

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of PropertyHistoric name: Edwin Bancroft and Mary Ellen Henderson HouseOther names/site number: DHR File Number 110-0221

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. LocationStreet & number: 307 South Maple AvenueCity or town: Falls Church State: VA County: Independent CityNot For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this x nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

x national statewide x local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

x A x B C D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:

☒

Public – Local

☐

Public – State

☐

Public – Federal

☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)

☒

District

☐

Site

☐

Structure

☐

Object

☐

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: Single dwelling

SOCIAL: Civic

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: Single dwelling

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS:
Bungalow/Craftsman bungalow

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: CONCRETE; WOOD; METAL: Aluminum;
ASPHALT

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

In 1913, Edwin Bancroft and Mary Ellen Henderson built a one-and-a-half-story frame Sears Craftsman bungalow in then-rural Falls Church, Virginia. The kit house survives on .2 acres and is model number 225, a design that dates to 1911. The house's front elevation is symmetrical with a side-gabled shingled roof. The house is covered in brown and tan vinyl siding and formstone. A covered porch spans the entire façade of the house, and wood rails and pickets enclose it. Two double-hung windows flank each side of the front door, and three double-hung windows are on the half-story of the façade. Unique to South Maple Avenue, the house is located in suburban Falls Church's central business district, in an area witnessing new development. Two blocks west of the house are new six-story commercial and residential mixed-use buildings dating from 2006.¹ Several two-story brick quadplexes are located directly across from the Henderson house, dating from 1941.² On the house's east side, a narrow parking lot provides a buffer between the house and a six-story commercial building, constructed circa 1970. The Henderson house sits on a deep and narrow lot with a large front setback, one block north of U.S. Route 29/Lee Highway. Several large trees shade the Henderson property, and the perimeter of the lot is fenced.

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Narrative Description

The Henderson Craftsman bungalow has an integrated roof-covered front porch that spans the front of the house and a side-gabled carport on its west elevation. Its foundation is constructed of concrete blocks; the structure of the house is wood frame. Vinyl siding covers the side elevations and part of the rear elevation while the front elevation and rear elevation are veneered with an ashlar-patterned brown and tan colored formstone. The half story containing the private quarters of the residence is sheltered under shed dormers on the front and rear of the house. The front shed dormer is recessed; early photos of the house show a false balcony attached to the front dormer. The rear of the dwelling abuts an alley and parking area of a commercial building that faces South Washington Street/Lee Highway.

The front elevation of the house is symmetrical. There are two sets of steps that access the porch. The main set of steps is at the center of the porch and aligns with the front entrance of the house. They are constructed of concrete. The porch is open on its west side with a second set of wood stairs and a white wood balustrade leading to the carport. Three square, wood columns are clustered on both the northeast and northwest corners of the porch; they rest on pedestals. The original material is covered with an ashlar-patterned formstone. Paired wood columns on pedestals flank the front entrance to the porch. Wood rails with pickets enclose the porch on its east side and continue around the front with a center opening that aligns with the entrance to the residence. Tall trees and shrubs provide privacy to the porch. The front door is in the center of the house, flanked by two sets of replaced vinyl double-hung windows. The porch has a vinyl soffit and pressed wooden fascia, the same fascia on the front elevation of the house and on the half-story. The front porch has a bead-board ceiling, likely original to the house.

The side elevations are clad in beige vinyl siding and have double-hung windows. The west elevation has seven double-hung windows, and the east elevation has nine. The rear elevation is clad in vinyl siding and pressed wood and has five double-hung windows and three gliding windows slide horizontally. Each side of the half-story has one sliding window and a stationary window. The rake at each gable end is extended and supported by wood brackets, which appear to be original to the house.

A carport extends from the west elevation. It is supported by five wood columns that rest on pedestals similar to those on the front porch. The roof on the carport and the rest of the house is covered with dark, asphalt shingles.

The floor plan of the house largely remains unchanged except for the enclosure of a rear porch on the south side of the house. The enclosure increased living space and added a bathroom. Also, the kitchen has been modernized, eliminating a potbelly stove and chimney, which have been removed and enclosed, respectively. The house has replacement windows that are of the same size as the original windows, with the exception of the three double-

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hung windows on the front half-story that replaced a door and two windows on the false balcony. The sashes of the replacement windows have a single light.

Like most Craftsman bungalows, the house's expansive front porch adds living space. The front door opens directly into the living area with a brick hearth on the eastern wall. French doors divide the living space from the dining area. The enclosed rear porch and first-floor bathroom are accessible from the dining area. A door on the western side of the dining room opens to the kitchen. The living room and dining room floors are stained hardwood. The treads and risers of the stairs leading to the half-story are also a stained hardwood. The kitchen floor is covered with linoleum. Interior walls are finished with plaster, and the ceilings are about nine feet high. The half-story has carpeting over the wood floors. Ceilings in the half-story are about eight feet high.

