of many villages.

Public Transportation and the Direction of Growth

The first charter for a horsecar system in the District of Columbia incorporated three lines: the Georgetown to Navy Yard line; the Seventh Street to Boundary Street (Florida Avenue) line; and the Fourteenth Street and New York Avenue to Boundary Street line. (Figure 3-3). This charter combined the two lines that had emerged from the union of omnibus lines. Hence, the first efforts of horsecar entrepreneurs maintained the northwest growth of the city that had begun with the stage line and the omnibus.

The continued development of the public transit system in the northwestern section of the city was reflected

CITY OF WASHINGTON
Figure 3-3. Route of Horsecar Lines, 1862



Source: L.O. King, 100 Years of Capital Traction.

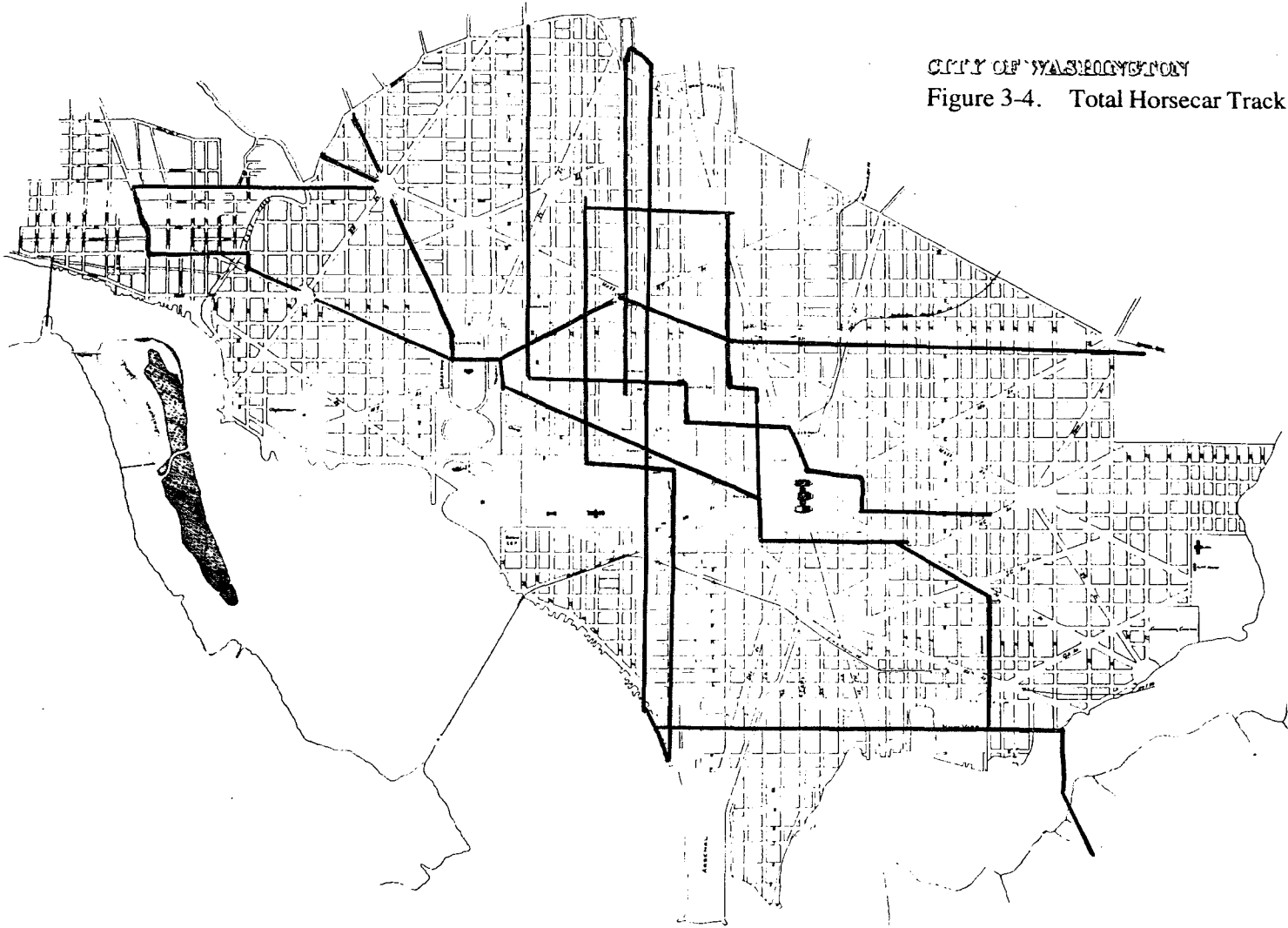
in the second horsecar enterprise in the city. The second line, chartered in 1864, established a route from Seventh and "H" Streets, N.W., eastward through downtown. This line, while doing little for the residential population of villages immediately, later served as an exchange line for the northwest village town horsecar lines.

