

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

1057

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Greater U Street Historic District
Other names/site number: _____

2. Location

Street & Number: _____ Not for Publication
City or town: District of Columbia Vicinity
State: Washington Code: DC County: District of Columbia Code: 001 Zip Code: _____

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

I recommend that this property be considered significant:
 nationally statewide locally (see continuation sheet for additional comments)

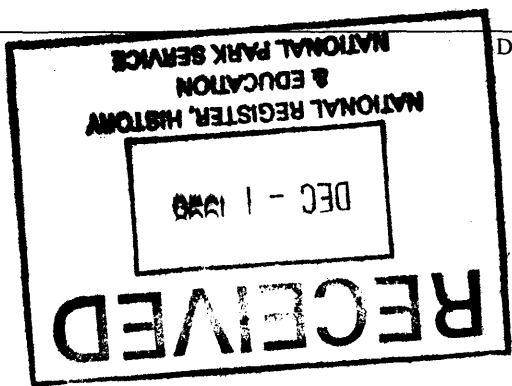
[Signature] STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER 12/1/98
Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency or bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register. [Signature] 12/31/98
 determined eligible for the National Register _____
 determined not eligible for the National Register _____
 removed from the National Register _____
 other, (explain:) _____

[Signature] Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____



Greater U Street
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	No. of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private	<input type="checkbox"/> Buildings		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public-Local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District	<u>1580</u>	<u>62</u> Buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> Public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> Site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> Sites
<input type="checkbox"/> Public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> Structure
	<input type="checkbox"/> Object	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> Objects
		<u>1580</u>	<u>62</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing
N/A

Number of contributing
Resources previously
listed in the National
Register 12

Designated properties within the historic district include:

1. Evans-Tibbs House, 1910 Vermont Avenue, N.W. (NR Listing 9/8/87)
2. Lincoln Theater, 1215 U Street, N.W. (NR listing 10/27/93)
3. Prince Hall Masonic Temple, 1000 U Street, N.W. (NR listing 9/15/83)
4. Southern Aid Society/Dunbar Theater, 1901-03 7th Street, N.W. (NR listing 11/6/87)
5. True Reformer Building, 1200 U Street, N.W. (NR listing 1/9/89)
6. Frelinghuysen University (Edward Goodwin House), 1800 Vermont Avenue, N.W. (NR listing 11/95)
7. Lincoln Congregational Temple United Church of Christ, 1701 11th Street (NR listing 2/24/95)
8. Anthony Bowen YMCA (12th Street Branch), 1816 12th Street, N.W. (NHL listing 1994)
9. Howard Theater, 620 T Street, N.W. (NR listing 2/15/74)
10. Whitelaw Hotel, 1839 13th Street, N.W. (NR listing 7/14/93)
11. Mary Ann Shadd Cary House, 1421 W Street, N.W. (NHL listing 12/8/76)
12. Manhattan Laundry, 1326-46 Florida Avenue, N.W. (NR listing 11/21/94)

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6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling
DOMESTIC: Multiple Dwelling
DOMESTIC: Secondary Structure
COMMERCE/TRADE: Business
COMMERCE/TRADE: Financial Institution
COMMERCE/TRADE: Specialty Store
COMMERCE/TRADE: Warehouse
SOCIAL: Meeting Hall
GOVERNMENT: Fire Station
EDUCATION: School
RELIGION: Religious Facility
RELIGION: Church School
RECREATION AND CULTURE: Theater

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling
DOMESTIC: Multiple Dwelling
DOMESTIC: Secondary Structure
COMMERCE/TRADE: Business
COMMERCE/TRADE: Financial Institution
COMMERCE/TRADE: Restaurant
COMMERCE/TRADE: Specialty Store
COMMERCE/TRADE: Warehouse
GOVERNMENT: Fire Station
EDUCATION: School
RELIGION: Religious Facility
RELIGION: Church School
RECREATION AND CULTURE: Theater

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Italianate
Second Empire
Queen Anne
Classical Revival
Renaissance Revival
Commercial Style

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Stone; Brick
walls: Clapboard
Brick
Limestone
Granite
roof: Flat; Sloped; Gable; Mansard; Hipped
other: _____

Narrative Description

Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets

[X] See continuation sheet

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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.)

Property is:

- 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

ARCHITECTURE	1862-1948	1862
COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT		1871-78
ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION		1948
ETHNIC HERITAGE: BLACK		
SOCIAL HISTORY		

Significant Person

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and period of significance noted above.