Preservation Value of Sears Kit Houses

While noteworthy individuals resided at this house, the architecture and structure of the house bear mentioning. After the end of World War I, the United States experienced explosive population growth and faced a growing housing shortage. Sears, Roebuck and Company recognized this market potential and manufactured modern houses that "reflected tradition and taste rather than making an architectural statement."³ Sears, Roebuck and Company targeted rural markets through advertising clothing and houses in catalogues. Kit houses from these catalogues were shipped by railroad to thousands of houses in the Northeast and Midwest. Between 1908 and 1940, Sears, Roebuck and Company sold houses to 70,000-100,000 clients.⁴ The kit houses came in a wide variety of styles, and purchasers could even tailor certain details of the houses, personalizing them with unique features.⁵ While different sources differ on how many houses Sears sold, one expert estimates that approximately ninety percent of the 75,000 Sears houses sold still stand today.⁶ These kit houses came in many styles and could be tailored to the tastes of the buyer. In the 1920s-1930s, several hundred Sears homes were constructed in Washington, D.C., suburbs.⁷

House Relocation

Lee Highway was constructed in 1922, and it was one of the largest highway projects constructed before the Interstate Highway System.⁸ The highway split the Henderson property in half: the family's barn was on the south side of Lee Highway, while the house and chicken coop were on the north side of Lee Highway, where the house currently sits. According to the Henderson family now living in the house, the house was moved back approximately fifty feet south from the original construction site on the same parcel around 1950. Furthermore, minor modernizations to the house, such as the addition of a carport and the enclosure of a rear porch, have not affected its overall integrity.

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¹ Falls Church, Virginia, Mapping Site. <http://property.fallschurchva.gov/Search.aspx> Web. 18 Nov 2010.

² Ibid.

³ Cooke, Amanda, and Avi Freedman. "Ahead of Their Time." *Journal of Design History* 14.1 (2001): 53-70. *JSTOR*. <http://http://jdh.oxfordjournals.org.ezproxy.lib.vt.edu:8080/content/14/1/53.full.pdf> Web. 21 Oct. 2010.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Moreno, Sylvia. "Priced to Move." *The Washington Post*. 21 Oct. 2007. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/10/20/AR2007102001171.html> Web. 28 Oct. 2010.

⁷ Gearan, Ann. "If Wishes Were Houses, Sears Made Them Come True." *The Los Angeles Times*. 15 Aug. 1993. http://articles.latimes.com/1993-08-15/news/mn-24072_1_sears-houses Web. 29 Oct. 2010.

⁸ Johnson II, William. "My Grandfather's Lee Highway." *The Fare Facts Gazette*. 6.1 (Winter 2008). <http://www.historicfairfax.org/HFCI61.pdf> Web. 11 Oct. 2010.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☒ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☒ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☒ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: Black

SOCIAL HISTORY

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

EDUCATION

Period of Significance

1913-1965

Significant Dates

1913

1915

1965

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Henderson, Edwin Bancroft

Henderson, Mary Ellen

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Sears, Roebuck and Company, architect

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Edwin Bancroft Henderson ("E.B.") and his wife, Mary Ellen Meriwether Henderson, were leading figures in Falls Church, Virginia, history who dedicated their lives to civil rights advocacy. Mr. Henderson was a man of many firsts, including being the nation's first certified African-American male physical education instructor and the initiator and founding member of the Colored Citizen's Protective League (C.C.P.L.), an organization that evolved into the first rural branch in the United States of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P.) in 1915. A tireless advocate for equality, E.B. wrote over 3,000 letters to newspaper editors on civil rights issues and held leadership roles with the N.A.A.C.P. throughout his life. His wife, Mary Ellen, a teacher and principal in segregated Falls Church schools, was instrumental in improving schools for African-American youth. She introduced a disparity study comparing Virginia's segregated schools with white institutions, which influenced the construction of a new school facility in Falls Church. Furthermore, she was a member of a committee charged with oversight of school integration per the landmark Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education*.

From 1913 to 1965, E.B. and Mary Ellen resided at their Falls Church dwelling at 307 South Maple Avenue, a Sears, Roebuck and Company Craftsman bungalow, which today is one of the last standing houses in the area from the early 1900s. The Henderson House satisfies national significance under Criterion A in Social History and Ethnic Heritage: Black, for its role as a civic meetinghouse for E.B., Mary Ellen, and other advocates in the C.C.P.L. to strategize how to steer the local civil rights movement. Additionally, national and local significance is met under Criterion B in Education and Entertainment/Recreation for the Hendersons' advocacy for African-Americans through their teaching careers, civic leadership, and E.B.'s founding the nation's first black basketball league. Their civil rights advocacy was truly intertwined with their professions and encompassed their lifetimes. The period of significance begins in 1913 with the construction of the house by the Hendersons and ends in 1965, under Criteria Consideration G, when they relocated to Alabama. According to the Henderson family now living in the house, the house was moved back approximately fifty feet south from the original construction site on the same parcel around 1950. The move occurred during the period that E.B. and Mary Ellen Henderson occupied the dwelling and the building remained on its original parcel with the same orientation toward the road, thereby meeting Criteria Consideration B.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Edwin Bancroft Henderson's Early Years

A descendent of both free and enslaved African Americans, a white plantation owner, Algonquian Chief Mimetou and a Portuguese Confederate soldier, Edwin Bancroft Henderson

