

# Navy Yard Tunnel (1872-1906)

## Virginia Avenue Tunnel

The Baltimore & Potomac Railroad constructed the first tunnel beneath Virginia Avenue SE between 1870 and 1872. Known as the Navy Yard Tunnel, due to its proximity to the Washington Navy Yard, the tunnel extended from 7th Street SE to east of 11th Street SE. Potomac Bluestone, shipped from quarries north of Georgetown along Rock Creek, was used to construct the majority of the tunnel walls and roof arch. Seneca sandstone from the Seneca Quarry in Montgomery County, Maryland, was used to build the retaining walls extending from the portals. The tunnel was built using cut-and-cover construction, which involved excavating a trench from ground level, building the tunnel, and backfilling when the top of the arch was complete.

The original west portal of the Navy Yard Tunnel (removed when the tunnel was extended to the west in 1904) was located between 7th and 8th Streets SE. The original east portal was a segmental arch opening located between 11th and 12th Streets SE. In 2018, the tunnel was extended 300 feet east of the original 1872 east portal; portions of the interior of the original 1872 Navy Yard Tunnel were left intact and incorporated into the reconstructed Virginia Avenue Tunnel.



The east portal, shown here in 2014, was constructed from 1870-1872. The portal was a segmental arch made of Potomac Bluestone.



Retaining walls constructed of Seneca sandstone, shown here in 2014, extended from the east portal to protect the below-grade track. The 1872 retaining walls exhibit an ashlar pattern with irregular courses using stones of varying sizes.



For more detailed information, scan the QR code to the left to access the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) documentation for the Virginia Avenue Tunnel at the Library of Congress or go to [insert link].