The impact on the city by the merger of omnibus lines and the subsequent chartering of horsecar companies was evident as early as 1880. The length of horsecar tracks in the city totaled thirty and eight-tenths miles, with only five and seventh-tenths miles of track located east of the Capitol Building.^{3/} (Figure 3-4). The city was not experiencing a balanced growth in surrounding areas. The northwest areas of the city with an earlier history of development related to omnibus use continued to develop at a faster rate than other parts of the city. Lack of temporal and directional parallelism persisted even with a more efficient system such as the horse car. Varying areas in the city, including northwest, remained very much under the influence of private concerns in growth related to transportation developments.

^{3/} L. O. King, Jr., 100 Years of Capitol Traction (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1972), 15.

CITY OF WASHINGTON

Figure 3-4. Total Horsecar Track Mileage, 1887



Source: L.O. King, 100 Years of Capital Traction.

CHAPTER IV

WASHINGTON'S STREETCAR SUBURBS IN THE 1880'S

General Growth and Development of the City's Village
Towns

The growth of many Washington village towns throughout much of the nineteenth century depended heavily on the power and prestige of residents who invested in the land and on the accessibility to the downtown area. The unification of early transit lines gave rise to the city's eventual use of later transit innovation at inception, thereby making the entire county accessible. (Figure 4-1.) The District of Columbia, with a population of approximately 132,000 in 1870, consisted of a number of village towns and tracts of underdeveloped land extending from the city limits to the county boundary line. The territory which contained the federal governmental operations was known as Washington City; the remaining territory was Washington County. No provisions were incorporated for the annexation of areas outside the city limits when the District was established.

The eventual extension of the boundary lines to encompass the village towns of Washington County was expedited by transportation service. Urbanization, often related to improved transportation service, was the prevailing method of a village town becoming a functional part of the

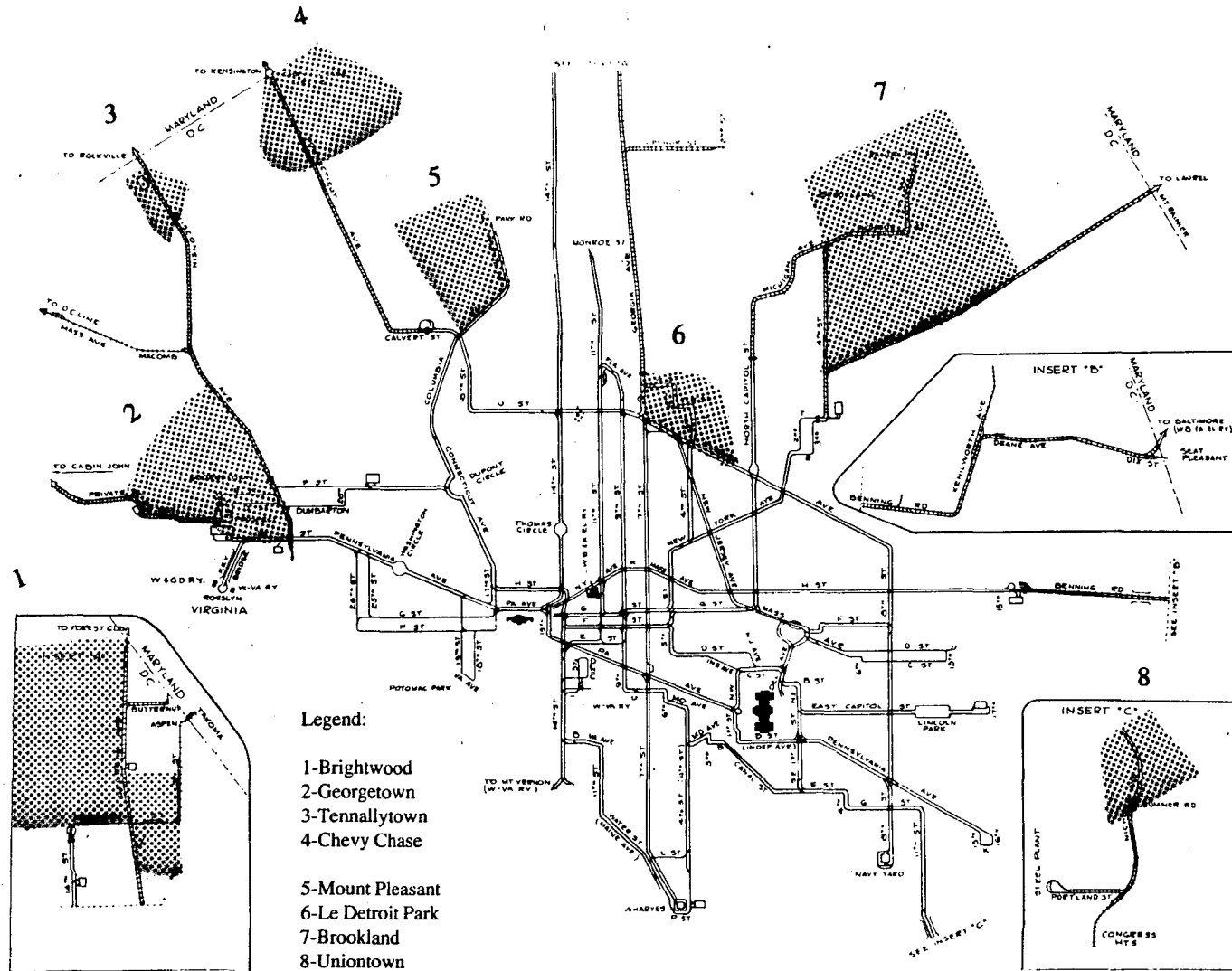


Figure 4-1. Routes Linking Village Towns to Downtown, 1887-1892

Source: L.O. King, 100 Years of Capital Traction.

city. In a minute yet instrumental way, the acquisition of a public transportation franchise was a pre-requisite for becoming a part of the city.