See continuation sheet

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9. Major Bibliographic References

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)

previously listed in the NR

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of add. data:

State SHPO office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Specify repository: Traceries, Inc.

see continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property: approximately 175 acres

UTM References

A 1/8/ 3/2/4/0/0/0/ 4/3/0/9/7/5/0/

Zone Easting Northing

B 1/8/ 3/2/4/1/3/0/ 4/3/0/9/7/4/0/

Zone Easting Northing

C 1/8/ 3/2/4/1/3/0/ 4/3/0/9/3/4/0/

Zone Easting Northing

D 1/8/ 3/2/4/2/3/0/ 4/3/0/9/4/6/0/

Zone Easting Northing

E 1/8/ 3/2/4/5/0/0/ 4/3/0/9/4/6/0/

Zone Easting Northing

F 1/8/ 3/2/4/8/0/0/ 4/3/0/9/1/4/0/

Zone Easting Northing

G 1/8/ 3/2/4/8/0/0/ 4/3/0/9/0/5/0/

Zone Easting Northing

H 1/8/ 3/2/4/5/2/0/ 4/3/0/8/7/8/0/

Zone Easting Northing

I 1/8/ 3/2/4/1/2/0/ 4/3/0/8/7/8/0/

Zone Easting Northing

J 1/8/ 3/2/4/1/8/0/ 4/3/0/8/9/5/0/

Zone Easting Northing

K 1/8/ 3/2/3/4/0/0/ 4/3/0/8/9/5/0/

Zone Easting Northing

L 1/8/ 3/2/3/4/0/0/ 4/3/0/9/3/7/0/

Zone Easting Northing

M 1/8/ 3/2/3/5/6/0/ 4/3/0/9/6/5/0/

Zone Easting Northing

see continuation sheet

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11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Laura V. Trieschmann, Architectural Historian

Organization: Traceries

Date: May 1998

Street & Number: 5420 Western Avenue

Telephone: (301)656-5283

City or Town: Chevy Chase State: Maryland

Zip code: 20815

Name/title: Anne Sellin, Architectural Historian

Organization: Residential Action Coalition

Date: May 1998

Street & Number: 1834 16th Street, N.W.

Telephone: (202)387-7782

City or Town: Washington State: DC

Zip Code: 20009

Name/title: Stephen Callcott, Architectural Historian

Organization: DC Historic Preservation Division

Date: November 1998

Street & Number: 614 H Street, NW, Suite 305

Telephone: (202)727-7360

City or Town: Washington State: DC

Zip Code: 20001

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Early Architectural Beginnings: 1862- c. 1875

The earliest buildings remaining in the Greater U Street historic district date from the Civil War era, after the construction of streetcar lines along 14th Street opened the area up to speculative development. These buildings have flat facades with limited decorative detailing. They were typically built individually, in pairs or in small groups. While influenced by the Italianate style, most of the earliest houses are quite spare in their use of ornament, representing a builder's vernacular interpretation of the style. These buildings are typically of frame construction, clad with painted clapboards. Over time, some of these houses have been faced with stucco.

An excellent example of this type of vernacular dwelling is located at 1901-1905 12th Street, N.W., constructed c. 1865. These three buildings are marked by side gable roofs and a spare use of applied ornament. Set back from the lot line, these frame buildings feature flat front elevations, with window openings on the second story that extend almost to the cornice. The cornice is comprised of small, simple wood brackets set on a fascia board. Each house is two bays wide, with six-over-six wood sash windows. The front doors have four recessed panels, without raised molding.

A longer continuous row of buildings dating from this early period can be found at 1205-1233 T Street, N.W., constructed c. 1875. These seventeen identical houses are modest, two-story frame dwellings clad in brick that are set back from the lot line. The facades are flat-fronted, with ornamentation limited to bracketed wood cornices and door surrounds, and simple stone window lintels. The houses are three bays wide, with two-over-two wood sash windows. The full length front porches extant on some of these buildings are not original. Similar flat-fronted Italianate brick houses can be found in the 1200 block of V Street, at 2251-2255 12th Street and at 2224-2234 13th Street, on the north side of the 1200 block of S Street, and at 1345-49 Florida Avenue.

The most architecturally noteworthy residential row from this early period are the dwellings at 1413-1431 S Street, constructed c. 1864. This row of ten brick houses forms a unified terrace, with a three story center capped by a mansard roof connected by recessed, flat-roofed, two-story hyphens and flanked by pedimented two story terminal pavilions. Each of the five elements is a duplex. The gables in the end pavilions are pierced by bull's eye windows with circular surrounds. Flanking the paired front doors, each house has (or had) a one story polygonal bay. The houses were originally unified by a continuous bracketed one story porch, with a second story deck emphasizing the center mansarded pavilion.

