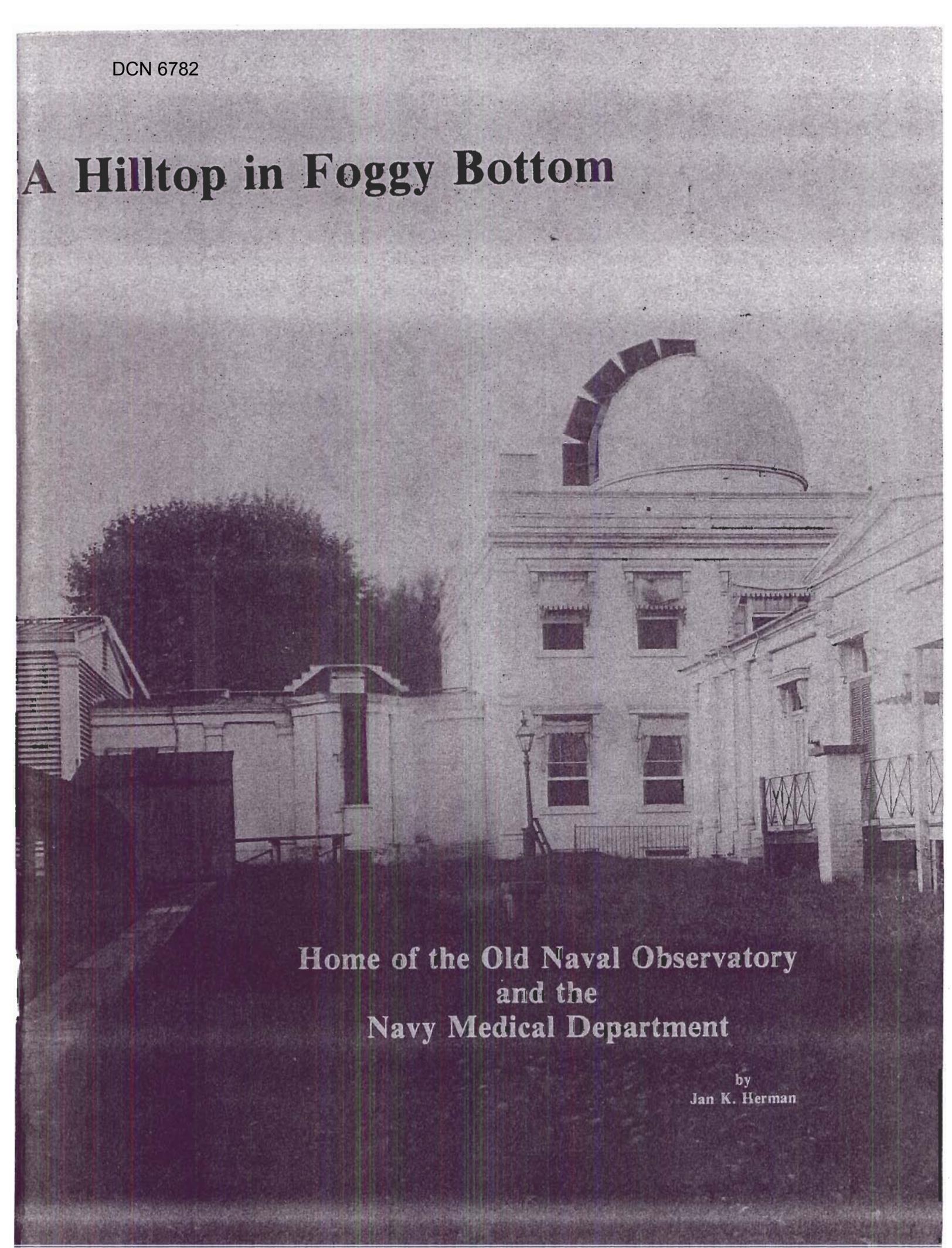


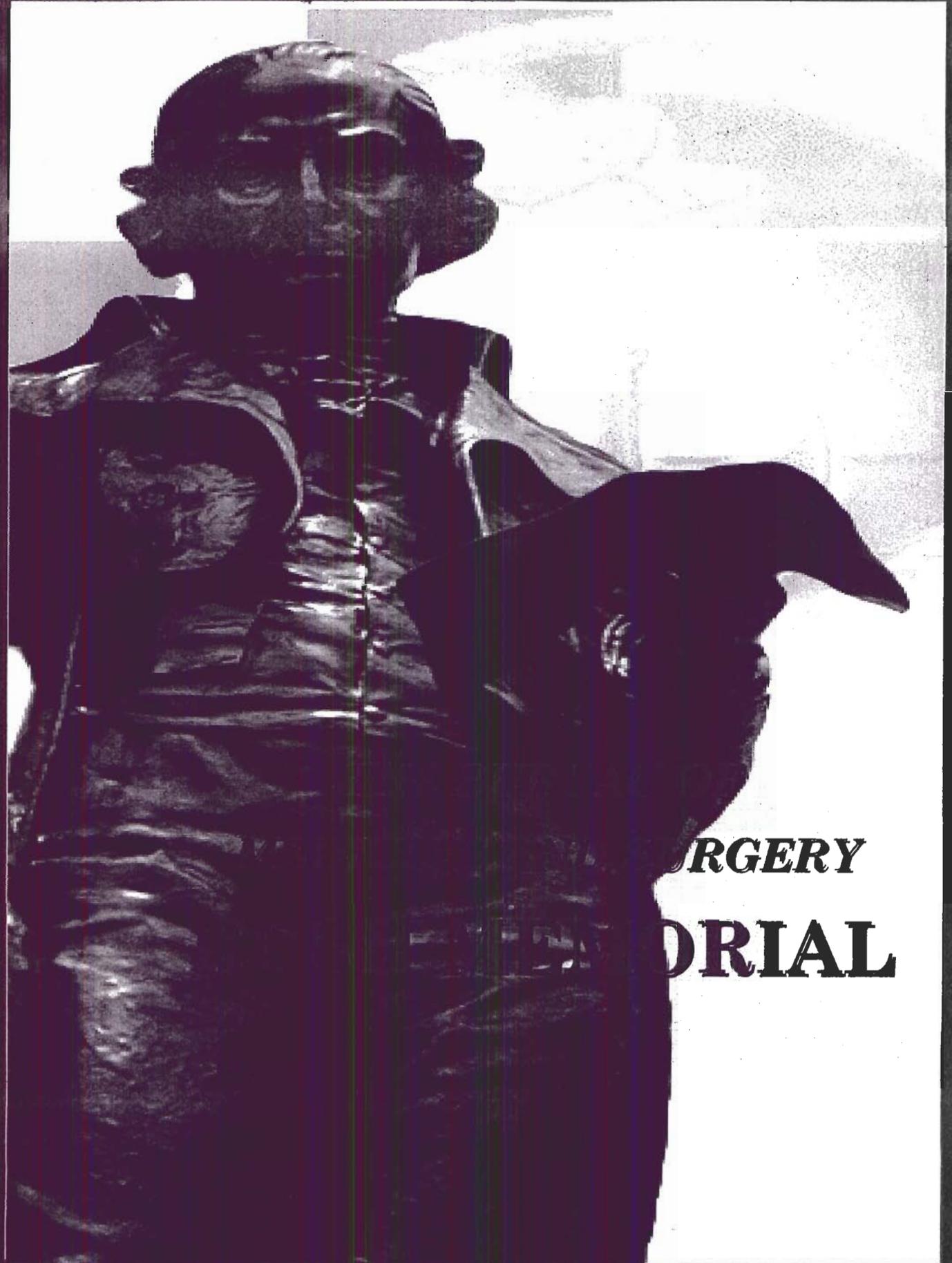
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# A Hilltop in Foggy Bottom



Home of the Old Naval Observatory  
and the  
Navy Medical Department

by  
Jan K. Herman



**URGERY**

**ORIAL**

## *A Brief History of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery Campus*

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The headquarters of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery sits atop a prime parcel of Washington real estate overlooking the Potomac River and the city's marble monuments. At first glance, one could easily mistake the grounds for a venerable old campus--a quiet oasis plunked down in the middle of the bustling neighborhood called Foggy Bottom. Stately oaks that germinated in the mid-1800's shade a grouping of turn-of-the-century buildings and gardens.

The centerpiece is a two-story, cream-yellow brick structure crowned by a white dome that gleams in the afternoon sun. The bureaucracy has dubbed it "Building Two" and air conditioners now protrude from many of its aged windows. Yet there is a classical grandeur reflected in the Doric-style pilasters that decorate the front and rear facades.

The once three-chimneyed east wing is now minus its dark wooden shutters, and the finely turned railings that adorned the flat roofline are gone. But the wing still retains the look of the comfortable residence it once was.

