

# The Paving Stone Archaeological Site

## Virginia Avenue SE

Diagonal Virginia Avenue SE and rectangular Virginia Avenue Park are two of the many features that characterize the L'Enfant Plan. Eventually, cut granite block paving stones were installed on Virginia Avenue SE and most likely date to the post-Civil War roadway improvements (1870s) implemented by DC Governor Alexander Robey "Boss" Shepherd.

In 2009, intact segments of the cut granite block paved Virginia Avenue SE were encountered east of 11th Street SE beneath two feet of fill. The cut granite block paving stones were dry laid and averaged 4 inches by 12 inches in size and 6 inches in height. A segment of smaller blue scoria brick was found on the south side of the cut granite block paving stone roadway. The blue scoria brick were made from slag, a by-product of the iron smelting process, in Middlesbrough, England, in 1872. The first shipment of scoria brick arrived in Washington, DC, in 1910.

In 2015, more extensive intact segments of cut granite block paving stones were uncovered at depths of up to 5 feet below grade. Some segments were underlain with large wood beams in the wetter areas to prevent the paving stones from sinking into the mud. Recorded as the Virginia Avenue Paving Site (archaeological site 51SE062), the segments extended about 650 feet east from 11th Street SE along the original road alignment established by L'Enfant.

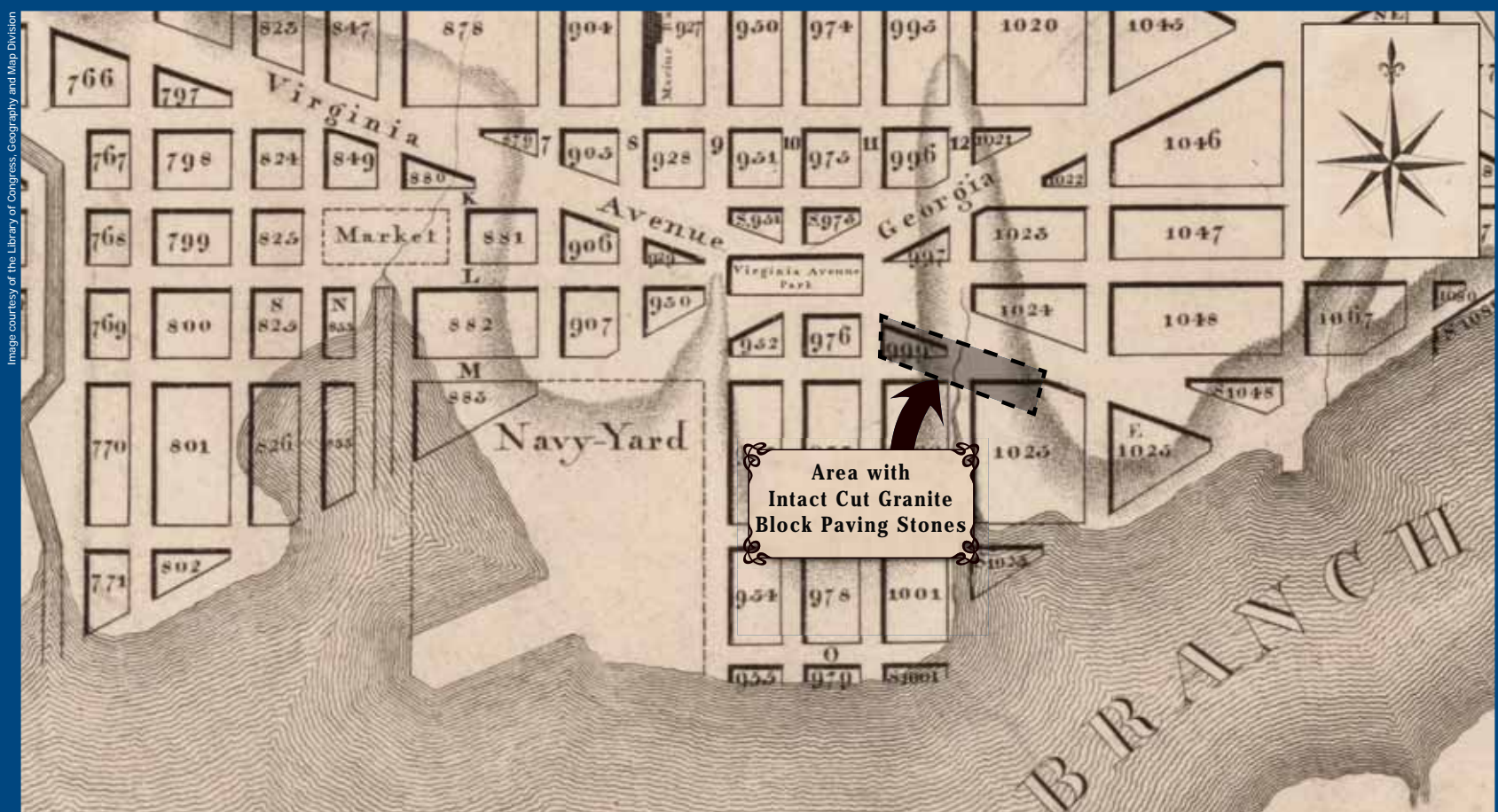
Although Virginia Avenue SE did not extend through Virginia Avenue Park, a segment of the 1870s cut granite block paving has been reconstructed here to provide both past and present perspectives on the road alignment and vista originally conceived by L'Enfant.



Intact segment of cut granite block pavers from Virginia Avenue SE found under the 11th Street SE Bridges. The road is about 20 feet wide. Removed paving stones are piled in the background and were donated for reuse by the District Department of Transportation.



Blue scoria brick segment prior to removal.



Location of Intact Segments of Cut Granite Block Paving Stones overlaid on 1818 map.