Egmont Key: Sentinel of Tampa Bay

John W. Stafford
University of South Florida

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/tampabayhistory

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/tampabayhistory/vol2/iss1/4
EGMONT KEY: SENTINEL OF TAMPA BAY
By John W. Stafford

From time to time places and people gain or lose significance and fame. Such has been the case with Egmont Key. At one time it was one of the most important locations between Key West and Pensacola for ships sailing along the west coast of Florida. Egmont Key first gained significance when a lighthouse was erected there in 1848 to guide ships along the coast. Later the military significance of the island was recognized, and for nearly one hundred years it served as a sentinel guarding the approaches to Tampa Bay. Today, however, Egmont Key has lost its military significance, and has, ironically, resumed its earlier role serving once again primarily as a beacon to guide ships and planes to and from the Tampa Bay area.

Few dispute the close relationship between history and geography, for the two complement each other in many ways. Just as geographical inquiry must consider historical events, history is often enriched by geographical considerations. Although Egmont Key’s early importance rested primarily on its geographical location, its lingering significance rests to a greater degree on its history. Thus, to appreciate fully the role of Egmont Key in the development of the Tampa Bay area, one should consider both the history and the geography of the island.

I

Egmont Key is a small island on Florida's Gulf Coast at the mouth of Tampa Bay thirty miles southwest of Tampa. The island is approximately 1.6 miles long and has a uniform width of less than one-half mile. It is parallel to the Florida coastline far enough out in the Gulf of Mexico so that it probably is not part of the chain of offshore islands which dot the west coast of Florida.

Don Francisco Maria Celi, Pilot of the Royal Spanish Fleet, made the first known survey of Egmont Key in 1757. His early survey by means of a sextant and a rope or chain provided an accurate measurement of the island, noting both its size and shape. Today it remains the best early map of the island.

Egmont Key has been altered in size from time to time by the endless action of wind and surf, periodically enlarged by deposits of sand and later reduced by erosion of the coastline. Most of the modification in size and shape of the island has occurred along the seaward coast, as might be expected. When surveyed by the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Service in 1875, Egmont Key was fifteen to twenty per cent larger than shown by Celi, having grown significantly along the southwest Shore as a result of sand deposition. However, considerable erosion has occurred in the last 100 years, and the island today has been reduced to 398 acres, or approximately the same shape and size as measured by Celi over 200 years ago. The erosion power of continuous wave and wind action can be easily seen today after even a minor storm. However, the forces of erosion and deposition which cause periodic fluctuations in the beach area seem to balance each other out over a period of time, and the island has shown considerable resiliency in maintaining its approximate size and shape for over 200 years. This is especially true compared to other nearby islands, such as Mullett Key which has been severely modified in size and shape, and
Passage Key, 1.7 miles to the southeast, which has virtually disappeared beneath the sea and is today little more than a sand bar barely visible at low tide. Early eighteenth century charts show Passage Key as approximately the same size as Egmont.
The main surface of Egmont Key lies only three or four feet above sea level, but a row of sand dunes along the northwest shore gives an appearance of greater elevation. The highest natural point on the island is less than ten feet above sea level. The difference between the highest and lowest natural points, excluding beaches, is generally no greater than two or three feet in most places. The low elevation of the island and absence of significant high points, such as hills, hammocks, or ridges, subject the island to considerable erosion during severe weather. Although the shoreline appears to have stabilized somewhat in recent years, a hurricane or other severe storm could cause considerable damage and reduction in the size of the island because of the low-lying shores.

Water depths around the island vary considerably. Most noteworthy is an area within 100 yards of the northeast corner where a geologic anomaly—a depression in excess of ninety feet—is found. This is the deepest water in Tampa Bay and perhaps the entire nearshore of Florida’s Gulf Coast, and it may have influenced the geography and history of the island. Egmont Channel, the main shipping channel for Tampa Bay, passes through this depression just north of the island and averages forty to fifty feet in depth. A secondary channel, Southwest Channel, with depths to twenty-five feet, lies one-half mile south of the island. Water depths are generally deeper on the Bay side of the island compared to the Gulf side, and the bottom slopes more quickly to depths in excess of ten feet. To the east of the island water depths are generally less than fifteen feet for a distance of one-half mile or more, but shallow water of six feet or less is limited to the area within fifty yards of shore. The west side of the island is surrounded by extensive areas of shallow water with average depths of less than six to eight feet as far as two or three miles from shore. The shallower Gulf side is due to the buildup of bottom sand as a result of winds, currents, and waves.
The soil on Egmont Key is primarily sand mixed with numerous shells and is low in natural fertility. In the sandy soil rainwater percolates rapidly below the surface and the island is well-drained. There are no swamps, marshes, springs, or other forms of surface water anywhere on the island.