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was born in Washington, D.C., on November 24, 1883.¹ During his youth, he attended a segregated school in the same neighborhood as the United States Capitol, and was an avid reader, spending free time in the Library of Congress educating himself on history. He would often visit his grandmother in nearby Falls Church, Virginia, in the summertime, a community where he would later reside and influence greatly. After elementary school, Henderson attended M Street School, a prestigious school known for preparing “black America’s ‘talented tenth;’” where graduates often achieved college degrees from white colleges or historically black colleges and universities.² Henderson attended the segregated Miner Normal School #2, graduating first in his class in 1904, and receiving his teaching degree.³ As part of this “talented tenth,” higher education presented him and his black peers two choices, “teaching or preaching...only among blacks.”⁴

Initially, Henderson pursued a medical degree at Howard University. When the school ceased to offer evening classes, Henderson settled on the former – teaching – by default. After teaching for one year, at the suggestion of Anita Turner, the first African American female to obtain a physical education certification, he began attending the Dudley School of physical training at Harvard University. He attended three summers in 1904, 1905 and 1907, and earned a certification in physical education, or as it was called in that era, “physical training.”⁵ Through his education at Harvard, E.B. earned another accolade in his academic and early professional career in becoming the first African-American male certified to be a physical education teacher.⁶ In the early 1900s, universities did not offer degrees in physical education. A certificate in this field from an Ivy League institution, Harvard University, was a very prestigious accomplishment.⁷

E.B.’s Early Professional Career: Teaching and Basketball

At the turn of the twentieth century, Washington, D.C., citizens had few facilities and open spaces to utilize for recreation, and African-Americans suffered disproportionately. Washington sports leagues were segregated, and minority youth lacked access to athletic clubs and sporting equipment. After one summer term at Harvard, E.B. returned to Washington in 1906, establishing the Interscholastic Athletic Association (I.S.A.A.) with fellow teachers for the city’s segregated schools, bringing football and baseball leagues to black youth.⁸ Over time, the I.S.A.A. leaders agreed to broaden the club to include other sports and cobbled together funds to build a track at Howard University.⁹ In 1906, the association hosted Washington, D.C.’s first black track meet at Howard University, one of the nation’s prominent historically black universities.¹⁰

The following year, E.B. returned to Harvard for his final term, where he learned and mastered the game of basketball. James Naismith invented basketball over a decade earlier in 1891, and various amateur leagues played his game in the early 1900s.¹¹ Returning home and wanting to practice his new skills, E.B. and a friend attempted to play a game at a local Washington, D.C., Y.M.C.A., where the organization’s director rebuked the two men, banishing them from the “whites-only” establishment. E.B. reacted to this experience proactively and, in 1908, formed a

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basketball league for African-American students in the Washington region, akin to the establishment of the I.S.A.A. The "Basket Ball League" played its first games that same year.¹²

During the years between World War I and World War II, some black leaders advanced a novel philosophy on how to achieve racial equality, enabling blacks to stand on the same ground as their fellow white citizens.¹³ They believed that through athletic achievements, Jim Crow laws would be eliminated and social barriers overcome. A student at Howard University wrote in a 1924 school newspaper editorial that "the success of African-Americans in sport would provide powerful lessons in 'interracial education.'"¹⁴ Black college athletes, in addition to receiving higher education to gain respect in society, played their sports on teams of mixed races, earning symbolic respect. E.B. Henderson credited black college athletes playing at "'predominantly white colleges of the North' that they did 'much to soften racial prejudices' and to advance 'the cause of blacks everywhere.'"¹⁵ While excelling in athletics could mean earning respect in society through earning gold medals or scoring a winning touchdown, in terms of equality, integration of sports teams and leagues and "open competition" to any race, "remained an ideal central to civil rights activism."¹⁶

New York City and Washington, D.C., are credited for having established the earliest organized leagues, with Washington, D.C.'s interscholastic and intercollegiate leagues operating for decades. Bob Kuska wrote in *Hot Potato: How Washington and New York Gave Birth to Black Basketball and Changed America's Game Forever*, that E.B.'s creation, the ISAA, "had trained forty basketball teams and roughly a thousand players."¹⁷ Through this network of teams, E.B. created the infrastructure and association for players to join and build upon. He organized the Washington 12th Streeters team that played against teams along the East Coast and across the country, and as its captain led them to win the Colored Basketball World Championship in 1909-1910.¹⁸ The team's future was solidified when E.B. convinced Howard University to accept the 12th Streeters as its first varsity basketball team. Howard University accepted the offer, and the team won its second consecutive Colored Basketball World Championship. Given E.B.'s vast knowledge of the rules of the sport, he co-edited *The Official Spalding Handbook*, from 1910-1913.¹⁹

Mary Ellen Henderson's Early Years

Mary Ellen Henderson was a working mother who was a teacher and later principal of a segregated Falls Church school. Unlike her husband, most of her ancestors were free. She came from a highly educated family, her mother being one of the first African-American women to graduate from an American university.²⁰ Her father was a prominent black Washingtonian who sat on the Board of Trustees at Howard University.²¹ Following in her family's lead and also her husband's, Mary Ellen was studious, graduating third in her college class at Miner Normal School in 1905, where she met her husband.²²

Mary Ellen then taught in a Washington, D.C., segregated school until her marriage. She was what was called a "model teacher," an outstanding teacher selected to train her peers. She and

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her husband moved to Falls Church in 1910 because married women were not permitted to teach in the Washington, D.C., school system.²³ However, once she started her family, she had not planned to return to teaching. It was only after repeated requests from the community and school administrators for her to teach (the colored school had been closed due to lack of a teacher) that she returned to teaching.