Variations in Growth of Washington Village
Towns

Washingtonians exhibited an urge to establish suburban homes at an early date, as village town residential growth increased steadily between 1870 and 1900. Urbanization of many northwest village towns, the area most heavily influenced by transportation service, was very similar in intensity; however, there remained differences in the growth rate of each town.

The proximity of LeDetroit Park and Mt. Pleasant contrasts sharply with the remote locations of Chevy Chase and Tennallytown; giving rise to different decisions concerning development. The proximity to downtown of Columbia Heights and Brightwood offered still other developmental differences. The overall advantage of access to downtown and pre-streetcar transit history bouyed the growth of practically all of the northwest village towns.

The remoteness of Uniontown and Garfield, which had neither pre-streetcar transit service nor easy access to downtown slowed development. Areas like Brookland, with relatively accessible locations outside of northwest, grew slowly because they lacked transportation service to downtown. Nonetheless, the impact of the emerging public transit dominance in shaping Washington is indicated by the

population change from 1892-1897. (Table 4-1.) The access to a village town location was perhaps the key variable in the process of growth among villages. The easy access to downtown advantage of a village town as a cause of growth is reduced among village towns located in northwest.

Mt. Pleasant, one of the earlier village towns of Washington, had a population of approximately 546 people in 1887. The easy access to downtown was of great important in the settlement of this northwest area, as public transport was virtually non-existent. Mt. Pleasant was first settled by college-educated, middle-class, New England migrants dissatisfied with the Civil War economy which prevailed in downtown.^{1/} The influential character of the community and the size of its population resulted in the early incorporation of a public transportation system ensuring a continued exchange with downtown.

Similarly, LeDetroit Park, another northwest village town, developed from the desire of those who wished to move from the downtown zone. Located immediately north of the city's boundary line, (Boundary Road now Florida Avenue), this development was not the result of public transportation. It was developed for people of wealth, and these people usually traveled by private carriage to the city. The arrival of public transportation contributed to a change in

^{1/} Fifth Annual Conference on Washington, D.C., Historical Studies, History and Development of Mt. Pleasant, paper prepared for D.C. Historical Studies, by P. G. Fisher (Washington, D.C.: D.C. Historical Studies Annual Meeting, 5 and 6, February 1978.

Table 4-1

Population Growth of Washington Village Towns,
1892 - 1897

	1892 ^{a/}		
	WHITE	BLACK	TOTAL
Uniontown (Anacostia)	2,116	106	2,222
Brookland	461	--	461
Hillsdale	141	1,917	2,058
LeDetroit Park ^{c/}	1,137	49	1,186
Garfield	--	226	226
Tennallytown	520	211	731
Grant Avenue	198	189	387
Brightwood	189	70	259
Mt. Pleasant	856	99	955

	1897 ^{b/}		
	WHITE	BLACK	TOTAL
Uniontown (Anacostia)	2,571	68	2,629
Brookland	671	55	726
Hillsdale	102	2,062	2,164
LeDetroit Park ^{c/}	1,721	146	1,867
Garfield	--	486	486
Tennallytown	758	369	1,127
Brightwood	707	133	840
Mt. Pleasant ^{c/}	--	--	4,158

^{a/} Report of the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, 1892.

^{b/} Report of the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, 1897.

^{c/} This designation when used for census purposes obviously covers a much larger area than the private development of that name.

residential composition. As others moved in, the wealthier people moved to the more outlying villages, seeking the earlier LeDetroit Park environment.

The proponents of streetcar suburbs designed other village towns similar in concept to those of LeDetroit Park and Mt. Pleasant. The agrarian philosophy of nature and family became a standard in advertising the many developments.

The village towns of Chevy Chase and Cleveland Park developed not because of their accessibility but specifically as streetcar suburbs. Chevy Chase was developed to provide an environment where every resident could enjoy the benefits of country living. Cleveland Park was promoted as a place where residents could enjoy the advantages of downtown living while remaining free from the ills of the city. While advertising such noble intentions, these village towns developed with a knowledge that street railway service through northwest would reach the communities. The initial advantage of transit service and investments of prominent individuals assured the rapid growth of these areas.

Uniontown, the largest village town outside of northwest, was a 240 acre subdivision that incorporated much of the agrarian philosophy while attempting to attract government workers employed at the Navy Yard. This early suburb, one of the few east of the Capitol, was developed with the idea that a horsecar line would connect the area to the city. Neither accessibility nor horsecar service motivated

this venture, but rather the proximity to the major employment center--the Navy Yard.