The climate of Egmont Key may be classified as sub-tropical. Data from the nearest official weather station at St. Petersburg, ten miles to the northeast, show an annual average temperature of 73.9°, with January the coldest month at 63.3°. The marine location of Egmont Key tends to moderate temperature extremes. Record low temperatures are in the mid to upper 20s, frost is extremely rare, and snow is unheard of. Annual rainfall at St. Petersburg is 55.4 inches with heaviest amounts occurring in the summer. Although winds in the Tampa Bay area are from the east most of the year, a high incidence of onshore breezes occur, especially during afternoon thunderstorms, an almost daily occurrence during summer months. The Tampa Bay area averages eighty-seven thunderstorms per year. Strong winds are also likely to occur in association with tornadoes and waterspouts that frequently accompany these thunderstorms.

During the period from 1885 to 1965 approximately fifty hurricanes have made landfall on the Gulf Coast of Florida, an average of one every eighteen months. Hurricanes can be expected to make landfall in the Tampa Bay area an average of once every twenty years. The 1848 hurricane covered Egmont Key with several feet of water and destroyed the newly erected lighthouse, but the 1921 hurricane did far more damage to nearby Mullet Key, partially destroying the island.

The vegetation on Egmont Key is substantial and nearly 100 different species of plants have been identified. Most of the island is covered with shrubs, palmetto, and small trees. The most common plants are the cabbage palm – *Sabal palmetto* – wax myrtle, and various lianas and vines. Less common but still widespread are sea grapes, strangler figs, buttonwood trees, and various shrubs. Poison ivy, sea oats, and greenbrier are found less frequently. Introduced plants such as Australian Pines have been planted on opposite ends of the island. Mangrove is conspicuously absent from the island, although it can be found in this part of Florida primarily along the inner shore of the barrier islands.

Wildlife on Egmont Key is quite sparse but includes a variety of birds, Florida “gophers” (land turtles), and rattlesnakes. The Florida “gopher” seems to be the most widespread of the fauna in evidence in every part of the island. Birds are limited in number, but rattlesnakes, although rarely seen, are probably everywhere. Crabs and other marine life exist in abundance on the beach, and the adjacent waters contain spotted and silver trout, redfish, snook, sharks, and nearly every other type of fish common to the Gulf Coast of Florida.

II

When Celi went ashore on Egmont Key in 1757 he found an abandoned canoe which was probably left by pre-historic Indians who utilized the island from time to time. The absence of a freshwater supply and adequate wood for fires suggests something other than permanent occupation by pre-historic Indians. Numerous archaeological sites in nearby southern Pinellas County and good fishing and hunting and the abundance of turtle eggs in the area of Egmont Key
lend credence to the possibility that pre-historic Indians had visited the island periodically. The distance from Mullet Key is only one and one-half miles, but it is across open water of Tampa Bay which is frequently rough and has a fairly swift tidal flow and dangerous current which might have discouraged frequent visits to Egmont Key. Any permanent settlements that may have existed on the island would have been located close to the shoreline. Thus they may have disappeared beneath the water of Tampa Bay or the Gulf of Mexico due to historic fluctuations in sea level and periodic alterations in the size and shape of Egmont Key from the actions of wind, currents, tides, and hurricanes. An archaeologic search of the island in 1977 found no evidence of pre-historic occupation.  