E.B. and Mary Ellen: Building the Falls Church Home and Forming the C.C.P.L.

In 1913, the Hendersons built a Sears Craftsman bungalow kit house on acreage in Falls Church where they raised two sons, Edwin and James, who received advanced degrees and became a dentist and scientist, respectively.²⁴ E.B. and Mary Ellen were members of the black elite who worked and socialized with well-known and affluent African-American intellectuals and professionals.²⁵

After the period of Reconstruction in the 1870s, southern states enacted a battery of “Jim Crow” laws that segregated facilities and “stripped blacks of citizenship rights.”²⁶ In 1896, the Supreme Court’s ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* upheld the doctrine of “separate but equal,” giving credence to states’ decisions to segregate public facilities as long as the amenities were equal, which seldom was the case.²⁷ Sharecropping and mob lynchings increased, and the situation for black Americans in the South, home to ninety percent of all blacks in the early 1900s, was dire.²⁸ In 1905, Harvard-educated professor W.E.B. DuBois started a call to action in forming the Niagara Movement, a group that actively pursued a civil rights agenda.²⁹ This group countered the philosophy of one of the strongest civil rights leaders, Booker T. Washington, who advocated a more passive approach, supporting industrial education for blacks and acquiescence to southern states’ “home rule.”³⁰

The black citizens who comprised the “small and selective” Niagara Movement had modest means to finance its goal of securing racial equality, yet by 1909, this association expanded to include white citizens sympathetic to the civil rights cause.³¹ William English Walling, Charles Edward Russell, and Mary White Ovington joined forces with DuBois and his Niagara Movement associates, forming the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, which litigated cases that violated the 14th and 15th Amendments and “began its long-term strategy of undermining the legal foundations of the American race system by involving itself in court cases dealing with disenfranchisement and residential segregation.”^{32 33}

Falls Church, Virginia, was not immune from the effects of Jim Crow. In 1875, Falls Church incorporated as a town within Fairfax County.³⁴ During this time, racial tensions in the town grew, and many white residents wanted to cede territory with a significant black population to Fairfax County.³⁵ Upon moving to Falls Church in 1910, E.B. and his family faced a paradox: living in a town that afforded his wife the opportunity to teach, and Jim Crow laws that hindered their freedom.³⁶

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After work one day, E.B. was removed from a bus traveling from Washington, D.C., across the Potomac River into Virginia because he refused to sit in the rear of the bus in the designated Jim Crow seats.³⁷ Some Falls Church residents shared concern over the town's new trolley bringing in blacks from other communities, despite that one-fifth of the Falls Church population in the late nineteenth century was black.³⁸ Reacting to the economic, political, and social gains blacks made during Reconstruction, Virginia enacted many laws to quell their advancement.³⁹ After Virginia passed a law permitting residential segregation ordinances in 1912, the Falls Church Town Council started the process of enacting its own segregation ordinance in 1915 that would move 113 black families into their own district.^{40 41} In January 1915, E.B., Joseph Tinner and other residents assembled to form the Colored Citizens' Protective League (C.C.P.L.) to combat the measure, an undertaking that spanned two years. Through his leadership in the C.C.P.L., E.B. began his grassroots civil rights advocacy in Northern Virginia.

In the C.C.P.L., E.B. held the position of secretary, while Joseph Tinner was the president of the group.⁴² On January 8, 1915, the C.C.P.L. called a meeting at E. B. and Mary Ellen's home. This was the second meeting, the first having taken place at the home of Tinner. The second meeting was devoted to formulating how the group would combat the proposed residential segregation ordinance, deciding to undergo a letter writing campaign. Handwritten minutes of the first C.C.P.L. meeting remain in family archives (Appendix A). This noteworthy event makes the house eligible for National Register Criterion A, as these meetings helped to lay the groundwork for fighting the proposed ordinance.

By May, the town council announced that the proposed ordinance would go to the voters as a referendum, where only white voters could legally vote in this era. As E.B. and other C.C.P.L. members' protest letters to the mayor and council members went largely ignored, the Washington, D.C., N.A.A.C.P. chapter filed a lawsuit against the measure, and attorneys James E. Cobb and George E.C. Hayes represented the case. A similar lawsuit, *Buchanan v. Warley*, was pending in the U.S. Supreme Court. Anticipating the ruling from the higher court, the Fairfax County Circuit Court judge decided to delay the case and wait for the Supreme Court ruling. Undeterred, the Falls Church Council ignored the judicial system and moved forward with its ordinance, proposing five percent of the land for its African-American residents, which comprised about thirty-five percent of the population.⁴³ The land that the Tinner and Henderson families lived on was not included in the land proposed for African-American residents. No exception was made for black landowners, and these families would have been forced to sell their land to whites and relocate.⁴⁴ The town never proceeded further with the ordinance because in 1917, the Supreme Court ruled in *Buchanan v. Warley* that residential segregation ordinances violated the 14th Amendment, nullifying the Falls Church ordinance and similar ones.⁴⁵