Despite the fact that the easy access of northwest locations generally allowed for more rapid development, this was not always the rule. Brightwood, a northwest village town, did not develop as a streetcar subdivision, nor did it not have the substantial pre-horsecar background that warranted excessive growth. Instead the growth of Brightwood paralleled that of Brookland, a northeast village town with no public transit service. (Figure 4-2.) The means through which these village towns became a part of the city--changing residential composition, increased building and economic activity, and the utilization of public transportation franchises--best typifies the process of most of Washington's acquisition of village towns. The temporal differences in similar growth are the only indicators of northwest accessibility versus the overall growth of these areas.

Brightwood and Brookland are examples of the accelerated urbanization of Washington village towns during the latter nineteenth century. The virtual elimination of growth differences between these seemingly similar, yet vastly different village towns from 1870 to 1900 reinforces the impact of public transportation developments in shaping the city of Washington.

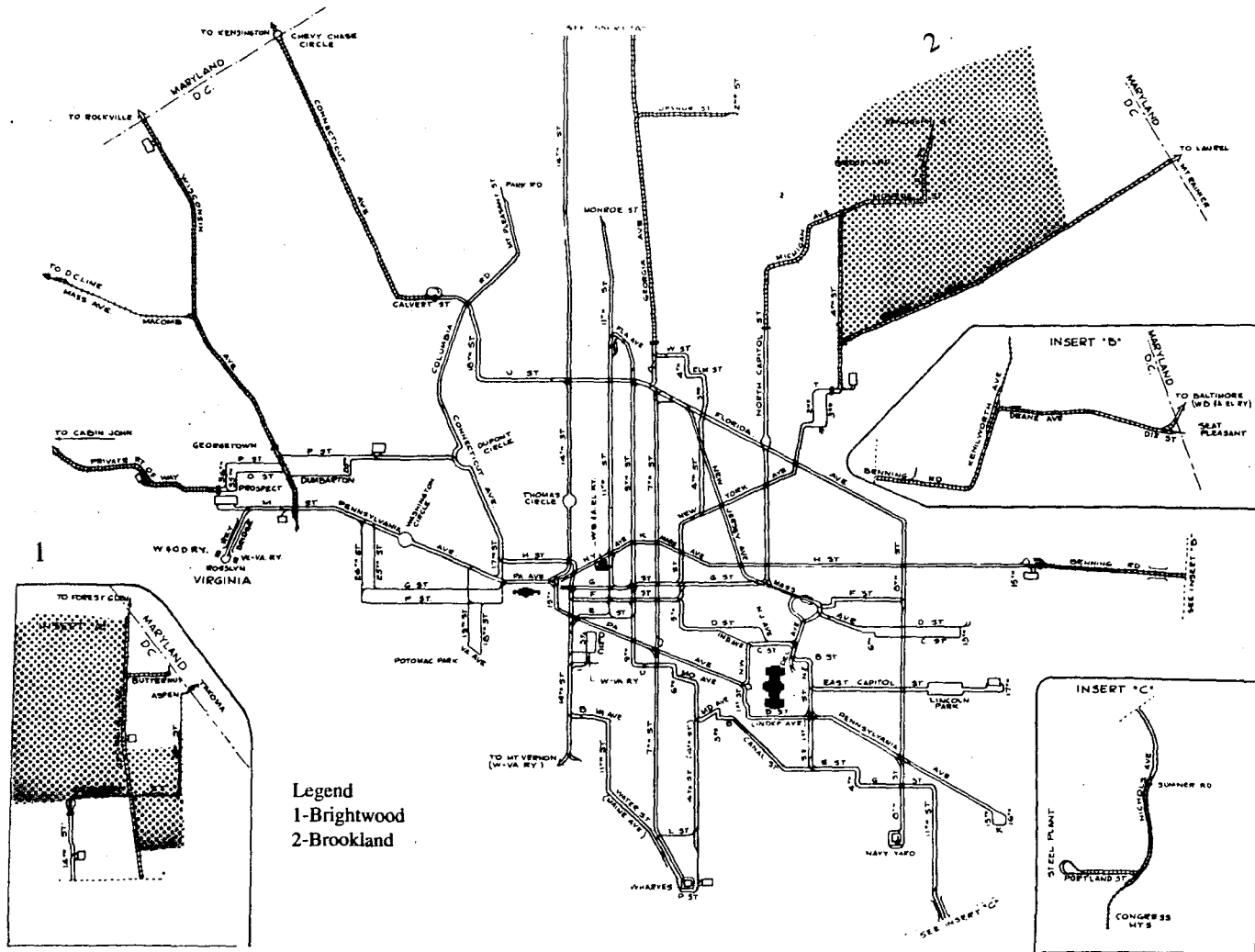


Figure 4-2. Village Towns of Brookland and Brightwood, 1880

Source: L.O. King, 100 Years of Capital Traction.

