

## Guide to the Art and Public Works of the New Deal for Washington, D.C.

### **Notable Sites with New Deal Artworks**

*The New Deal nurtured an American Renaissance in theater, dance, music, and visual arts. Hundreds of murals, sculptures and bas-reliefs commissioned by TSFA, PWAP, TRAP and FAP adorn the city's civic buildings. Unfortunately, public access is limited, so check online for public tours.*

#### **A. Udall Department of Interior Building**

*Main entrance, 1849 C Street, NW*

This monumental Classical Moderne Interior building, built 1935-36, is home to over 40 New Deal murals and bas-reliefs. Highlights include murals by Maynard Dixon for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, William Gropper for the Bureau of Reclamation and David McCosh for the National Park Service; several by Native-American artists Woodrow Crumbo, James Auchiah, Allan Houser, Velino Herrera and Stephen Mopope; and Millard Sheets' "The Negro's Contribution in the Social and Cultural Development of America."

#### **B. Smithsonian American Art Museum**

*Main entry, F Street and 8th, NW. Admission free*

The Smithsonian American Art Museum is housed in the 19th century Patent Office. The museum has a vast collection of American art from the colonial era to today, which includes hundreds of New Deal paintings and sculptures. Some are on permanent display, while others emerge for special exhibits.

#### **C. Government Publishing Office Bldgs 3 & 4**

*732 North Capitol Street, NW*

Buildings 3 & 4 of the Government Publishing Office were constructed 1936-40 by the Treasury Department and FWA. Building 3 is the north wing of the first printing office built in 1903 and matches its brick style. Building 4, facing the original building, is a Moderne warehouse with four exterior bas-reliefs commissioned by TSFA; two sculptures of printing press workers are by Elliot Means and two of eagles are by Armin Scheler.

#### **D. Clinton Federal Building**

*1200 Pennsylvania Ave; main facade on 12th St.*

This building was completed for the Post Office Department in 1934 and now houses the EPA. The design, with two wings with concave centers, is by William Adams Delano and Chester Holmes Aldrich based on the Place Vendôme in Paris. The building contains a trove of artworks commissioned by TSFA: 22 murals, 12 bas-reliefs, 2 sculptures and 8 wood medallions. Most have postal themes, such as murals by George Harding, "Post Dispatch Rider;" Ward Lockwood, "Opening of the Southwest"; Alfred Crimi, "Transportation of Mail"; and Reginald Marsh, "Sorting the Mail." The postal branch at 1200 Pennsylvania Ave, open to the public, has an impressive floor mosaic map of the world.

#### **E. Recorder of Deeds Building (former)**

*515 D Street, NW (currently closed)*

This Classical Moderne building was completed in 1943 with aid from the PW. The name is incised on the facade, along with a leaf design; entry is through cast bronze doors. Long associated with the city's African American community, the building contains several TSFA-commissioned murals on Black History by Marty Schweig, Ethyl Magafan, Carlos Lopez, Maxine Seelbinder, Austin Mecklem and William Eduoard Scott, plus Selma Burke's bas-relief, "Four Freedoms." A movement to save this building and its art is underway.

#### **F. Kennedy Department of Justice Building**

*950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW (Closed to public)*

The Justice building was completed in 1935 with funding from the PWA. The Classical Revival design by Zantzinger, Borie and Medary features Art Deco influences, such as aluminum detailing on doors, windows and fixtures. Mosaics by John Joseph Earley embellish the Great Hall. A trove of New Deal artworks depicts American life, law and justice.

Among the 68 murals are Henry Varnum Poor's frescoes, "Activities of the Justice Department"; George Biddle's "Society Freed Through Justice"; and Leon Kroll's enormous lunettes, "Justice Triumphant and Justice Defeated."