In 1915, E.B. petitioned W.E.B. DuBois, one of the founders of the N.A.A.C.P., to incorporate the C.C.P.L. as the first rural branch of this urban civil rights organization. Considering the volatility in Falls Church and fearing for the safety of rural members during the ordinance dispute, DuBois was reluctant to agree to the charter. The group was given permission to operate as a standing committee of the N.A.A.C.P. After Falls Church dropped its pursuit of

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the ordinance and after the *Buchanan v. Warley* ruling, E.B. contacted the N.A.A.C.P. to request a charter with the group for a second time. The N.A.A.C.P. responded in a May 20, 1918, letter (Appendix B) stating that, “with an organization such as the National Association has become there could be great service rendered to you if you were a branch of the great national movement instead of a purely local organization.” This letter also explained that E.B. would receive the materials for applying for an official charter. E.B. and his C.C.P.L. associates followed through with the process, and in 1918, the C.C.P.L. became the N.A.A.C.P.’s first rural branch.⁴⁶ Under the helm of Thurgood Marshall, the N.A.A.C.P. Legal Fund successfully litigated other “racially restrictive real estate covenants,” in *Shelley v Kraemer* and *Hurd v. Hodge*, both in 1948, striking down the same type of measure the C.C.P.L. helped to dismantle.⁴⁷

E.B.: Author and Op-Ed Writer

While living in Falls Church, E.B. used letters to newspaper editors as a way to draw attention to racial injustice and advocate for equality. E.B. wrote over three thousand op-ed letters to *The Washington Post*, *The Baltimore Sun*, the now-defunct *Washington Star*, and other newspapers, covering broader civil rights topics, from highlighting the miserable conditions of segregated schools to clarifying N.A.A.C.P. positions.^{48 49} While many readers responded to his writings positively and thanked him for his contributions, E.B. also heard backlash from others. In the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan threatened his life, vividly describing how he would be “gagged, stripped and given thirty lashes.” In response to his writings, he also received countless phone calls, a mix of positive and negative feedback.⁵⁰ Howard University has documented many of these op-ed letters in its Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, one of the largest repositories of African-American literature in the world.⁵¹ Even after E.B. and Mary Ellen relocated to Alabama in 1965, his prolific letter writing continued, and he reached a new audience of readers in the South, sending letters to *The Birmingham News* and *The Atlanta Constitution*.⁵²

E.B. became the head of the Department of Physical Education in Washington, D.C.’s segregated schools in 1925. He furthered his education, received an advanced degree from Columbia University, studied at Howard University and received a specialization in athletic training from a chiropractic college.⁵³ He began to incorporate his career into journalism, and wrote that members of the African- American community could gain respect through athletic prowess. In 1939, he published a book, *The Negro in Sports*, which promoted “interscholastic, intercollegiate and national sports” and detailed how African-Americans endured hardships to participate in sports. He later updated this volume by contributing to the 1979 edition of *The Black Athlete: Emergence and Arrival*, with editors of *Sport* magazine. This volume included

an introduction written by Jackie Robinson and documented numerous African-American athletes’ careers and victories in their respective sports.⁵⁴

N.A.A.C.P., Philanthropies and the Hendersons Helping Schools

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In the early twentieth century, Southern black children's educational options were "poor or non-existent," and black children suffered the consequences of "separate but equal" education.⁵⁵ Black students in the South had to travel long distances to be educated in "primitive facilities," teacher pay was low, and if textbooks existed, they were typically outdated.^{56 57} Facing hostility from many white southerners who attempted to stop any of their chances at a quality education, Southern blacks found allies in many northern philanthropic charities and in the N.A.A.C.P. Charities such as the Rosenwald Fund, Jeanes Fund and Slater Fund financed improvements in black school facilities.⁵⁸ The Jeanes Fund paid salaries of black teachers and financed their training, while the Slater Fund focused on constructing black schools in counties that completely lacked facilities. Founded by Julius Rosenwald, then-president of Sears, Roebuck and Company, the Rosenwald Fund built about 5,000 schools in the rural South beginning in 1917.⁵⁹ The goal was to make these facilities "independent and self-sufficient," so they would not have to rely on charity.⁶⁰ Rosenwald's funding of the schools overlapped with Sears, Roebuck and Company's venture into manufacturing kit houses, which sold these kits across the Midwest and Northeast to approximately 70,000-100,000 clients from 1908 to 1940.⁶¹ Wanting to utilize the Sears, Roebuck manufacturing prowess, Rosenwald initially intended to erect prefabricated schoolhouses throughout the South; however, Booker T. Washington, who raised funds and established relationships with philanthropists and those interested in improving black southern educational institutions, argued that communities needed to be self-sufficient and should use local materials and labor.⁶²

Instead of providing kit schools, Julius Rosenwald contributed capital investment to build schools in the rural South. To ensure success of his investment, Rosenwald required matching funds from communities and jurisdictions to cover the remainder of the school capital costs. Additionally, he stipulated that states and counties had to operate and maintain structures as they maintained white schools. The fund also mandated a minimum school term of five months, but guaranteed additional funding for teachers' homes if the school year was extended to eight months.⁶³ Of the schools constructed in 1917, rural blacks paid about forty-five percent of the costs, the Rosenwald Fund paid thirty-three percent, white citizens paid about six percent, and public taxes covered the remaining sixteen percent.⁶⁴ Between 1917 and 1932, the Rosenwald Fund spent \$4.4 million on direct costs of school construction, which amounted to fifteen percent of the total costs.⁶⁵ While the Rosenwald Fund catalyzed development of new school facilities for blacks, black citizens guaranteed the Rosenwald schools' successes by donating money, labor and land.