CHAPTER V

BROOKLAND AND BRIGHTWOOD--EXAMPLES OF VILLAGE
TOWN CHANGES 1800 - 1900Pre-1880 Brookland and Brightwood

Residence in a village town prior to 1880 was, in many instances, a measure of personal status. The residents either travelled downtown by private carriage or farmed for a living. The late nineteenth century plunge into the public transportation market opened village towns to residents of the densely populated city. Many of the earlier qualities and attributes of a very few towns became the standard for most. Brookland and Brightwood are examples of village towns that by 1900 had acquired many attractive features. The growth process that each experienced is, quite possibly, the standard for most of the late nineteenth century village towns surrounding Washington. In examining the process of change in Brookland and Brightwood, a means of viewing the expansion of Washington City into Washington County is provided.

Brightwood

Brightwood, (bordered by Eighth Street on the east, Sixteenth Street on the west, Kennedy Street on the south, and Peabody Street on the north), like most village towns prior to 1880, had few roads entering the area. The Seventh

Street Turnpike which carried most of the traffic was extremely narrow and, at times, impassible. With an 1880 population of 104 persons, the repair of the turnpike was not a major concern of the city. The Blairs of Silver Spring, a very influential family of that day, used the Seventh Street Turnpike for commuting to downtown. Through their efforts, improvements were made on the road from the city limit (Boundary Street) to the county boundary line. Motivated by the efforts of the Blairs, Brightwood had grown sufficiently by 1872 to form a citizen's association. The purposes of this organization were, first, to obtain a horsecar franchise and, second, to obtain the necessary amenities needed to become a part of the city. The formation of the citizen's association, the first among Washington's village towns, by the residents resulted in the securing of a horsecar service for the area in 1872. This resulted in a more influential residential population. By 1900, Brightwood was a suburb of equal stature to those with many earlier and more influential ties to the city.

Brookland

Brookland, while always a village town of the city, got its real beginnings about 1887, when Ida Marshall bought 134 acres of land to develop as a sub-division. The land had been previously owned by Colonel Jehiel Brooks, for whom the area was named. This northeast village town was bordered on the north by present day Otis Street, on the east by Eighteenth Street, on the west by the B and O Railroad, and on the south by Rhode Island Avenue. With an 1880 population

of 111, this area was of a size comparable to Brightwood. However, very few of the residents of Brookland maintained ties to the city. The village was a fairly self-sufficient unit, with private carriages providing travel to the city when necessary.

Brookland and Brightwood: Comparative
Development - 1880

The similarities between Brookland and Brightwood in 1880 were quite numerous. The populations of the villages were approximately the same. The prevailing social character of working-man status permeated each area. Both villages existed in embryonic form before the arrival of public transportation.

Demographic similarities between the villages existed as early as 1880. A typical household in Brookland consisted of a family unit headed by a native-born, white American male, approximately forty-three years of age. Children of school age attended school. Almost identically, a typical household in 1880 Brightwood was a family unit, with children attending school. The family head was usually a native-born, white American male approximately forty-two years old. In each village, family units averaged four dependents. Servants were not generally a part of the household, but a number of homes maintained live-in servants.

In spite of the many general demographic similarities of Brookland and Brightwood, the location of the respective areas greatly influenced their actual economic and residential character. The impact of early transit

developments throughout northwest and the easy access to downtown from northwest helped to shape the residential character of Brightwood as opposed to Brookland which had neither of these features.

In 1880, only thirty percent of Brookland households were headed by individuals employed in professions that would require daily travel to the city (Table 5-1.) Households in Brightwood were found to be headed forty-three percent of the time by persons employed in occupations that required daily commuting (Table 5-2.) The easy access to downtown by carriage or public transportation increased the attractiveness of Brightwood for persons engaged as government employes, skilled craftsmen, and, many times, self-employed businessmen.

While many businessmen did not commute to the city daily, the advantage of location in 1880 allowed for the growth of a more developed infrastructure in Brightwood. With fifteen percent of the residents of Brightwood being self-employed, the village developed a cosmopolitan character in contrast to Brookland where only four percent of the residents were self-employed.

Further evidence of the cosmopolitan nature of 1880 Brightwood is provided by an examination of its population engaged in farming or unskilled occupations. Only forty-two percent of Brightwood's residents were employed in such occupations compared to the sixty-six percent of Brookland. The proportion of residents employed in these occupations tended to magnify the overwhelming 1880 residential character

Table 5-1

Occupation of Heads of Household in Brookland,
1880

<u>Occupational Classification</u>	<u>Number Employed</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Skilled (carpenters, butchers, plasterers, blacksmith, stonecutter)	20	22
Unskilled (farming, laborers, gardeners)	59	66
Government Employed (policeman, court baliff, clerk, soldier)	7	8
Self-Employed (grocer, restaurant operator, boardinghouse owner)	4	4
Total Number Employed <u>a/</u>	90	100

a/ The number of heads of households for 1880 represents the totals from the census.

Source: Compiled by the author from the manuscript schedules of the U.S. Census of Population for Washington, 1880.