Weathered, red sandstone stairs, grooved by an endless procession of feet, and ornate wrought iron railings speak of a time when carriages rolled up the drive to pick-up and discharge scientists and government dignitaries.

Building Two is indeed a relic from another age. From 1844 to 1893 this National Historic Landmark housed the U.S. Naval Observatory, the workplace of the Navy scientists and mathematicians whose skill and perseverance made this institution one of the finest astronomical laboratories in the world.

The U.S. Naval Observatory's Master Clock calibrated by celestial observations became the standard for the nation.

In the 1850s, 0 degrees meridian was established at the U.S. Naval Observatory. The (American) Prime Meridian passed through the center of the U.S. Naval Observatory dome. The dome served as the reference for determining the north-south boundaries of a number of western states.

Before telescopes, transits, chronometers, and other instruments were moved to the Naval Observatory's present site on the heights above Georgetown, the men that labored here had left their marks.

As the Observatory's first Superintendent, LT Matthew Fontaine Maury, considered to be the father of modern oceanography, published among other works *Wind and Current Chart of the North Atlantic*, *Abstract Log for the Use of American Navigators*, and *The Physical Geography of the Sea*, considered the first text on the science of oceanography. From his office on the first floor, he resigned in 1861 to join the Confederacy.

In the 1870s and 1880s teams of this institution's astronomers traveled throughout the world to study solar eclipses and the transits of the planet Venus.

There are the ghosts of tradition and the stories based on fact. One tells of a gaunt, melancholy, and war-weary Abraham Lincoln seeking a rare moment of solace studying the heavens through the Observatory's 9.6-inch telescope. And the story of another famous visitor--Emperor Dom Pedro II of Brazil--whose royal wish was to observe the Moon through an impenetrable Foggy Bottom overcast.

There was the memorable August in 1877 when Professor Asaph Hall peered through the largest refracting telescope (26-inch) in the world at the time and discovered the two Martian moons—Phobos and Deimos.

Such stories and traditions are many and the significance and contributions of what John Quincy Adams termed "The Lighthouse of the Sky" are truly remarkable. Yet the history of Peter's Hill, Reservation Number 4, University Square, Camp Hill, and Observatory Hill, as this parcel has successfully been called over the years, neither began when the Observatory was built nor ended when it moved 49 years later.

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There have been other historical happenings on the hill.

In 1894, the Naval Museum of Hygiene moved into Building 2 housing a collection of pathological specimens, and medicines frequently in use by the Navy at that time. Soon thereafter, in 1902, the Navy Medical School joined the museum grounds.

In January 1904, a statue of Revolutionary physician and "alienist" (psychiatrist), Dr. Benjamin Rush was dedicated in front of Building 2 by Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt and Navy Surgeon General Presley Rixey. The statue was a gift from the American Medical Association to the Navy Medical Community.

In May 1904 construction on the Washington Naval Hospital began on the old Observatory grounds. The hospital was designed by famed architect Ernest Flagg (designer of the Singer building in New York and the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, DC). The buildings surrounding Building 2 were part of the original hospital.

- Building 1: The Nurse Corps Quarters.
- Building 3/4: The Main Administration Building containing 4 wards and an operating room.
- Building 5: The Sick Officers Quarters.
- Building 6: The Contagious Diseases Ward.
- Building 7: Hospital Corps Quarters.

In 1936, the Washington Naval Hospital became the National Naval Medical Center (aka, the "President's Hospital")

In 1942, the National Naval Medical Center, and the Navy Medical School moved to Bethesda and on 31 August 1942 the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED), the administrative wing of the Navy Medical Department moved in.