During the years these philanthropies operated, Mary Ellen Henderson, known by her students as "Miss Nellie," found her own way to give her black students better school facilities, as the

school she taught in, the Falls Church Colored School, had no running water or janitor.^{66 67} In 1935, Mary Ellen Henderson completed a disparity study that compared how Fairfax County allocated tax revenue to black and white schools, highlighting the vast disparity between black and white schools. Her next step was to mobilize an inter-racial group of citizens committed to

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correcting this injustice. Her study became the basis for legal redress against inequality in the public schools throughout the state. Mary Ellen and E.B. published a flyer with the results of the disparity study. Falls Church did not attain independent city status until 1948, thus, schools in Falls Church were under the purview of the Fairfax County.⁶⁸ The Henderson disparity study (Appendix C) found Fairfax County's 1935 budget proposed about ninety-seven percent of funds for white schools, totaling \$330,750, and fewer than three percent for "colored" schools, amounting to \$9,000.⁶⁹ While white schools were of sturdy brick or stone construction and heated school buses transported students to learn in sanitary conditions, African-American students in Fairfax County learned in cramped one- to three-room buildings without toilets.

While some progress was being made in Fairfax County, which received four new Rosenwald schools within its boundaries, Mary Ellen worked with the N.A.A.C.P. and with Agnes Meyer, a journalist, civic leader and wife of the owner of the *Washington Post*, to publicize the substandard conditions her black children were forced to learn in at the Falls Church Colored School.^{70 71} Her students used secondhand supplies, and records from the 1940-1941 school year show that her school had "thirty-five desks, five double desks, one teacher's desk, one bookcase, one piano, no radio, no dictionary and no encyclopedia."⁷² There was no improvement – no supplemental maps, no educational materials, no additional school furniture or supplies by 1943 records – when Mary Ellen was principal of the Falls Church Colored School.⁷³

Gaining momentum from the progress made with Rosenwald schools and other philanthropic school investments, a groundswell of community activism in Northern Virginia continued into the 1940s seeking abolishment of "separate but equal" school facilities. "Colored delegations" actively lobbied the Fairfax County School Board for better teacher pay, reliable transportation for students and better school facilities.⁷⁴ Touting the benefits of economies of scale, the colored delegations of community leaders advocated for consolidation of colored school facilities so black students could access more resources. These citizens also lobbied for new school facilities that would match the quality of nearby white schools.⁷⁵ Fairfax County School Board records indicate that in November 1949, E.B. Henderson, as a member of the "School Emergency Committee," attended a series of additional board meetings and participated in dialogue regarding a school bond referendum, as well as costs of new school facilities, where he is on the record for requesting that a new school for blacks students in Fairfax County be included in a "summary of needs" assessment that the board and superintendent compiled.^{76 77}

The N.A.A.C.P. continued to litigate for equal school facilities through fighting for uniform pay for black teachers. In the mid-1930s, Thurgood Marshall began the N.A.A.C.P.'s equal salary campaign, and the organization forced Maryland and Virginia school boards to abolish

"caste salary schedules," where blacks earned lower salaries than their white counterparts for equal work.⁷⁸ During the mid-1930s, Southern black teachers earned about forty percent less than white teachers.⁷⁹ However, Southern school administrators found a legal means that enabled inequality in teacher pay to continue, through restricting teaching positions to teachers

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scoring higher on a new standardized test and adjusting their pay according to performance on the test.⁸⁰ The N.A.A.C.P. struggled to prove the unconstitutionality of these exams in Florida and other state courts. Proponents of the exam argued that college degrees and teaching experience did not yield competency.⁸¹

Fairfax County School Board records documented salary data of teachers in colored schools and white schools. Mary Ellen Henderson's principal's salary at the Falls Church Colored School in the 1940-1941 school year was \$685.⁸² During the same school year, the highest principal's salary in a colored elementary school was \$700, and in white elementary schools it was \$1,900.⁸³ School board records from 1941 show pressure to abolish the two salary scales in favor of one.⁸⁴ By 1946 records show the county instituted one uniform salary scale based on educational attainment, even though black teachers continued to teach in substandard segregated facilities.⁸⁵ By the 1949-1950 school year, Mary Ellen's teacher's salary at James Lee Elementary was \$3,100. The highest salary listed for teachers in colored schools was \$3,400, and for white teachers it was \$3,500.⁸⁶ Over the 1940s in Fairfax County, the gap between salary scales that the N.A.A.C.P. fought against at state levels had narrowed.