Table 5-2

Occupations of Heads of Household in Brightwood,
1880

<u>Occupational Classification</u>	<u>Number Employed</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Skilled (carpenters, butchers, bakers, blacksmith, shoemaker)	7	8
Unskilled (farming, laborers, gardeners)	35	42
Government Employed (clerk, policeman, post office)	22	26
Self-Employed (storekeeper, grain dealer, boardinghouse owner)	13	15
Professionals (lawyer, physician, architect)	8	9
Total Number Employed ^{a/}	85	100

^{a/} The number of heads of households for 1880 represents the totals from the Census.

Source: Compiled by the author from the manuscript schedules of the U.S. Census of Population for Washington, 1880.

of the two towns. Brightwood was a village town with downtown links due to the diversity of its population. Brookland, on the other hand, was a more self-contained town. Information in the 1880 City directory of Washington reinforces this characterization of both villages. Professionals living in Brightwood maintained offices downtown, while businessmen operated in the suburbs. The businesses increased the economic viability of the village; the downtown offices of professionals fortified ties to the city. The opposite situation prevailed in Brookland. Businessmen listed as residents of Brookland functioned downtown and there were no professional occupations represented in the population. Thus a cursory examination of Brightwood and Brookland indicates that, while similar in origin, they were dissimilar communities.

Brookland was decidedly isolated from daily involvement with the city. Brightwood was a more transient community, with a residential composition and infrastructure that exhibited this characteristic. The daily movement of people to the city was inherent. These two suburban villages lost their distinctive residential character and composition as they grew and their ties to downtown strengthened. By 1900, they were quite similar communities with practically identical residential characteristics and physical environments.

Electrification - Catalyst for Residential
Change: 1880 - 1900

The key effort towards reducing the advantage of northwest village town growth began in June of 1888, with a Congressional charter for an electric railway. With electrification, all parts of the city would become more accessible.

In Brookland, land sub-division that started with the Marshall land purchase began to increase with the acquisition of the first electric railway charter in Washington. By 1900, Brookland with the aid of this charter had developed a village town character much like that of Brightwood. Electrification in Brightwood, commencing in October of 1888, furthered the attractiveness of the area. The acquisition of an electric railway charter increased efforts that had begun during an earlier period.

The 1880 demographic similarities of the two communities continued through the last decades of the century. In 1900, Brookland and Brightwood households were still, on the average, headed by a white, native-born American male. The average age for household heads increased in both villages and children in both villages attended school. The number of households with servants decreased for both areas.

Perhaps the clearest indicator of the impact of the electric railway on the growth of villages around Washington is found in the reduction of the disparities in residential character of 1880 Brookland and Brightwood. The 1880 observation of Brookland's agrarian nature and Brightwood's comopolitan character no longer held true as shifting

residential patterns engulfed both towns.

Brookland

The 1900 census of Brookland shows eighty-one percent of the household heads employed as professionals, businessmen, or skilled workers (Table 5-3.) This compares to thirty-four percent of the 1880 population employed in similar professions. The increase reflected the changing character of the area. Construction stimulated by the railway helped to reduce the self-containment of the community. Virtually every household head in 1900 had some degree of education. The shifting occupational status of the village was one result. In 1900, only nineteen percent of the househeads remained employed as farmers or laborers, a drastic decrease from the sixty-six percent of 1880.

Among the residents of Brookland, home ownership was closely linked to occupation as it relates to travel to the city. Skilled workers whose daily schedule perhaps entailed infrequent trips outside the village were found to be homeowners in fifty-four percent of the cases.

Government employees constituted forty percent of the 1900 Brookland household heads, with fifty-five percent owning homes. This group symbolized the growth of Brookland as the use of public transportation was of paramount importance to these workers. The high incidence of homeownership among this group indicates that Brookland had indeed developed to accommodate a more diverse population.

Table 5-3

Homeownership According to Occupation of Heads of Household in Brookland,
1900

<u>Occupational Classification</u>	<u>Number Employed</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent Employed 1880</u>	<u>Owners</u>	<u>Renters</u>
Skilled (machinists, bakers, butchers)	21	20	22	12	9
Unskilled (gardeners, laborers)	10	9.5	66 ^{a/}	1	9
Farmers	10	9.5		1	9
Government Employed (clerks, inspectors, mailmen)	42	40	8	29	13
Professionals (doctors, lawyers)	13	13	0	9	4
Self-Employed (merchants, boardinghouse owners)	9	8	4	4	5
Totals	105 ^{b/}	100	100	56	49

^{a/} Figure represents unskilled and farmers in 1880.

^{b/} Total based on a ten percent sample from the Census.

Source: Compiled by the author from the manuscript schedules of the U.S. Census of Population for Washington, 1900.

Professionals were thirteen percent of the 1900 heads of households, where as none were observed in 1880. The arrival of the professional worker, with a home ownership rate of seventy-five percent, added an element of stability to the still-developing area. The settling of a professional class in Brookland broadened the evolving infrastructure of the community as it moved towards becoming urbanized.

