

**The Centennial of the Last Trees Planted on 16<sup>th</sup> Street  
in Honor of the District's War Dead**

Sunday, February 6, 2022 marks the centennial of the planting of the final Norway Maples along 16<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W. to complete the District of Columbia 16<sup>th</sup> Street Tree Memorial. The 2-mile stretch of 16<sup>th</sup> Street from Varnum Street to Alaska Avenue was lined with maples and individual, commemorative bronze markers mounted on cement plinths. The memorial has been variously referred to as the 16<sup>th</sup> Street World War I Tree Memorial and the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Tree War Memorial. The less specific version is probably more appropriate as reference at the time to the conflict usually referred to it as "The Great War." There was no thought at the time there would be a second world-wide conflict that would result in the two wars being assigned their numerical titles.

Over the ensuing years, street-widening projects along 16<sup>th</sup> Street were carried out without regard to the memorials and today the remains of only three are barely visible in their original locations near 16<sup>th</sup> and Montague Street, 16<sup>th</sup> & Underwood and a sole completely intact memorial is located in the office of the D.C. Council Chair.

The design work is completed for the signage honoring the 16th Street DC World War Memorial and was to be dedicated on the centennial anniversary of the last trees planted on February 6, 1922. However, the sign company is still working on the fabrication of the sign to be placed on the site at 16th Street and Alaska Avenue, NW. We plan an official unveiling of this signage when it is completed and will advise the AOI membership and guests when that time is near.

The membership of the AOI sponsored the project by providing the majority of the funding and project oversight with the additional financial support of the District of Columbia State Regent of the Daughters of the American Revolution.



Memorial trees on Sixteenth Street planted in honor of the men of the District of Columbia who gave their lives during the World War.

**Figure 1** This photo appeared in the Feb. 1923 issue of "American Forests" magazine.



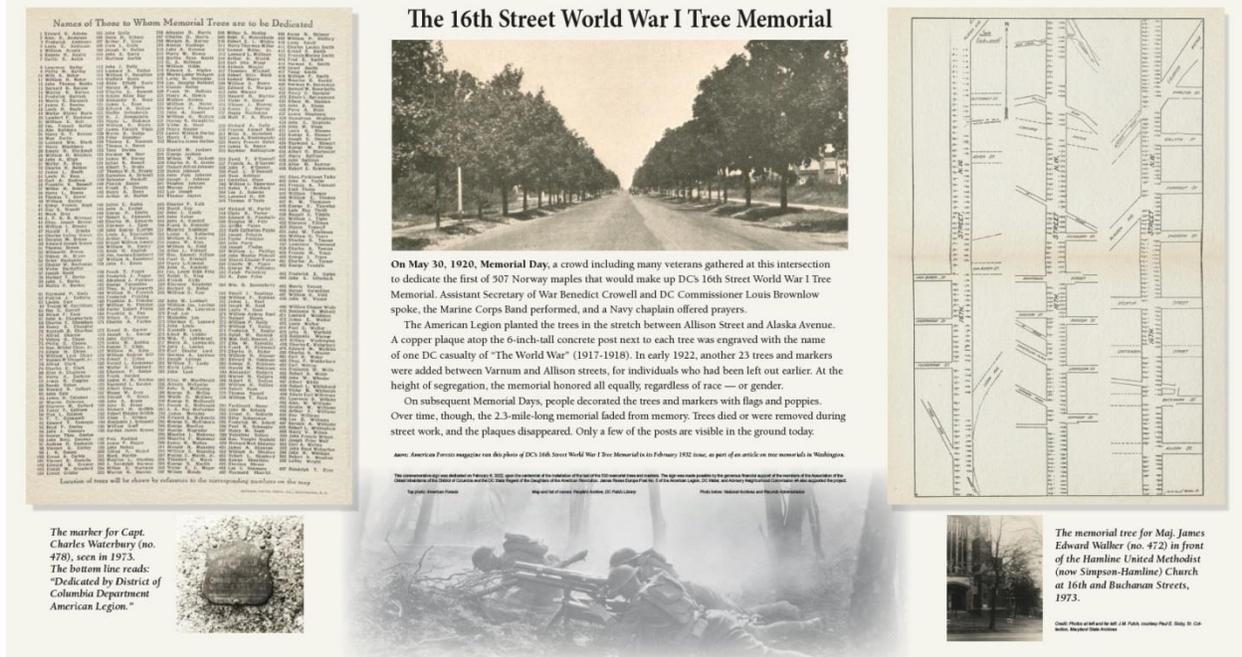
**Figure 2** This is one of only three known remaining memorials at 16th & Underwood Street, NW, believed to be that of Clarence M. Collard, No. 88 on the listing and map.



Figure 3 This is the only remaining intact memorial safely maintained in the DC Council Chair's office.



Figure 4 This is a mock-up of the commemorative signage on DC Water's property at 16th & Alaska Avenue., NW



**Figure 5 This is how the commemorative panel will appear when completed. The text is detailed below.**

The text reads: “On May 30, 1920, Memorial Day, a crowd including many veterans gathered at this intersection to dedicate the first of 507 Norway maples that would make up DC’s 16th Street World War I Tree Memorial. Assistant Secretary of War Benedict Crowell and DC Commissioner Louis Brownlow spoke, the Marine Corps Band performed, and a Navy chaplain offered prayers.

“The American Legion planted the trees in the stretch between Allison Street and Alaska Avenue. A copper plaque atop the 6-inch-tall concrete post next to each tree was engraved with the name of one DC casualty of “The World War” (1917-1918). In early 1922, another 23 trees and markers were added between Varnum and Allison streets, for individuals who had been left out earlier. At the height of segregation, the memorial honored all equally, regardless of race — or gender.

“On subsequent Memorial Days, people decorated the trees and markers with flags and poppies. Over time, though, the 2.3-mile-long memorial faded from memory. Trees died or were removed during street work, and the plaques disappeared. Only a few of the posts are visible in the ground today.”

The left caption reads: “The marker for Capt. Charles Waterbury (no. 478), seen in 1973.”

The bottom line reads: “Dedicated by District of Columbia Department American Legion.”

The right caption reads: “The memorial tree for Maj. James Edward Walker (no. 472) in front of the Hamline United Methodist (now Simpson-Hamline) Church at 16th and

Buchanan Streets, 1973. Credit: Photos at left and far left: J.M. Futch, courtesy Paul E. Sluby, Sr. Collection, Maryland State Archives.”

The bottom caption reads: “This commemorative sign was dedicated on February 6, 2022, upon the centennial of the installation of the last of the 530 memorial trees and markers. The sign was made possible by the generous financial support of the members of the Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia and the DC State Regent of the Daughters of the American Revolution. James Reese Europe Post No. 5 of the American Legion, DC Water, and Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4A also supported the project.”

Top photo: “American Forests Map and list of names: People’s Archive, DC Public Library  
Photo below: National Archives and Records Administration”