Finally, E.B. and Mary Ellen's efforts paid off in 1954 when Fairfax County built a new high school facility, Luther P. Jackson High School, the first new high school for blacks in the county.⁸⁷ Previously, African-American students in Falls Church had to leave the jurisdiction, traveling twenty miles to Manassas, Virginia, or to Washington, D.C., to attend high school. Fairfax County students comprised over half of the enrollment at the Manassas Institute in 1949, which illustrated the dire need for a new high school in Fairfax County and helped to argue for construction of a new facility.⁸⁸

The year Luther P. Jackson High School became operational, separate but equal facilities had been the law of the land for almost fifty years after the *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling. After other lawsuits attempted to strike down separate but equal school facilities unsuccessfully, the N.A.A.C.P. successfully argued against the precedent in *Brown v. Board of Education*, in which the Supreme Court found that school segregation violated the Equal Protection and Due Process clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment.⁸⁹ The positive effects of this ruling were not immediately felt. While the court stated segregation should end with "all deliberate speed," it took twelve years for the Fairfax County school system to integrate its school facilities.^{90 91}

Just as she worked in tandem with the N.A.A.C.P. to obtain new school facilities for black youth and for equitable teacher pay, Mary Ellen also worked with the N.A.A.C.P. community to develop ideas to encourage school integration in Northern Virginia.⁹²

E.B.'s Continued Advocacy

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While the Hendersons were largely involved in civil rights activities in Northern Virginia, in 1944, E.B. directed his efforts to the desegregation of Washington, D.C.'s Uline Arena, a venue just a few blocks from where E.B. held his basketball league practices two decades earlier when introducing basketball to black youth. The Uline Arena, recently awarded National Register status for its architectural significance and historic events, including the site of the Beatles' first American concert, held numerous sporting events, many of which were segregated.⁹³ The proprietor of the arena, Michael Uline, permitted African-Americans to attend boxing and wrestling matches but banned them from basketball, ice hockey, and ice capades, where white women performed in "skimpy attire."⁹⁴ Continuing his writing legacy, E.B. penned editorial letters to gain community support for desegregating the arena. Henderson organized pickets and protests, imploring his community to boycott the venue.⁹⁵ In 1948, needing the revenue from increased attendance at his arena, Uline relented and permitted both races to attend events.⁹⁶ In a similar vein, E.B. organized pickets at the National Theatre in Washington, D.C., catalyzing its integration.⁹⁷

The Couple's Civic Leadership and Accolades

E.B.

E.B.'s work with the C.C.P.L. was just the beginning of his civic activism. While living in Falls Church, he held numerous leadership positions at the N.A.A.C.P. and worked with other famous civil rights advocates. In 1921, he traveled as a local N.A.A.C.P. delegate to the group's Detroit convention, where he met national leaders and founders of the organization, W.E.B. DuBois, Walter White, Mary White Ovington and James Weldon Johnson. Some years later, he joined the leadership ranks, becoming vice-president of both the Washington, D.C. branch as well as state conference of Virginia N.A.A.C.P. branches. He was president of the Virginia state conference in 1955-1956.⁹⁸

By the time E.B. became president of the Virginia conference, the N.A.A.C.P. had gained influence, especially through Thurgood Marshall and other attorneys' successful litigation in *Brown v. Board*. While the N.A.A.C.P. celebrated victories, the white establishment attempted to pass a battery of "anti- N.A.A.C.P. laws." Many southern states, including Virginia, passed laws forbidding barratry, or "the habitual stirring up of quarrels and suits," and champerty, or "involvement in litigation with no interest in it other than monetary gain."⁹⁹ The N.A.A.C.P. responded, suing Virginia on the constitutionality of barratry, with the court ruling in favor of the N.A.A.C.P. in *N.A.A.C.P. v. Patti*. By 1956-1957, E.B. was part of the cause that influenced the Virginia Legislature to overturn other anti-N.A.A.C.P. bills.¹⁰⁰

Mary Ellen recruited members to the new N.A.A.C.P. chapter, and "there was seldom a year during which Nellie did not travel the roads around Falls Church and throughout Fairfax County getting 100 or more memberships."¹⁰¹ E.B. also had memberships to other clubs, the Pigskin

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Club and the School Club, which served fraternal and social purposes and enabled him to interact with peers who enjoyed athletics and public school interests.¹⁰²

E.B. Henderson also received many professional accolades for his dedication to physical education, among them, the first African-American inducted as a national honor fellow at The American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (A.A.H.P.E.R.) in 1954. Two decades later, he was inducted to the Black Athletes Hall of Fame, celebrating his professional achievement of fighting for the desegregation of sports facilities and for his introduction of basketball to the black community. Being inducted to the Hall of Fame, he joined the ranks of famous athletes Muhammad Ali, Jesse Owens and Hank Aaron, to name a few.¹⁰³ That same year, he was a recipient of AAHPER's Presidential Service Award, as he was a "first" in his profession.¹⁰⁴

Mary Ellen

Mary Ellen's civic leadership was instilled in her from her family, the Meriwethers. As a young woman, Mary Ellen and her sisters often participated in the self-help activities of African American organizations in Washington, D. C. with their parents. In 1892, she witnessed her mother speaking before Congress in a successful effort to regain funding for the Washington, D. C. Elizabeth Keckly Home of Destitute Women and Children. With funding restored, Mary Ellen's mother eventually became the home's director, which was renamed the Meriwether Home for Children in her honor. The home is featured on a cultural walking tour in Washington, D.C., to this day.¹⁰⁵

Mary Ellen and later her children would often visit the home in Washington, D.C. Standing up for what one believed in was one of the tenets of her childhood. It is not surprising that her disparity study became the basis for legal redress against inequality in the public schools throughout the state. A political activist, she was the first African American to join the Falls Church, Virginia, League of Women Voters. Additionally, Mary Ellen was a founding member of the Women's Democratic Club, volunteered for thirty years with the Girl Scouts and was a dedicated community volunteer. Echoing her husband's prolific editorial writing, Mary Ellen also wrote regularly for the *Washington Bee*. She devoted her life to gaining access to quality education and facilities for African American children and civil rights for all.