Spanish exploration of the Gulf Coast of Florida began in the late sixteenth century. The first white man to see Egmont Key and the Tampa Bay area was probably Ponce de Leon in 1513. Panfilo de Narvaez visited the southwest coast of Florida in 1528, and DeSoto came in 1539. However, no reliable evidence exists that either visited the Tampa Bay area, contrary to the reports of numerous historians and writers. Although seriously disputed, a good case can be made that both Narvaez and DeSoto probably sailed along much of Florida’s west coast and landed perhaps 75 to 100 miles south of Tampa Bay, near present-day Fort Myers. It is not likely that DeSoto went ashore on Egmont Key, as is claimed, to cut grass and find water for his
horses. DeSoto's journal describes bottom conditions, water depths, and channel widths that have little or no similarity to present conditions around Egmont Key, and it is highly unlikely that significant natural alterations of the physical environment have occurred in the past 450 years.

It is highly likely that several other expeditions sailed past Egmont Key and Tampa Bay, including Miruelo's in 1516 and Pineda’s in 1519. Captain Braddock of Virginia reportedly explored Tampa Bay in 1744-45, but here, too, the evidence is sketchy at best. Father de Barbastro tried to establish a settlement along Old Tampa Bay in 1549, and Pedro Menendez failed in an attempt to do the same in 1767.7

The first positive identification and useful description of Tampa Bay and Egmont Key was provided in 1757 by Don Francisco Maria Celi. Although the purpose of Celi’s voyage was not specifically described in his log, he provided the first map of Tampa Bay and reliable information concerning wind and weather conditions, water depths, and the size and shape of Egmont Key and other islands and keys at the mouth of Tampa Bay. He measured Egmont Key with great precision by repeated sightings along the shoreline, and he noted compass bearing and distance. Despite his remarkable and complete attention to detail on certain issues, he was guilty of sloppy practices in other ways. His failure on two separate attempts to survey and sound Egmont Channel along the north side of the island “because of adverse wind and current,” and his description of shoaling several miles west of the island detract somewhat from an otherwise complete and accurate early description of the geography of the area. It seems likely that he did not accurately survey the channel and resorted to careless speculation, for how could he have missed locating the ninety foot trench immediately north of the island. Furthermore, an English chart published in 1769, as well as modern charts, show the channel to have a minimum depth of twenty-one feet.8 Although Celi had no botanists, zoologists, trained geographers or cartographers with him, little fault can be found with his early contributions to our knowledge of the Egmont Key area.9

Two later voyages along the southwest coast of Florida by Joseph Antonio de Evia in 1783 and Vincente Folcy y Juan made little mention of Egmont Key or its surrounding waters except that Evia identified Castor (Egmont) Key and Pollux (Passage) Key as two sand bars on his chart.10 These two voyages ended the Spanish period in the Tampa Bay area after 250 years of exploration.

Bernard Romans, Deputy Surveyor of East Florida, was the second person to provide an accurate picture of Egmont Key and the Tampa Bay area. He reported a range of islands at the mouth of Tampa Bay including those he identified as Castor and Pollux Keys with shoals running westward from each island.11

A careful study of historical sources dealing with the first explorations of the Tampa Bay area will do little to inspire confidence in early cartographers or historians, for there is little consistency in naming the islands and keys in the area near the mouth of Tampa Bay. To make matters more difficult, many maps and charts reverse the names and improperly identify Mullett Key as Egmont or Passage Key as Egmont, and they often use different names for each of the islands.
Francisco Maria Celi not only provided the first useful description of the island we know as Egmont Key today, but he also was the first to give it a name. In 1757 he named the island Isla de San Blas y Barreda for the Rear Admiral of the Royal Fleet and Commander General in Havana. However, in 1759 it appeared on charts as Castor Key. When Joseph Antonio de Evia explored the area in 1783 his Spanish charts identified Egmont Key as Castor. Evia probably spotted the wooden cross erected on the south end of the island by Celi and renamed the island Cayo de Cruz, for that is the name which appears on an 1803 Spanish Admiralty chart of Tampa Bay (Bahia de Tampa). The island was finally given its present name by the British during their brief occupancy of Florida, 1763-1783, in honor of John Perceval, the Second Earl of Egmont, a member of the Irish House of Commons.

The late eighteenth century was a period of relative inactivity along Florida’s Gulf Coast, and Egmont Key was largely forgotten until the early nineteenth century. Two young men reportedly tried to homestead Egmont Key in 1821 but were unsuccessful. Captain Francis Dade from Fort Brooke (Tampa) hunted on Egmont in 1824, but he made no mention of seeing anyone living there. In July 1838 a party from Fort Brooke fished and hunted on Passage Key reported seeing three Spanish fishermen living there in a palmetto hut. They also saw abandoned houses, but they failed to mention anyone living on Egmont which was larger, safer, and probably better for hunting.