Businessmen accounted for eight percent of Brookland's residents in 1900 with forty-five percent owning homes. The low home ownership rate undoubtedly represented the conservative investment practices of businesses. With Brookland primarily in a transitional stage from 1880 to 1900, the risk of losses probably did not warrant heavy investments, nor residents to monitor such investments. The businessmen who owned homes often operated the business from the home address.

Farmers at nineteen percent and laborers at nine percent accounted for the nineteen percent of Brookland employed household heads. The home ownership rate for each group was approximately ten percent. These figures point to the vast amount of subdivision and construction that occurred from 1880 to 1900. These figures further indicate that Brookland had experienced the impact of the street railway through a reduction in farmland, an increase in residential home building, and through a changing residential composition.

Brightwood

In a similar manner to Brookland, but in less pronounced form, the residential character of Brightwood changed between 1880 and 1900. (Table 5-4.) Eighty-four percent of the 1900 heads of household, an increase from 1880, were employed as government workers, skilled tradesmen, professionals or businessmen. The remaining sixteen percent were laborers or farmers.

Employees in government work, a job which usually required travel to the city, accounted for twenty-five percent of the household heads, yet only thirty-nine percent were homeowners. Electrification in Brightwood accelerated growth through residential developers who primarily rented homes. The accessibility of downtown was the electric horse-car increased the attractiveness of the area to government workers who came as renters.

Persons employed as professionals accounted for fifteen percent of the employed household heads, with less than one-fourth owning homes. The growth of the area with such a small portion of a potentially influential segment of the population owning homes crystalizes the character of the suburb. Like the government workers, the professionals utilized the convenience of the suburb's location as renters rather than utilize its attractiveness as a permanent residence through home ownership.

Businessmen and skilled workers observed Brightwood's growth in a different manner. Businessmen constituted twenty-four percent of employed household heads and fifty-nine

Table 5-4

Home Ownership According to Occupation of Heads of Households in Brightwood,
1900

<u>Occupational Classification</u>	<u>Number Employed</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Percent Employed, 1880</u>	<u>Owners</u>	<u>Renters</u>
Skilled (machinist, baker, butcher, carpenter)	17	18	8	9	8
Unskilled (gardeners, laborers)	8	9	42 ^{a/}	1	7
Farmers	6	7		0	6
Government Employed (clerks, mailmen, inspector)	23	25	26	9	14
Professionals (lawyers, physicians)	14	15	9	3	11
Self-Employed (retailers, innkeepers)	22	24	15	14	8
Totals	90 ^{b/}	100	100	36	54

^{a/} Figure represents unskilled and farmers in 1880.

^{b/} Total based on a ten percent sample from the Census.

Source: Compiled by the author from the manuscript schedules of the U.S. Census of Populations for Washington, 1900.

percent were home owners. This high ownership reflected the confidence of businessmen in the eventual development of Brightwood. The railway service increased the potential for business success with the arrival of new residents. The resulting investments increased the number of businesses and the number of businessmen residing in the suburbs.

Skilled tradesmen constituted eighteen percent of the employed family heads. Fifty-three percent were owners of their homes. The pattern that emerged from such a high home ownership was of Brightwood developing stability centered around a skilled working class. The home ownership of businessmen and skilled tradesmen diminished the importance of the street railway to the success of Brightwood as a village town. The solid occupations of this stable group virtually ensured the successful growth of the area regardless of new residents who were dependent upon the electric railway.

Farming and unskilled laborers accounted for sixteen percent of the occupational status of employed Brightwood family heads. The reduction in number of these occupations was facilitated by the electric railway accelerating building by developers. Residents listed in these occupations were renters, undoubtedly awaiting the final stages of urbanization in Brightwood.

The overall character of Brightwood displayed a change from a comparatively progressive 1880 community. The low occurrence of home ownership by government workers and professionals reflected attractiveness caused by convenience

rather than a desire for the agrarian qualities of the area. The overriding character of the community emerged in 1900 with a solid home ownership rate among businessmen and skilled tradesmen.

Electrification - Impact on Construction,
1880 - 1900

One immediate impact of the electric railway's presence in Brookland was an increase in building. Approximately 500 building permits went to the subdivision of Brookland from 1880 to 1900 (Table 5-5.) Ninety-three percent of the permits issued were for the construction of new dwellings or for repairs on existing structures. The remaining seven percent of the permits were for the construction of tool or animal sheds. The installation of kitchens, porches, and balconies accounted for reasons for issuance of construction and repair permits. These repairs tended to enhance the physical nature of the community. Much of the agrarian character of the area disappeared as houses and construction patterns began to resemble those of other areas in the city. The permits for new residential construction were generally for two and three story frame houses with lots. (Figures 5-1 and 5-2.) These homes were designed for occupancy by one family. The appeal of these homes in Brookland was especially significant because the area offered a different setting from downtown with the same types of residences and public transportation services as other village towns.

The one element of building that did not reflect any benefits from the street railway was business construction.

Table 5-5

Building Permits Issued for Brookland, 1880-1900

<u>Purpose of Permit</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
New Residences	42	76
Residential Repairs	9	17
Non-residential Additions	4	7
New Businesses	0	0
Total Permits Examined ^{a/}	55	100
Total Permits Issues	500	

^{a/} Figures based on a ten percent sample.

