

A History of AOI's Locations Throughout Its History

(Compiled from various sources)

Since it was founded on December 7, 1865 at the old District of Columbia City Hall -- now the Court of Appeals -- the Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia has struggled to find a permanent home.



Figure 1 Old DC City Hall now the Court of Appeals (from HABS).

Between 1865 and 1908, the meeting minutes over the years cite several locations where the organization met, including: Analostan Island (aka. Mason's Island, now Roosevelt Island) the home of AOI Vice-President W.A. Bradley (Oct. 1866), the George Town Market Hall, the Thomas Burns' House in 1880, at member Nicholas Callan's house at 1418 P Street, NW and later in the Corcoran Building; but, it wasn't until 1909 when they took under their wings the remaining few members of the Veteran Volunteer Fireman's Association -- as their numbers dwindled below the threshold to be incorporated in the District -- that the official address became the Old Union Fire House at 19th & H Streets, NW.

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Figure 2 AOI members at Thomas Burns' house in 1880.

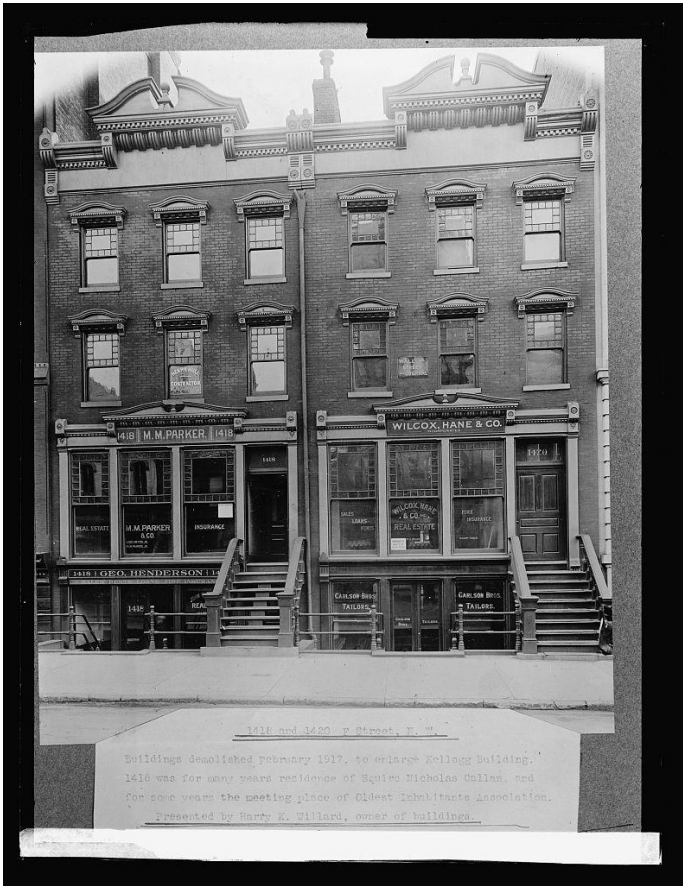


Figure 3 Nicholas Callan's house at 1418 P Street (far left) served as AOI's headquarters in the late 1800's.

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Figure 4 For a period in the early 1900's, the organization met in offices at the Corcoran Building at 15th & NY Avenue, NW.



Figure 5 The old Union Fire House served as AOI's headquarters from 1909 until the property was sold to the World Bank and International Money Fund in 1955.

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Figure 6 The Officers and members of the AOI at the Union Fire House about two years after they joined with the VVFF whose members are also present in this photo.



Figure 7 From c. 1956 until 2001 when the Historical Society of DC relocated to the Carnegie Library, the Christian Heurich House served as AOI headquarters.

A congressional bill in the late 1950's would grant the AOI title to the old Eng. 5 Fire House on M Street in Georgetown for one-half the appraised value, then about \$26,000. Certain riders required any improvements and contents would revert to the D.C. government if the organization folded. Those conditions were not acceptable to the organization's leadership.

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Figure 8 By Congressional legislation, the AOI was "offered" the old No. 5 Engine House on M Street just west of Wisconsin Avenue if the AOI met certain conditions.



Figure 9 The organization commissioned an architectural rendering of a "new" headquarters/club house in the early 1960's. It is unclear where this was to be located but thought to be somewhere in Georgetown. The rendering hangs in the Peabody Room of the Georgetown Branch Public Library.



Figure 10 When "negotiations" appeared to not be going well for the Georgetown Fire House location, other venues were considered including this building on 16th & S Street, NW.

After years of appeals to congressional sponsors to modify the restrictions placed on the AOI in the original legislation, the amendments were never introduced and the AOI leadership determined that the costs to bring the old M Street Fire House up to code, after being a sanitation depot for decades, was not in AOI's best interests and the rights to the building were forfeited in a letter to the city's first elected Mayor, Walter Washington.

The "dream" of having its own club house/headquarters never came to fruition. After the Historical Society relocated to the Carnegie Library building, the official mailing address of the organization became then-President William N. Brown's residence in Foxhall Village until 2022.



Figure 11 William Brown's house in Foxhall Village.

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In March of 2022 following its near decline from the Covid-19 pandemic, the Association completed some "housekeeping" and cleaning-up of its corporate records and official D.C. government filings and, interestingly, returned their official address back to the Heurich House Museum at 1307 New Hampshire Avenue which as of 2022 serves as the organization's "official" business address (though memberships, mailings, invoicing, donations, etc., are handled via the addresses of the various officers initiating the communications).



Figure 12 This sketch of the Heurich House adorned the AOI newsletters for two decades.

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Compiled by Past-President William N. Brown, March 27, 2022