

ORANGE BRICK IN WARM SUN is a unique study of the 1959-1961 Washington, D.C. hangouts of Jim Morrison, the late lyricist-vocalist of the rock and roll band "The Doors" who died in 1971 at the age of 27.

Orange Brick in Warm Sun

By Mark Opsasnick

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orange
BRICK
in warm
sun

Jim Morrison in DC

Mark Opsashnick

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BOOKS BY MARK OPSASNICK

CAPITOL ROCK

1996

WASHINGTON ROCK AND ROLL

1998

MISCELLANEOUS AND UNKNOWN

2000

THE CULTURAL BADLANDS TOUR Y2K

2001

THE MARYLAND BIGFOOT DIGEST

2004

THE LIZARD KING WAS HERE

2006

THE REAL STORY BEHIND THE EXORCIST

2007

ROCK THE POTOMAC

2019

ORANGE BRICK IN WARM SUN

2023

CONTENTS

Author's Notes	ix
Introduction	1
Part One: The Life and Death of Jim Morrison	5
Part Two: The Land of Mojo Risin'	15
Part Three: Walks in D.C.	25
Part Four: Keep On Risin'	65
Addendum: Jim Morrison of The Doors: His Teen Years in the Washington Metropolitan Area By Mark Opsasnick	67
An Interview With the Author: Mark Opsasnick Interviewed By Bethany Gresser	85
Acknowledgments	93

INTRODUCTION

Jim Morrison rates as one of the greatest lyricist-vocalists in rock and roll history. As lead singer of the Doors from 1965 to 1971, he altered the course of popular music in the way he meshed together elements of poetry and theater with spontaneous creative expression and traditional vocal performance. In a song he wrote and sang entitled “Not to Touch the Earth” (from the Doors’ third album, “Waiting for the Sun”) he proclaimed himself to be “The Lizard King” and maintained, “I can do anything.” However, Morrison died in his 20s at the dawn of the 1970s, just as rock and roll music was moving in a more progressive direction beyond the eras of Bill Haley, Elvis Presley and the Beatles.

In recent years, the music of the Doors, a quartet that emerged from the 1960s Los Angeles, California music scene and became one of the greatest American rock and roll bands of all-time, has maintained its popularity. Unfortunately, much of the recently published biographical information on front man Jim Morrison’s life and death includes questionable material laced with unfounded rumors and outlandish stories that serve no purpose other than to inject controversy into his personal endeavors and untimely demise.

Morrison, like every deceased rock and roll icon, must attempt to rest in peace while observing from beyond the grave a mix of accolades from appreciative fans and fabrications leveled upon his terminally restless spirit by hack writers of dubious nature. He is an easy target for those who wish to disparage his life and death, as he cannot defend himself. He is gone for good, and while many still enjoy the poetry he created and the music he was a part of with the Doors, others

maliciously assassinate his character and relentlessly paint sinister portraits of the final days of his mercurial life.

To date there have been innumerable biographies written about Jim Morrison and/or the Doors. The vast majority of these works have failed to provide detailed information on his high school years, one of the lone exceptions being this author's 2006 book "The Lizard King Was Here: The Life and Times of Jim Morrison in Alexandria, Virginia" (a revised edition of this volume was issued in 2022). Morrison, as a member of a military family, moved about the United States frequently as a youth and spent a portion of his teen years living in Alexandria, Virginia where he attended George Washington High School from January 1959 to June 1961. This formative period of his existence has been overlooked by just about all who have attempted to chronicle his fascinating life.

While living in his house upon the hill in Alexandria, Virginia, Morrison frequently ventured into Washington, D.C. and explored the city and its art galleries, book shops, libraries, movie theaters and night spots. On select Saturday and Sunday mornings, he would take a bus that traveled from his upper-middle-class neighborhood across the Potomac River and emptied at 12th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW in the heart of the nation's capital. He would then strike off on foot and spend hours canvassing the city, absorbing what he saw and heard while seeking special destinations from which he garnered inspiration to create a unique identity as a multidisciplinary artist.

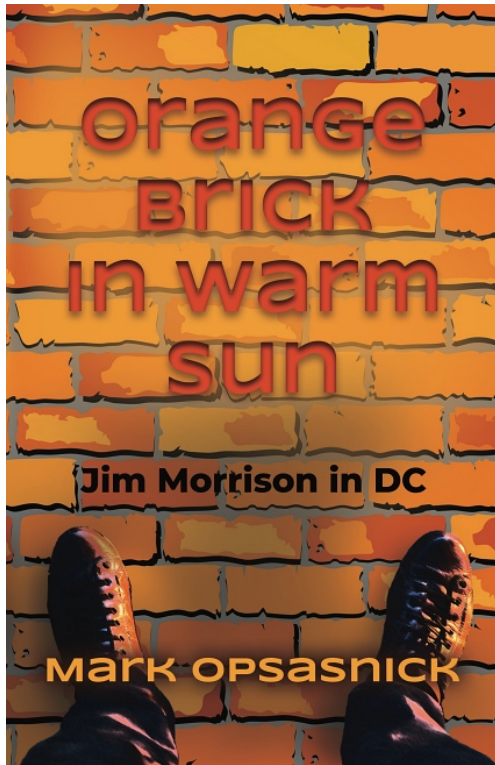
Sometime in the late 1960s, a few years before his untimely departure, Jim Morrison crafted a poem entitled "As I Look Back." In this work, he vividly brings to life fleeting memories of his walks in Washington, D.C., recalling "Negro streets," "The

Orange Brick in Warm Sun

library & book stores” and “The books & poets magic.” He also includes the passage “Orange brick in warm sun” – a line described by several of his high school friends as a colorful nod to the uniquely designed sidewalks that led to his three favorite Georgetown book shops. This offering is the one and only time he wrote about his experiences in the city and can be taken as evidence that these personal adventures and explorations helped inspire his creative ideas and endeavors.

This examination of the teenaged Jim Morrison’s Washington, D.C. places of interest serves as more than just a symbolic pilgrimage to his local temples of intrigue. It functions as a spiritual quest for insight and understanding into what directed him towards his role as frontman for one of the greatest rock and roll bands of all time, the Doors. Gazing on the sites of his old hangouts, we may recall a time when Morrison, with D.C. destinations in mind, valiantly plunged through warm sun in a personal quest for creative inspiration, meaning and truth. Jim Morrison was a talented filmmaker, lyricist, poet and rock and roll singer with undeniably strong creative roots in the nation’s capital.

MARK OPSASNICK
Greenbelt, Maryland
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