Many in the local community have recognized E.B. and Mary Ellen Henderson's efforts. Fairfax County dedicated the Providence Recreation Center in E.B.'s honor in 1982.¹⁰⁶ Upon their leaving Virginia to retire to Alabama, E.B.'s friend Congressman William L. Dawson added a statement to the Congressional Record in E.B. and Mary Ellen's honor, highlighting their achievements (Appendix D). In 2002, the City of Falls Church named the gymnasium in the Falls Church Community Center in honor of Dr. Henderson. On June 23, 2005, Congressman James Moran, who represents Falls Church, also submitted comments to the Congressional Record, honoring the couple's achievements in Northern Virginia (Appendix E). Remembering Mary Ellen's legacy of fighting for adequate school facilities for African-American students, the City of Falls Church named a new school in her honor in 2005.¹⁰⁷

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CONCLUSION

Civil rights advocacy was truly intertwined with the professional and personal lives of Edwin Bancroft and Mary Ellen Henderson. E.B.'s accomplishments in sports as starting the nation's first black basketball league and in becoming the country's first certified African-American male physical education teacher comprised his early civil rights work. Through E.B. and Mary Ellen's combined efforts, a residential segregation ordinance was abandoned; the first rural branch of the N.A.A.C.P. was chartered; basketball was organized into leagues for black youth participation; the plight of black schools was brought to local leaders' attention with the help of the N.A.A.C.P.; a new school facility was built for black students; and newspaper audiences had 3,000 op-ed letters informing them of injustices of the times.

As such, their homestead merits placement on the National Register of Historic Places based on Criterion B for being a landmark of statewide significance under Social History and Ethnic Heritage: Black. Also, this house demonstrates national significance under Entertainment/Recreation because of E.B.'s role in introducing basketball to black youth. Furthermore, the homestead meets Criterion A for the civics meetings of the Colored Citizens' Protective League, which became the nation's first rural N.A.A.C.P. branch, held in this home in 1915.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☒ Federal agency
☒ Local government
☒ University
☒ Other

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond,
Virginia; Library of Congress; City of Falls Church and Falls Church Library System;
Fairfax County Library System; Moorland/Springarn Research Library, Howard University;
Henderson Family Archives, Falls Church, Virginia

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): DHR File Number 110-0221

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.2 acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 38.881028	Longitude: -77.175436
2. Latitude:	Longitude:
3. Latitude:	Longitude:
4. Latitude:	Longitude:

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Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

1. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
2. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
3. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
4. Zone:	Easting :	Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary coincides with the lot lines for parcel No. 52-306-018 within the City of Falls Church (see attached parcel map). The northern boundary of the Edwin Bancroft and Mary Ellen Henderson House terminates at the juncture of the property's lawn and sidewalk along South Maple Avenue. The eastern boundary is demarcated with a wooden fence, and the parcel east of the property has a paved parking lot for commercial uses contiguous to the Henderson property. The southern boundary is defined by a fence that abuts a small alley. The western boundary runs adjacent to the property's driveway. A commercial building is sited close to the driveway on the west side of the property.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary of the house is the legal property line surrounding parcel 52-306-018, lot number five, in the City of Falls Church, Virginia, and is historically associated with the property.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Courtney E. McCall, Environmental Consultant
organization: Graduate of Virginia Tech School of Urban and Regional Planning
street & number: 1401 South Edgewood Street, #477
city or town: Arlington state: VA zip code: 22204
e-mail courtneymccall@gmail.com
telephone: 703.399.5423
date: October 2012

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Henderson House

City or Vicinity: Falls Church

County: Independent City State: Virginia

Photographer: Courtney E. McCall

Date Photographed: 9/10/10

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo: 1 of 7

View: Front elevation (north side)

Photo: 2 of 7

View: Front elevation (north side), with carport view.

Photo: 3 of 7

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View: Close-up of front elevation (north side)

Photo: 4 of 7

View: East elevation

Photo: 5 of 7

View: Dining room, facing south, Henderson, Edwin

Photo: 6 of 7

View: Living room, facing northeast

Photo: 7 of 7

View: Local historic plaque on Henderson property's northern boundary

Appendix Log

Appendix A: Colored Citizens' Protective League Meeting minutes, 1915.

Appendix B: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People charter letter, 1918.

Appendix C: Mary Ellen Henderson's disparity study advertisement, 1935.

Appendix D: *Congressional Record* remarks, *Dr. Edwin Bancroft Henderson – Community Leader and Civil Rights Hero*, 1965.

Appendix E: *Congressional Record* remarks, 109th Congress, First Session, 2005-2006.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.