Scope of Investigation

Phase I Survey (site identification)

Archival/Documentary Research

Field (geoarchaeological study and subsurface archaeological study)

Area of Potential Effects (APE) defined by direct construction zone

APE for archaeological resources is bounded by Constitution Avenue, Madison Drive, and 14th & 15th Streets, NW
Research Questions

Does the site contain remnants areas of natural landscape associated with bank of Tiber Creek?

Does the site contain features associated with the Washington City Canal?

What is the material that was used to fill the canal in the 1870s?

Does the site contain elements of earlier historical landscapes associated with the Monument Grounds?

Does the site contain resources related to the construction of the Monument, such as workshop debris?

Does the site contain resources associated with the Civil War-era occupation, such as the Beef Depot?
Where is Tiber Creek?

Tiber Creek was a broad estuary that would have supported a rich tidal marsh environment, with important subsistence resources such as such as shellfish, waterfowl, crabs and fish.

During early historic times, shad, herring, eels, pike, catfish, and perch were taken from Tiber Creek as far upstream as Pennsylvania Avenue and 2nd Street, NW.

Robert King’s *A Map of the City of Washington in the District of Columbia*, 1818.
Native American artifacts were collected from the Monument Grounds during the 1880s, and are now curated at the Smithsonian Institution in Suitland.

These artifacts indicate repeated occupation of the Monument Grounds for at least 7,000 years before European arrival.
Colonial Exploration Period

From Jamestown, English explorer John Smith mapped many villages along the Potomac and its tributaries.

Village of Nacotchtank was along the lower Anacostia River in early 1600s.
Abandonment of the DC area in the Late 17th Century

By the late 1600s, Native American groups abandoned the DC area.

Possible small-pox epidemic, warfare, or climate change are leading hypotheses for abandonment;
Initial Settlement of the District of Columbia Area (then Maryland)

Early patents along Tiber Creek date to the late 1600s, but the DC area was still a frontier.

NMAAHC site was included in patents known as Duddington Pasture and Cerne Abbey Manor, which passed to Notley Young in 1761.

Notley Young and others were established near lower Tiber Creek by 1790.

*Priggs map of 1790*
The City of L’Enfant

L’Enfant envisioned a canal through the city, along B Street

The canal would connect the City’s best port facilities, on the Anacostia, to Georgetown and allow easy transport of material to the City’s interior
The Beginning of the Federal City

“Washington in 1800” from Joseph Passonneau’s *Washington Through Two Centuries: A History in Maps and Images*
The Washington City Canal

Washington City Canal was built in the channel of Tiber Creek

Construction of the canal channel or “prism” completed across north end of NMAAHC Site by 1822

Towpath on the north bank of the Tiber

*Benjamin Latrobe’s, “Plan of the West End of the Public Appropriation in the City of Washington, Called the Mall, 1816”*
Early Landscaping of Public Reservations (A. J. Downing)

Only the Smithsonian Grounds and President’s Park were landscaped according to A J Downing’s plan.
“A Dull Wide Waste”

The Monument Grounds remained in pasture through the Civil War, while President’s Park and the Smithsonian Grounds were formally landscaped.

Boschke map shows two possible buildings along the canal.

“The grounds are capable of very great adornment, and should not be allowed to present the dull, wide waste that they now do.”

--Nathaniel Michler 1868
The Civil War Period – Military Occupation of the Monument Grounds

Construction of the Monument was interrupted by the Civil War.

Used for cattle grazing and military maneuvers, the Monument Grounds acquired names such as “Beef Depot,” the “Cattle Meadow”, and the “Washington National Cattle Yard.”

Military quarters, storehouses, stables, pens, sheds, and a slaughterhouse appeared.

One observer noted that the buildings were “surrounded by offal rotting two or three feet deep”
Filling the Washington City Canal – “that pestiferous ditch”

Calls for cleaning the canal increased as it became a health nuisance.

The canal drained more than a third of the city’s raw sewage; it was described as “immense laboratory of mephitic gas.”

Major improvements to the canal did not occur until the formation of the Territorial government in the early 1870s.

Under “Boss” Shepherd, the canal was converted to a sewer and paved over to become Constitution Avenue.
Completion of the Washington Monument in the 1880s

During the 1870s and 1880s, OPG&G reports document repairs and repaving episodes to the paths and carriageways on the Monument Grounds.

During the Monument’s final construction phase (1880s), the grounds were covered with machinery, shops, and a railroad siding.

When completed in 1888, the landscaping of the Monument Grounds featured curving carriageways and paths that reflected Downing’s 1851 design.
Early Twentieth Century -- to World War I

Detailed survey of the Monument Grounds was made in 1917.

In the northeast panel, contours and circulation system (roads and paths) continued from the late 1880s.

WW I returned the District to a wartime mentality, and some of the public grounds were used again for grazing.
Early Twentieth Century – 1930s

1917 base mapping was retained and updated through the 1930s

Contours and the circulation system (roads and paths) across NMAAHC site remained unchanged.

Realignment of 15th Street?

New utility lines were added, including a water intake for the PEPCO substation.

Increasing recreational demands led to construction of a tennis court on the NMAAHC site.

Detail of OPB&G 1917 Survey of the Mall, updated to 1930
During World War II, much of the Mall was taken over by temporary military office buildings.

The NMAAHC site remained open.

Detail of National Geographic Pocket Map of Central Washington, 1948
Mid-20th Century and World War II

The Age of the Automobile brought a major realignment of the roadway system on the Monument Grounds.

Madison Drive was extended across the Monument Grounds, connecting 14th and 15th Streets.

During World War II, the NMAAHC site used for special military events such as “Back the Attack-3rd War Loan.”
Late 20th Century to Present

Construction and removal of restroom facilities along 15th Street

Realignment of 15th Street and Madison Drive

New utilities

Ongoing turf maintenance

First Amendment Use

Other Special Events
A big part of the pre-field research was identifying both active and inactive utility lines.

Typical of urban areas, the NMAAHC site has many buried water, electrical, gas, steam, communication lines.

Formal utility mark-out
Utility Mapping Overlays

Series of overlay maps created to identify buried utility lines

24-inch Gas

Water

Stray Electric Lines

1983 utility mapping
Field Investigations – Geoarchaeological Survey

Consulting soil scientist/geomorphologist conducted a series of 18 manual tests across the site, using 4-inch bucker auger.

Soil column is interpreted by soil texture (particle size), color, weathering, and other characteristics.

Scaled, soil profile is created.
Field Investigations – Shovel Test Survey

Archaeologists excavate a series of 30 shovel tests (1.5-foot diameter) holes, sift soil, recover artifacts, examine soil profile.

Shovel testing focused in two areas:

1. Southeast corner of the site where the natural historic landscape was at or near the present surface.

2. Along Constitution Avenue, to search for possible early 19th century surface.
**What Did We Find?**

A natural prehistoric/historic landscape surface is present in the southeast area of the site.

A few prehistoric artifacts (quartzite debitage) were recovered from this area.

Possible early 19th century surface and artifact deposits in north area of site.

Possible remains of 19th century structure along the canal.
Where do we go from here?

Complete the draft Phase I report in February

Agency review & consultation

Possible Phase II archaeological study

If Phase II is needed, what factors should be considered?

Can some areas of the site be preserved?

Competing land uses

Scheduling of future field investigations or construction monitoring

Opportunity for public interpretation