



**Government of the District of Columbia  
ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 3/4G**

CHEVY CHASE, BARNABY WOODS, HAWTHORNE

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**ANC 3/4G Resolution Supporting  
Adding the Name of Captain George Pointer to  
Lafayette Park and Lafayette Recreation Center**

1. The purpose of this resolution is to request that the D.C. Council enact legislation to add the name of Captain George Pointer to Lafayette Park and Lafayette Recreation Center so that they will be named “Lafayette-Pointer Park” and “Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Center.” These names will acknowledge the history and dispossession of the black community on Broad Branch Road, NW.
2. Recent scholarship has brought to light the history of the community of free black residents who lived on Broad Branch Road, NW from at least the 1830s until 1928, when their homes (comprising a total of approximately six acres) were taken by eminent domain to build Lafayette Elementary School and Lafayette Park. One of the affected families, the Moten/Harris family, was directly descended from Captain George Pointer.
3. Much is known about Captain George Pointer from his 11-page petition, dated September 5, 1829, to the Board of Directors of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company, in which he recounts his own history of being born enslaved in 1773 on a plantation near Rockville, his purchase of his own freedom at age 19, and his 40-plus-year employment, including as Supervising Engineer, by George Washington’s Patowmack Company. In March 2019, the National Park Service erected signage at its Great Falls Virginia Visitor Center to acknowledge Captain Pointer’s history, including a depiction of his 1829 letter. The signage states:

Who was George Pointer? Captain George Pointer is directly quoted in this audio exhibit, unlike the other characterizations displayed here. He was one of the first enslaved laborers rented to

the Patowmack Company at age 13. He purchased his freedom at age 19, and continued to work on the canals for 40 years. He was mostly self-educated, and was the last superintendent of the Patowmack Company before its charter was transferred to the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal.

Great Falls Park staff is currently working with seventh generation descendants of George Pointer to reconcile this untold story. Ask a ranger to learn more about this ongoing project.

4. The history of Captain George Pointer's granddaughter, Mary Harris and her settlement with her family on Broad Branch Road in the 1840s was retold in considerable scholarly detail by Barbara Boyle Torrey and Clara Myrick Green, "Free Black People of Washington County: George Pointer and His Descendants," *Washington History* (Spring 2016). Torrey and Green explain the history of the Pointer descendants and their lives on Broad Branch Road, including their service in the Union Army during the Civil War, their education (including at the Reno School), and their struggles as African-Americans in the face of broad, daily-enforced racial strictures. All of that ended in 1928, however, with the forced evacuation and destruction of their small community, resulting from the same legislation that authorized the taking of homes in the nearby (and much larger) black community of Reno City, to build Alice Deal Junior High. The homes and property of the black residents comprised approximately six acres out of the 12-1/2 acre total footprint that is now Lafayette Elementary School and Park.
5. Considerable additional research and scholarship about the Broad Branch Road black community was also recently published by historian David S. Rotenstein, in his report "The River Road Moses Cemetery: A Historic Preservation Evaluation," September 2018 (see especially pp. 30-35), available at the Historic Chevy Chase D.C. website.
6. Seventh-generation Pointer descendant James Fisher and his partner, Tanya Hardy, are committed to educating the public about their ancestor and the Broad Branch Road community. They have worked with the National Park Service on the Great Falls Virginia exhibit, as well as with Historic Chevy Chase D.C., to support this resolution and its underlying grassroots education campaign. They also organized (with historical assistance by Torrey and Green) more than 50 Pointer descendants to come together at Lafayette Park in August 2015 for an extended "family reunion."
7. The D.C. Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) is currently planning to renovate the Lafayette Recreation Center. This presents a very timely opportunity to ensure that future users of the park and recreation center can appreciate its full history.

8. To more substantially acknowledge the history and dispossession of the Broad Branch Road black community, it has been proposed that ANC 3/4G consider and recommend to the D.C. Council that Captain George Pointer's name be added to the park and recreation center, so that the new names would be **“Lafayette-Pointer Park”** and **“Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Center.”** It has been submitted that this combination would both honor the long-established presence of "Lafayette Park" in the minds and memories of the community, while at the same time acknowledging the contribution and history of the displaced black community on Broad Branch Road, N.W.
9. Historic Chevy Chase D.C. led a three-month grassroots education campaign and a petition drive in support of this resolution, and has submitted to ANC 3/4G 550 handwritten petition signatures of residents of Chevy Chase, D.C. In addition, letters supporting the new name have been submitted by the Friends of Lafayette Park and by the Chevy Chase Citizens Association.
10. Based on the foregoing, ANC 3/4G urges the D.C. Council to enact legislation to add the name of Captain George Pointer to Lafayette Park and Lafayette Recreation Center so that they will be named **“Lafayette-Pointer Park”** and **“Lafayette-Pointer Recreation Center,”** in order to acknowledge the history and dispossession of the black community on Broad Branch Road, NW. The Council should also consider appropriating funds for signage in the Park that explains the history and background of the former residents, and no funds currently appropriated for the Lafayette Recreation Center modernization or stormwater controls should be used for this signage.

Approved by ANC 3/4G after a discussion at its regularly scheduled and noticed July 8, 2019 meeting by a vote of 4 to 0 (a quorum being 4).

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Randy Speck, Chair

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Abe Clayman, Secretary

cc: Councilmember Brandon Todd  
Councilmember Mary Cheh