After the end of the Second Seminole War the Armed Occupation Act of 1842 opened up southern Florida for homesteading. In 1843 the land office at Newnansville (Alachua) reported that there were settlers on Egmont Key, but the Secretary of War informed the land office that Egmont and certain other keys in the area were reserved for military purposes and no permits were to be granted for settlement there.

Throughout the early 1830s residents of Key West and Sanibel had petitioned the federal government to build a lighthouse in Tampa Bay. In 1846 Congress finally authorized a lighthouse on Egmont, the only lighthouse between Key West and St. Marks. The lighthouse was completed in May 1848, but one of the worst hurricanes to hit the west coast of Florida destroyed it in September of the same year when the island was covered with six feet or more of water at the base of the lighthouse. Within three weeks a second hurricane, nearly as severe as the first one, hit Egmont Key. As a result of these storms, the badly damaged lighthouse was torn down, and a new one was built on the old foundation for $16,000 “to withstand any storm.” That the goal was met is attested by the fact that the lighthouse is still standing in excellent condition, despite several severe hurricanes, including one in 1921 that did extensive damage to the Tampa Bay area.

Egmont Key also served military purposes after the United States acquired Florida in 1821 from the Spanish. Little use was made of Egmont Key until 1837 when a depot and observation post were established on the island. The two hurricanes in 1848 did little to enhance its military value, but in 1849 Lt. Col. Robert E. Lee recognized the potential military significance of Egmont Key and recommended that defensive works be erected. Thus, 1849 marked the beginning of significant military activity which was to continue at various levels until World War II.
Throughout the 1850s Egmont served as a gathering place and temporary stockade for Indians awaiting shipment to Indian Territory west of the Mississippi River. Estimates of the number of Indians vary considerably, but it seems that as many as 200 to 300 were garrisoned on the island for shipment west. The last load of Indians left Egmont Key in 1858.

Federal ships blockaded Tampa Bay during the Civil War and Egmont served as a base for Confederate blockade runners until the island was captured by Union forces in July 1861. Several buildings were constructed near the lighthouse, and Union sympathizers and runaway slaves fled to Egmont for safety and eventual shipment to Key West and elsewhere for protection. Union forces operating from Egmont raided coastal installations and bombarded houses on Pinellas Peninsula as well as Fort Brooke and the City of Tampa, sinking two ships in the Hillsborough River near present-day Lowry Park. Confederate Navy prisoners were held on Egmont during the Civil War, and the cemetery started there in 1864 became the burial ground for both Union and Confederate veterans. When the cemetery closed in 1909 most of the bodies were disinterred and moved to national cemeteries in St. Augustine, Florida or Marietta, Georgia. Following the Civil War little was done to develop the military potential of Egmont Key until the 1890s. In 1882 both Egmont and Mullet Keys were permanently reserved for military purposes. From 1882 to 1900 Egmont Key was known as the United States Military Reservation at Egmont Key. At the turn of the century it was renamed Fort Dade in honor of Major Francis L. Dade,
who along with practically his entire command was massacred by Seminole Indians in 1835. Of the approximately 398 acres on the island, 378 acres constituted the former military reservation, fifteen acres were set aside for a lighthouse, and five acres were leased to the Tampa Bay Pilot’s Association.24

Enthusiasm for military development of the island mounted as the likelihood of war with Spain increased. Two years before construction of Fort Dade began, there were only 1,198 soldiers in all of Florida.25 Fear and near mass hysteria in the Tampa Bay area in anticipation of a Spanish invasion in 1898 led to construction of a fort in 1899 after several months of frantic lobbying. Both Egmont and nearby Mullet Key (Fort DeSoto) were fortified one month before the Spanish-American War started.26 Coastal artillery units were installed on both the north and south ends of Egmont and the southwest corner of Mullet Key to guard entry into Tampa Bay. Although the guns were psychologically comforting to citizens of the Tampa Bay area, they were probably of limited military value and were, in fact, never fired at an enemy.

