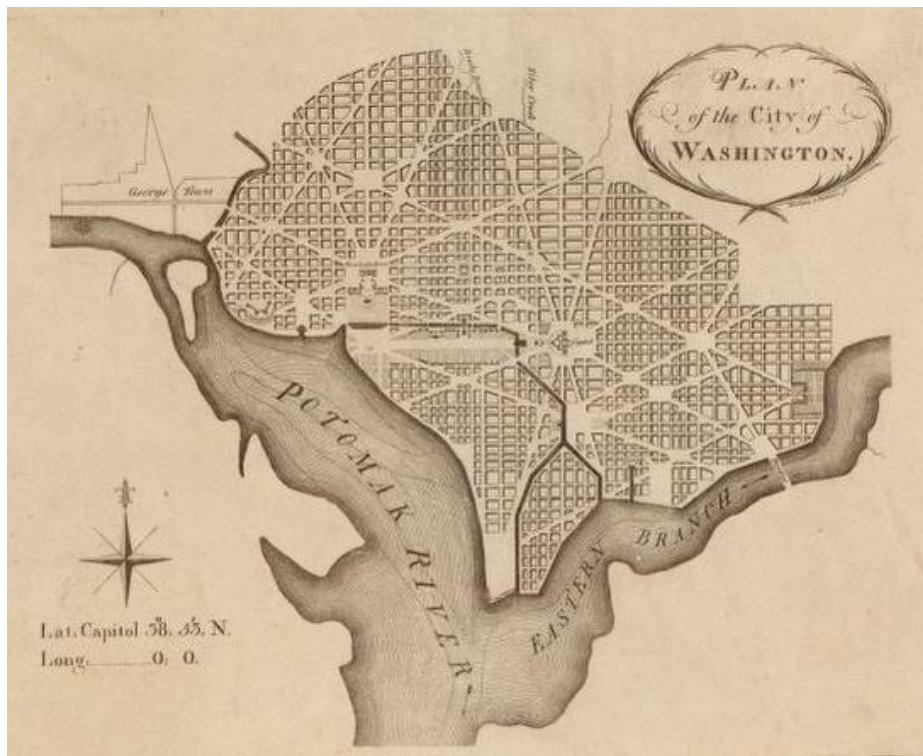


Plan of the City of Washington

by John Docktor, WMS Member



Courtesy Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, 21 x 26 cm

The Washington Map Society, when founded in 1979, chose this early map (above) as its first logo. The map portrays the final version of Pierre Charles L'Enfant's plan of the city of Washington, and is one of the earliest printed maps of Washington DC. Published in Philadelphia in 1792, the map was engraved by Thackara and Vallance, based on L'Enfant's work and changes incorporated by Andrew Ellicott. They issued this map several months before the November 1792 publication of their larger *Plan of the City of Washington in the Territory of Columbia* that has become known as the official city plan (shown at the end of this article). Here are some facts about each of the key individuals.

Pierre Charles L'Enfant (1754-1825)



L'Enfant was born in Paris where he trained to be an architect. He came to America in 1777, and served George Washington as an engineer during the Revolutionary War. In 1791 President Washington asked L'Enfant to design the new capitol city in the District of Columbia. L'Enfant designed a city similar in layout to the then French capitol city of Versailles. The Capitol in Washington sits in a position similar to that of the palace in Versailles, the White House (originally called the President's House) in the position of Grand Trianon, and the Mall is like the Parc. The Commissioners of the City of Washington wanted to have a printed copy

of the plan when they began to sell building lots. L'Enfant irritated them by working slowly and releasing only sketchy plans. On instruction from President Washington, Thomas Jefferson on February 27, 1792 wrote a letter to L'Enfant dismissing him as city planner. L'Enfant died penniless and was buried on a friend's estate. In 1909 his remains were moved to Arlington National Cemetery on a hill overlooking the capitol city.

Andrew Ellicott (1754-1820)



Ellicott, a Quaker, was raised in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. His father was a prosperous miller whose family founded Ellicott City, Maryland in 1775. Andrew Ellicott was trained to be a mathematician and surveyor. He conducted several large surveys with David Rittenhouse, the Philadelphia astronomer, mathematician, and clockmaker. President Washington in 1791 asked Ellicott to survey the bounds of the District of Columbia. The following year Washington asked him to complete L'Enfant's plan for the city. Ellicott made some changes to L'Enfant's plan. He changed the alignment of Massachusetts Avenue, eliminated five short radial avenues, added two short radial avenues southeast and southwest of the Capitol, and named the city streets. In less than one month Ellicott had a plan ready for the engravers. A few months later Ellicott, like L'Enfant, found himself at odds with the Commissioners and resigned from the project.

James Thackara (1767-1848)

Thackara was eight months old when he and his parents came to Philadelphia from England. He apprenticed with Robert Scott and James Trenchard as an engraver from 1786 to 1789. In 1790 he married James Trenchard's sister Hannah. Thackara was curator for the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts from 1816 to 1828, and he is listed as an engraver in the Philadelphia City Directories from 1791 to 1833. His partnership with John Vallance is listed in the 1794 City Directory. He and his son William formed the firm of Thackara and Son in 1832. Thackara was elected Commissioner of the District of Southwark Philadelphia in 1797, and served as clerk of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives from 1807 to 1810.

John Vallance (1770-1823)

Vallance arrived in Philadelphia from Glasgow Scotland early in 1791. He quickly established his reputation as one of the best engravers in the city. During this period he developed a friendship with James Thackara. In 1791 Vallance married Elizabeth Trenchard, a niece of Thackara's wife Hannah. A partnership with Thackara was established. He engraved banknotes and documents. In addition he was one of the founders, in 1774, of the Association of Artists in America. His wife Elizabeth died in 1798 at the age of 28. Four years later he married again to Margaret Pratt.



Courtesy Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, 52 x 69 cm