### **G. Federal Trade Commission Building**

600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

The Neoclassical FTC building stands at the apex of the Federal Triangle. Funded by the PWA and Treasury, it opened in 1938. The exterior has marvelous Art Deco works commissioned by the TSFA: aluminum grilles depicting shipping and transportation themes; bas-relief panels representing foreign trade, agriculture, shipping and industry; two bas-relief eagles; and two monumental statues of muscular figures restraining wild horses, "Man Controlling Trade," by Michael Lantz.

### **H. National Gallery of Art**

Constitution Ave at 6th St, NW. Admission free

The National Gallery regularly mounts exhibitions that feature works created for the New Deal's arts programs, especially the FAP. The gallery's New Deal collection includes hundreds of paintings, lithographs, etchings, aquatints and more. They can be researched online at [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov).

### **I. GSA Regional Office Building (former)**

301 7th Street, SW (currently unoccupied)

The eastern half of this large Moderne building was funded by the PWA in 1935 for the Procurement Division of the Treasury Department—in charge of all federal buildings until its functions passed to the General Services Administration in 1949. In the lobby are 22 murals by Harold Weston illuminating the work of the Division, such as drawing up plans, buying materials, and supervising construction. Weston was hired by TRAP.

### **J. Cohen Federal Building**

330 Independence Avenue, SW

Built in 1940 for the Social Security Administration, the Cohen building's design is Classical Moderne with Egyptian elements. It is home to a magnificent collection of Social Security-themed artworks commissioned by the TSFA: granite bas-reliefs by Emma Lou Davis and Henry Kreis over the entrances; murals by Seymour Fogel in the lobby; a backdrop by Philip Guston for the auditorium; and a fresco series by Ben Shahn in the central corridor.

## **Other Notable Sites in Central DC**

*The McMillan Commission of 1902 envisioned the redevelopment of the heart of the city: the Federal Triangle made up of imposing Neoclassical edifices. Congress passed the Public Buildings Act of 1926 to carry out the plan, but it took New Deal money and labor to complete the planners' dreams.*

### **K. The White House West Wing Expansion**

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

In 1934, the PWA funded expansion of the White House West Wing, including the Oval Office, Cabinet Room, Situation Room and Roosevelt Room. Architect Eric Gugler added these without increasing the building's footprint. The WPA restored two historic gatehouses at 15th and 17th Streets on Constitution Avenue.

### **L. District of Columbia Courts Building B**

510 4th Street, NW

The Judiciary Square area was part of the mid-century renovation of downtown completed during the New Deal. Building B, funded by the PWA in 1940, long served as the Juvenile Courthouse. It now houses the Small Claims and Conciliation Branch Court.

### **M. Internal Revenue Service North Wing**

Pennsylvania Ave and 10th Street, NW

In 1935, the PWA funded the North Wing of the IRS building, which had opened in 1930 as part of the Federal Triangle. The new offices housed the Division of Distilled Spirits, which grew after FDR repealed Prohibition in 1933.

## **N. Daly Building (former DC Municipal Center)**

*300 Indiana Avenue, NW*

For a century, DC officials beseeched Congress for a Municipal Center. In 1941, the PWA funded this Classical Moderne building by city architect Nathan Wyeth, which became the DC Police headquarters. It contains an array of non-New Deal artworks from the 1930s, including large murals in the two courtyards.

## **O. Washington Monument Restoration**

*National Mall at 15th Street, NW*

The iconic granite and marble obelisk dedicated to George Washington was thoroughly renovated in 1934-35 with PWA funds. A half-century of neglect had left significant cracks and leaks. Workers repointed, repaired and cleaned the monument from top to bottom. The CCC landscaped the grounds. It was renovated again in 2001, 2004 and 2011.

## **P. National Mall Renovation**

*3d to 23d Sts, Constitution & Independence Aves*

The National Mall is the city's centerpiece, connecting the Capitol with the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial. Its long-sought renovation was realized with PWA funds, WPA labor and NPS supervision. After clearing old structures, relief workers built four parallel roads, adjoining paths and huge lawns, installed sprinklers and lighting, and planted trees.