Source: Compiled by the author from building permits from the U.S. Archives' Division of Records and Documents for Washington, D.C. (1870-1900).

Figure 5-1 Typical Brookland
Residences, c.1900



906 Lawrence St., N.E., c.1900



901 Lawrence St., N.E., c.1900

Photos by K. Mills

Figure 5-2 Typical Brookland
Residences, c.1900



1223 Irving St., N.E.,
c.1900



1225 Irving St., N. E., c.1900

Photos by K. Mills

The advantages of earlier transit usage by other areas indicates that businessmen preferred the older areas with a more developed infrastructure for business investments rather than a newer one like Brookland. Nonetheless, the impact of the electric railway on Brookland as seen by building activity was dramatic. Building activity significantly decreased the distinguishable physical appearances of Brookland and Brightwood. Brightwood and Brookland began to resemble each other more closely.

In Brightwood over 500 building permits were issued between 1880 and 1900 (Table 5-6), a figure comparable to Brookland also serviced by an electric railway. Permits issued for new residential construction were generally for single family occupancy. These homes were usually two story frame houses with brick foundations. (Figures 5-3 and 5-4.)

New residential construction greatly magnified the role of the real estate developer in Brightwood. Several instances of developers capitalizing on the growth of the area, by securing permits for construction of single family homes, were noted. This phenomenon was not observed in the construction of Brookland. While the electric railway is probably an insignificant factor, the higher level of access to downtown from Brightwood influenced the construction of single family homes for newcomers.

Table 5-6

Building Permits Issued for Brightwood, 1880-1900

<u>Purpose of Permit</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
New Residences	35	63
Residential Repairs	8	15
Non-residential Additions	5	10
New Businesses	7	12
Total Permits Examined ^{a/}	55	100
Total Permits Issued	545	--

^{a/} Figures based on a ten percent sample.

Source: Compiled by the author from building permits from the U.S. Archives' Division of Records and Documents for Washington, D.C. (1870-1900).

Figure 5-3 Typical Brightwood
Residences, c.1900



1329 Missouri Ave., N.W., c.1890



1330 Missouri Ave., N.W., c.1895

Photos by K. Mills

Figure 5-4 Typical Brightwood
Residences, c.1900



5613 14th Street, N.W., c.1900



1301 Madison Street, N. W., c.1895

Photos by K. Mills

Brookland and Brightwood, 1900

Similarities in the 1880 demographic composition of Brookland and Brightwood are joined by similarities in residential character, as expressed through employment, and similarities in construction patterns and styles. In some respects Brookland, which was decisively inferior to Brightwood in the pre-electric horsecar era, had surpassed Brightwood in attractiveness and appeal to new residents. The higher incidences of home ownership across occupational stratas in Brookland is indicative of that appeal. It is also indicative of the impact of the electric railway on the development of village towns located outside of the northwest corridor from 1880 to 1900.

The one area that exhibited little response to the electric railway was an increase of businesses outside of northwest. Throughout the span of the electric railway, Brightwood maintained a comfortable margin of business operation over Brookland. Data suggests that the advantage of convenience to downtown encouraged more intensive economic investments in Brightwood and northwest village towns than in Brookland and other parts of the city.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

It is probable that public transit developments had greater impact on land use changes and economic viability in those towns with early urban affiliation than in other areas. Although this was suggested, together with directional bias, as being the primary stimulant in the growth-time continuum of Washington village towns, it was not proven to be the case. The crucial factors in the growth of village towns around Washington were the political efforts of the residents of such communities in conjunction with private entrepreneurs, and the dominant power of the federal legislature over city affairs. The models of urban growth relative to transit innovations, such as that by David Ward, are inadequate in explaining Washington village town growth.

This study of Brookland and Brightwood suggests that Washington's village towns were quite similar in composition despite the initial advantage of Brightwood in terms of horsecar linkage to downtown. Brookland and Brightwood, as examples of comparably sized village towns in different sections of the city, were quite similar at the onset of the public transportation rush and remained so throughout the late nineteenth century in most respects. This was in spite

of the concentration of public transit service in the northwest portion of the city which possibly should have benefited Brightwood.

The residents of a village town were more important in determining residential growth than transit innovations. The influence of individual village town residents in acquiring needed, or wanted, services was the major difference in the variation of growth among northwest villages and among villages city-wide. Of lesser importance was the role of the private entrepreneur in securing Congressional charters for transit lines and in private development.

Washington, D.C., like all the major urban centers of nineteenth century America, eventually incorporated its surrounding village towns into the built-up area. Although the method through which this occurred, public transportation development, was the same as in other cities, the process was different. The governmental structure of Washington allowed village towns to grow at practically the same pace with little incentive for private entrepreneurship. When the horsecar age arrived in Washington with full governmental support, the process of similar growth among villages--with a slight difference dependent upon residents--was in full progress negating any advantages that might have been derived from early use. Thus, the impact of transportation innovations in creating differential residential growth in Washington was slight.

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