The war with Spain did not last long, and Egmont’s participation was minor. However, all soldiers returning from Cuba had to spend ten days at a 1000-tent hospital and quarantine station set up on the island. Even though the war ended soon after construction of Fort Dade began, it was decided to carry on with plans to develop the military potential of Egmont Key. From 1899 to 1916 over seventy buildings were erected on the island at a total cost of $494,427.48.27 A smaller, auxiliary post, Fort DeSoto, was built on Mullet Key for somewhat less than half this amount.

Most of the Fort Dade buildings were built of wood on brick piers with roofs of slate or tin. The buildings were heated by oil stoves and/or fireplaces and lighted by mineral oil lamps. A sewer system installed in 1902 drained into Tampa Bay. Cypress cisterns stored water drained
from roofs of buildings for drinking purposes. In 1904 six shallow wells and a large storage tank were installed to provide water for bathing and flushing toilets. Work began in 1909 on brick streets and sidewalks. In 1911 an electric generating plant was installed, and by 1912 most buildings had electric lights. An underwater cable provided phone service to St. Petersburg. In 1911 the first school was started at Fort Dade and enrolled sixteen students. In addition to barracks, lavatories, a bakery, miscellaneous storehouses, mess halls, a guardhouse and other typical installations, Fort Dade also had a thirteen-bed hospital, a morgue, cemetery, movie theater, ice plant, fire station, tennis court, baseball diamond, gymnasium, bowling alley, corral, stable, post office, telegraph, a train, and daily steamer service to Tampa. A small garden near the lighthouse provided a few fresh vegetables. However, the overall poor quality of the soil limited its productiveness, and even hay had to be brought from elsewhere to feed the horses. Despite the paucity of grass and other forage on the island, in 1914 a request was sent to the quartermaster’s office in Washington for authority to establish a dairy at the fort because of the difficulty in obtaining milk from town.\textsuperscript{28}

In its early days shortly after the turn of the century, Fort Dade was quite attractive in many ways. At least some of the main buildings were surrounded by lawns. Palm trees lined the main sidewalks, and a series of well-built red brick roads and sidewalks gave the fort a certain charm. Despite its relative nearness to the mainland it was somewhat isolated, and soldiers complained of the mosquitos, rattlesnakes, and tropical climate.
Like many other Army posts, Fort Dade was beleaguered from time to time with problems seemingly typical of military inefficiency. When the school opened in 1911, the new desks that were delivered were too large for the children to use. In 1913 a sergeant filed an official complaint and request for transfer to a different duty station so his fourteen-year-old son could get suitable schooling. A request for canned milk submitted in July 1912 for delivery in
September was not received until January 1913. In 1912 when painters in Tampa protested that soldiers at Fort Dade were painting their own buildings, the Army responded that Tampa painters were charging exorbitant prices. Other difficulties bordered on the macabre. The base cemetery had become dilapidated and run down. Since the first burial in 1864, few records had been kept, and the government was unsure how many bodies had been buried. When a decision was made to disinter the bodies and move them to other military cemeteries in Florida and Georgia, considerable confusion resulted. Some graves were unmarked; no records could be found for two bodies that were exhumed; at least two Negro soldiers had been buried outside the cemetery boundary line.

During 1900, the first full year of the existence of Fort Dade, the number of soldiers stationed at the fort varied from eighty to 102, including one or two officers. The fewest number of soldiers reported on the bi-annual reports issued in January and June for the period 1900-1916 was sixty-three in 1904, and the largest number reported was 254 in 1916. Throughout the 1900-1909 period the number of soldiers at the fort averaged approximately 100-115 and from 1909-1916 approximately 200-275. Since the total number of children enrolled in school in 1911 was reported to be sixteen, a reasonable estimate might be an additional dozen or so children under age five and perhaps a dozen wives. Thus, Fort Dade generally had fewer than 300 personnel, including wives and dependents.

During World War I Fort Dade became a training center for National Guard Coast Artillery units. Reportedly 600 men were stationed at the fort during the war, including anti-submarine mine crews whose duties included the protection of Tampa Bay against attack. Several new buildings were erected in addition to a mine-laying dock at the north end of the island. After the war the coastal defense installation was considered obsolete, and Fort Dade was deactivated and abandoned to a single caretaker in 1923. The Secretary of War was authorized to sell the fort in
1926. Hurricanes in 1921 and 1926 did considerable damage to the fort and hastened the decision to close the installation.