## **Q. Bureau of Engraving and Printing Annex**

*300 14th St, SW*

The PWA funded an Annex for the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, opened in 1938 across 14th Street from the original bureau. This enormous, 10-wing building was described at the time as "the largest reinforced concrete factory type structure in the world."

## **R. Switzer Memorial Building**

*330 C Street, SW*

The paired Railroad Retirement Board (Switzer) and Social Security (Cohen) Buildings, built in 1940, were the first federal offices south of the Mall. Now part of the Department of Health and Human Services, this is first federal building named for a woman, Mary E. Switzer, an early advocate for the disabled.

## **S. Ford House of Representatives Office Building**

*Second and D Streets, SW*

This enormous building was completed in 1940 for the US Census Bureau. Foregoing the grandeur of the Federal Triangle, this utilitarian Moderne building was meant to provide space for any agency that needed it. It formerly housed the FBI.

## **T. Jefferson Memorial**

*East Basin Drive, SW*

This beautiful monument to Thomas Jefferson was built to echo the Roman Pantheon and Jefferson's own design for the University of Virginia. The memorial became a personal crusade for FDR, who dedicated it in 1942 on Jefferson's 200th birthday.

## **New Deal Parks and Parkways**

*Washington's extensive parks system dates back to the L'Enfant Plan of 1791. The McMillan Report of 1902 was even more ambitious. Yet, these city plans languished until FDR put the National Capital Parks under the NPS, which directed a sweeping redevelopment of all parks.*

### **1. Rock Creek Park**

*Rock Creek Park, NW*

New Deal agencies made major improvements to the 1,750-acre Rock Creek Park in the 1930s. The PWA funded five new footbridges and repairs to roads, bridges and pathways. The CCC, which had a camp in the park, added miles of bridle paths, improved Bingham Drive and installed picnic areas and playground equipment. CCC teams also erected

the Caretaker's and Police Lodges, restored Pierce Mill and improved the creek channel. The WPA built Piney Branch Parkway and Brightwood Recreation Center.

## **2. Smithsonian National Zoo**

*3001 Connecticut Avenue, NW*

The National Zoo, established in 1889, got a major boost from the New Deal. The PWA funded an Elephant House, Small Mammal House, the south wing of the Bird House, and the Mane Cafe. Edwin Hill Clark designed the additions. WPA workers added new animal exhibit areas, the Harvard Street entrance and two service buildings, as well as upgrading roads, parking, water lines, sewers, heating and wiring. Artworks commissioned by TRAP and TSFA include: Sculptures by Heinz Warnek "Tumbling Bears" (near Large Cat Area) and Erwin Springweiler "Great Anteater" (Small Mammal House); bas-reliefs by Springweiler (pachyderms for Elephant House); Charles Knight (frieze and floor roundels of prehistoric animals in Large Mammal House); Elizabeth Fulda (concrete panels on Bird House); and Domenico Mortellito ("Pied Piper of Hamelin") in Small Mammal House. Mortellito's murals in the Elephant House, Bird House and cafe have been lost to renovations.

## **3. Meridian Hill Park**

*16th and W Streets, NW*

Work on the park began in 1912 but stalled until PWA funds arrived in 1935. Meridian Hill is Washington's most elegant small park, with Italianate terraces, pools and balustrades, and especially the staircase cascade. It is known to many locals as Malcolm X Park.

## **4. Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway**

*Connecticut Ave bridge to the Lincoln Memorial*

Planned by the McMillan Commission and begun in the 1920s, the parkway was completed with PWA funds and CWA, WPA and CCC labor. This work can be seen in trails, walls, riprap and landscaping above and below P Street. The New Deal funded bridges across Rock Creek at P Street, Massachusetts Avenue and Calvert Street and two more for the parkway itself. The busy roadway still pleases with its park-like setting.

## **5. Theodore Roosevelt Island National Memorial**

*Enter on G. Washington Parkway, Arlington VA*

This 88-acre park in the Potomac River was designed by the Olmsted Brothers as a living memorial to President Theodore Roosevelt. CCC teams working under the NPS drained swampy areas, cleared vegetation, planted 20,000 native trees and built roads, paths and trails. The park opened in 1936. The TR memorial sculpture was added in 1967.