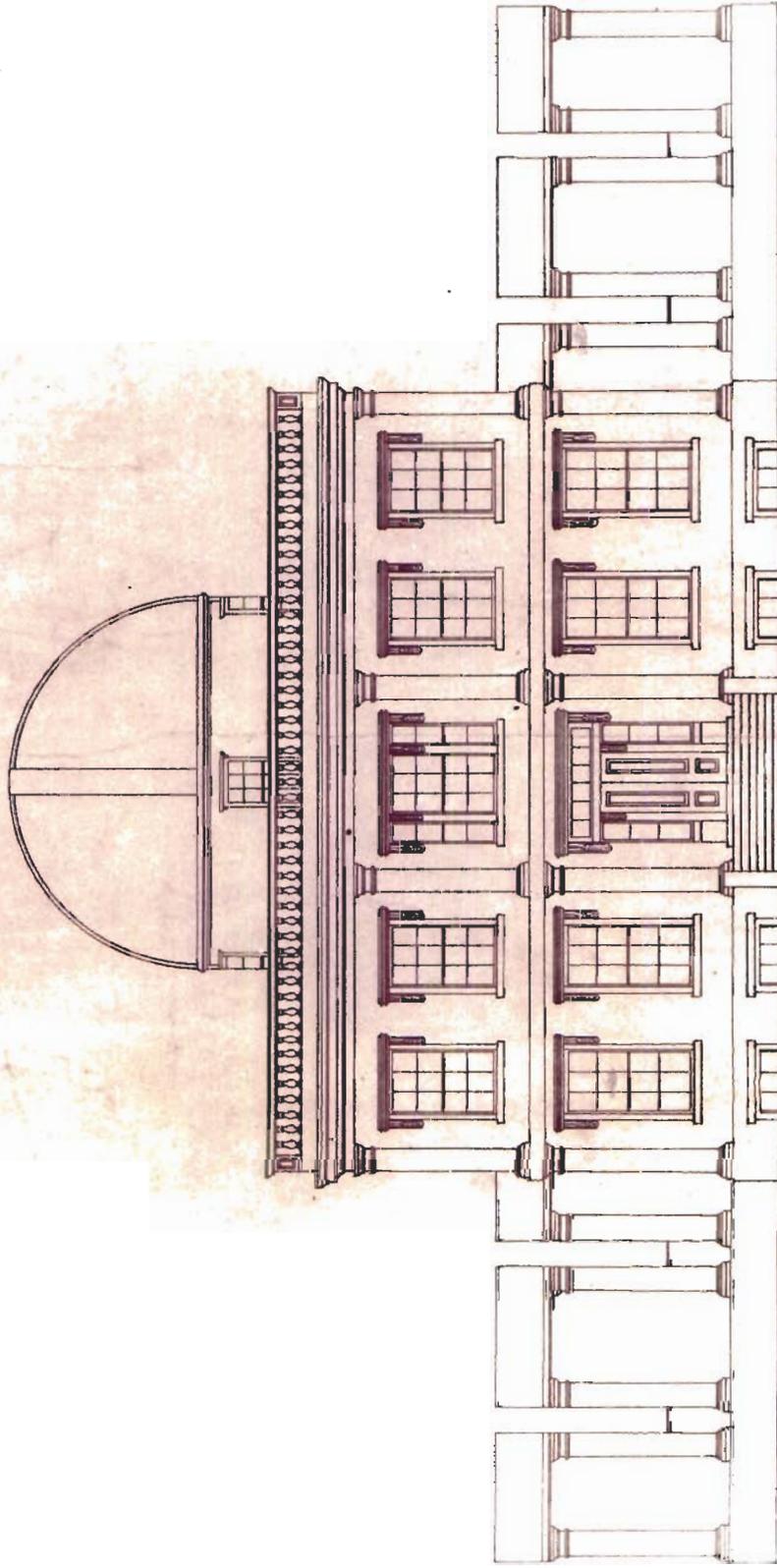
THE NAVY DEPARTMENT.

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THE NAVAL OBSERVATORY.

*Drawing 162.  
Sheet 11.*



*by W. H. P. 8  
Jan 8, 1842*

*Elevation of front of the  
for Camp Hill Washington D.C.  
designed by W. H. P. 8 1842*

MAP  
of the  
**U.S. NAVAL-OBSERVATORY  
GROUNDS**

at  
**Washington D.C.**

Scale 1" = 200'

**Explanation of Buildings**

- 1. Superintendent's Bldg. 2. Clock Room. 3. Transit & Merid. Circle.
- 4. Main Bldg. above Equatorial Telescope. 5. Library. 6. Clock R.
- 7. West Transit Circle & Passage. 8. Prime Vertical & Hour Circle.
- 9. Professor's Office. 10. Great Equatorial Telescope. 11. Five-  
proof Bldg. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. Frame Houses (Meridian Station)
- 18. Photographic R. 19. T. Transmitter R. 20. Magnet. Office
- 21. Pavil. 22. Horse Stable 23. Coal & Wood Shed.
- 24. Privy. 25. Cattle Stable 26. Barren Shed.
- 27. Gardeners Tool H. 28. Day Barn.
- 29. Equatorial T. H. - a. Gas Laps.
- b. W. Flugs. c. Caters.

Survey, Levels & Drawing

Wm. Beaman CE