In the early 1930s many of the original buildings at Fort Dade were burned down or demolished.

Although Fort Dade was abandoned and most of the buildings had been destroyed, Egmont Key again became useful for military purposes during World War II. Several new buildings were erected in the early 1940s. The island again served as a harbor patrol station just as it had done during World War I, the Spanish-American War, and the Civil War. During World War II, vessels entering Tampa Bay had to unload and store their ammunition on the island. Egmont was also used for amphibious warfare training and for aerial gunnery exercises. Reports of upwards of 1800 servicemen on Egmont during the war were probably greatly exaggerated, for few buildings were still intact, and during its prime just prior to World War I fewer than 300 soldiers were stationed there. After World War II the island was again abandoned for military purposes, except for the U.S. Coast Guard which tends the lighthouse and a radio beacon which helps guide aircraft to Tampa and St. Petersburg airports.

Thirty years later efforts to have Egmont Key declared a national park met with failure, but it has been set aside as a National Wildlife Refuge since 1974 and is presently managed by the J. N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Service at Sanibel Island. The most outstanding historic features on the island are the lighthouse built in 1848 and the remains of Fort Dade, including the only road on the island. In 1978, Egmont Key was named to the National Register of Historic Places primarily because of the lighthouse.

The Coast Guard continues to maintain the fifteen-acre lighthouse reservation, and the Tampa Bay Harbor Pilot’s Association still utilizes a five-acre area of the island. Two or three coast guardsmen and a dozen or so Tampa Bay pilots are the only permanent inhabitants on the island. The remainder of the island is being attacked by the natural elements. Trees and underbrush partially obscure the paved walkways and brick streets as well as the foundations of fifty to sixty structures of Fort Dade. Only a handful of buildings built during the Spanish-American period or later have survived the ravages of time, the elements, and vandalism. Plotting towers for gunnery exercises and several underground ammunition bunkers remain relatively intact. The two major gun emplacements on opposite ends of the island are still highly visible, but the one at the south end of the island is badly disintegrated, broken by wave action, and is falling into the Gulf of Mexico. The guard house erected near the lighthouse in 1910 is the only pre-World War I building still standing, but nature and vandals have taken their toll of this once noteworthy structure. An unidentified concrete structure resembling a garage or workshop still stands near the center of the island, but is missing its roof and doors. The only other remaining structure is a post-World War I concrete building near the west-central shore of the island which apparently served as a pumphouse, cold storage locker, and mess hall. It too has been victimized by vandals and natural elements. Several quonset huts erected during the World War II period are still in relatively good shape near the center of the island, but similar structures have rusted away and fallen into the Gulf of Mexico. In addition to these few surviving structures, the only other parts of Fort Dade which remain are several sections of the red brick streets and walkways which are in nearly as good condition today as when first installed in 1909.
Egmont Key remains a government reserve and is thus unavailable for additional settlement. The island rests demurely like a sentinel at the mouth of Tampa Bay, its history all but ignored. Nevertheless, with its excellent beaches, historic remnants of Fort Dade, and lighthouse, it remains an outstanding reminder of the Tampa Bay area’s history and deserves more attention than it now receives. Its geographic significance for military purposes has changed with the times, but not its geography.

Someday Egmont Key could be turned into an excellent park or recreation area where history buff, family picnicker, and tourist may spend pleasurable hours relaxing on the beaches, walking the red brick streets of historic Fort Dade, and in general, reliving part of the history of the Tampa Bay area.


8 Ware, “A View of Celi’s Journal;”: 11, 17, 20.


13 The original is in the Special Collections of the Tampa Public Library.


22 Covington, *The Story of Southwest Florida*, pp. 142-44.


25 U.S. Series Set 3524, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
Fort Dade located at Egmont Key was the third military installation of that name in Florida. See Frank Laumer, “This was Fort Dade,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 45 (July 1966): 11. Charles Arnade, “Cycles of Conquest in Florida,” *Tequesta* 22 (1963): 22-23.


Record Group 92, Office of Quartermaster General, Document File, 1890-1914, Fort Dade, Box 199, National Archives, Washington, D.C.


*Return from Military Posts*, 1800-1916, Microcopy 617, Roll 278, Fort Dade, National Archives, Washington, D.C.