## **6. National Arboretum**

*3501 New York Avenue, NE*

The National Arboretum was authorized in 1927 but developed in the 1930s by the CCC, which had a camp there. Enrollees cleared and fenced the 450-acre tract, built roads, developed the water system, installed ponds and a small lake, planted trees and shrubs, and constructed five greenhouses. The world-renowned arboretum holds a vast and varied collection of flora.

## **7. Langston Golf Course**

*2600 Benning Road NE*

The WPA and CCC laid out the 9-hole Langston Golf Course in 1939, the first public course in the city open to African Americans. It is named for John Mercer Langston, first dean of Howard University School of Law and the first African American elected to Congress from Virginia. Expanded to 18 holes in the 1950s, it is the city's premier public course.

## **8. Anacostia Park**

*Anacostia Dr., NE (So Capitol bridge to MD line)*

The 1,200-acre Anacostia Park runs along the Anacostia River through eastern DC, from South Capitol Street to the Maryland line. It was developed during the 1930s with PWA funds and CWA, WPA and CCC labor. Relief workers built roads, planted lawns and installed lighting throughout the park, as well as constructing Langston Golf Course, Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens and Anacostia Recreation Center.

## **Other Notable Sites Around the City**

*The New Deal invested heavily in public facilities of all kinds to improve the lives of Washington's citizens and made special efforts to reach the underserved African Americans on the east side of the city.*

### **9. Mount Pleasant Branch Library**

*3160 16th Street, NW*

Mt. Pleasant library was built for the DC public library system by the Carnegie Foundation in the 1900s. The Children's Room is enlivened by Aurelius Battaglia's murals, "Animal Circus" and "Animal Orchestra," funded by PWAP in 1934.

### **10. Howard University**

*Main Gate, 2400 6th Street, NW*

This historically African-American university was expanded under the New Deal. The PWA funded the imposing Founders Library, Chemistry and Education buildings, and two wings of Cook Hall dormitory. WPA workers renovated the Home Economics and Music buildings, Miner and Clark Halls, and the Dental and Medical colleges, as well as doing landscaping.

### **11. John Adams Building and Doors**

*120 Second Street, SE*

The Adams Building, long known as the Library of Congress Annex, opened in 1939. It covers an entire city block and contains 180 miles of book shelves. The design is Classical Moderne with streamline and cubist features. The magnificent bronze doors by Lee Lawrie have bas-reliefs of pivotal figures in the history of the written word. The matching glass doors are recent.

### **12. Langston Terrace Dwellings and Sculptures**

*21st Street and Benning Road, NE*

This large public housing project was funded by the PWA and US Housing Authority and built 1935-40. The International-style buildings were designed by African-American architect Hilyard Robinson and constructed by black workers for African American residents at a time when the city was wholly segregated. Five large animal sculptures by Hugh Collins, Lenore Thomas and Joe Goethe double as children's climbing structures. A terracotta frieze by Daniel Olney, "Progress of the Negro Race," frames the courtyard.

### **13. Frederick Douglass National Historic Site**

*1411 W Street, SE*

Cedar Hill, above the Anacostia River, was the post-Civil War home of Frederick Douglass, a former slave and abolitionist who became Washington's most prominent intellectual of the time. NYA recruits made extensive improvements to the grounds, while WPA relief workers—mostly professional women—organized records, catalogued books and prepared public displays. The home became a national park in 1988.

### **14. Blue Plains Wastewater Treatment Plant**

*5000 Overlook Avenue, SW*

Prior to the New Deal, raw sewage flowed directly into the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers. PWA funds and WPA labor rebuilt the city's sewer system, directing storm runoff to rivers and waste to a new treatment plant. Though Blue Plains has been greatly expanded, the New Deal pump house and laboratory still function and their design motifs have been incorporated in later buildings.