Victorian Architecture: c. 1875-1900

The availability of mass-produced components from pattern books and hardware supply catalogues allowed local builders to create reasonable facsimiles of the most fashionable architectural styles. Brackets, finials, molded bricks, windows, paneled doors, and cast iron elements, as well as interior stairs and moldings were all ready-made and could be pieced together by builders in infinite varieties. Stylistically, row buildings in the 1880s and 1890s were

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inspired by eclectic, medieval sources, including the English Gothic and Queen Anne, the Romanesque, the French Second Empire, and even Japanese design motifs. Houses tended to be asymmetrical in form – emphasized by the towers, turrets, bay windows and oriels – and constructed in a dark palette of red brick, brownstone, black iron, and wood and metal trim painted in somber tones. Based on period photographs, it appears that the masonry facades of pressed brick and stone were never painted, instead relying on their natural colors to give the buildings character. Masonry joints of pressed brick facades were typically tinted to match the color of the brick, and facades were often “bagged,” a process in which the mason would rub a brick dust and linseed oil finish on the façade to give it a monolithic, uniform appearance. Architectural emphasis was placed on the fronts of the buildings (and sides, for corner structures); rear elevations were utilitarian, most often with ancillary ell-wings projecting off a portion of the back wall.

The Building Projection Act of 1871, allowing the construction of projecting bays into public space, and the enactment of municipal building codes between 1872-78, prohibiting frame construction and wood cladding and requiring indoor plumbing, had a profound effect on the architecture in the Greater U Street area. Houses constructed in this period also began to be larger in size. While houses prior to 1875 were typically two stories in height, houses constructed in the late 1870s and 1880s tended to be three stories (two floors above a raised English basement). By the 1890s, houses in the area were more typically four full floors (three above an English basement).

Projecting bays are a prominent and important character defining feature of the majority of row buildings in the neighborhood constructed in this period. The first projecting bays, dating from the early 1870s, were tentative in nature, typically only one story in height, of wood construction, and appearing as if tacked on to existing flat-fronted brick houses. The continuous row of houses on the south side of the 1400 block of T Street, constructed in 1874, illustrates early bay design. The two-story brick houses, two bays wide, are similar to the flat-fronted houses built prior to 1871, except for the introduction of their small, polygonal wooden bays. The houses in the 1800 block of Vermont Avenue illustrate clapboard houses with one story polygonal bays. The three-story brick houses in the 1400 block of Swann Street, also from the mid-1870s, are more elegant in their incorporation of the bay into the design of the building. The bays extend from the English basement through the first floor, and the bay has been made wider and deeper. In addition to the larger proportions, the polygonal bays are ornamented with brackets, decorative trim, and a blind balustrade or panel below the windows. The use of a similar cornice treatment on the projecting bay and at the top of the house unites the façade composition. The houses in the 900 block of French Street also exhibit two story wood bays with wood detailing, on three story brick rowhouses. The houses in the 1100 block of S Street are very much the same but the bays are brick. Upper floor windows on all of these houses are capped by projecting brick or metal surrounds. The effect created by these rows is very much in keeping with Victorian notions of the picturesque, as it could be achieved on a small rowhouse.

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The 1500 block of Swann Street, constructed in 1879-80, is noteworthy as a block that was developed entirely without bays, no doubt due to the narrow width of the street. Decorative treatment is provided to the facades primarily at the roofline, with corbelled pediments on some units and mansard roofs on others. All the houses are united by corbelled stringcourses and small cast iron steps. The 1500 block of Caroline Street, also developed in 1879-80, is unusual for the neighborhood, as it was developed with two-story, detached brick duplexes with narrow side yards. The center of each duplex forms a projecting bay, with the entrances located on the side of the house. These streets illustrate the still experimental nature of rowhouse design in the late 1870s, and the creative responses by builders to the narrow streets cut through some of the blocks.

By the beginning of the 1880s, projecting bays typically rose the full height of the building and were often capped with corbelled brickwork, cast iron cresting, pressed metal or masonry castellation, and/or pyramidal or conical roofs. Constructed exclusively of brick in this period, projecting bays became fully integrated into the body of row buildings. Bays were most typically polygonal in shape, but were also occasionally round, elliptical, or rectangular. After 1879, Italianate wood cornices were no longer used, and brick became the most common decorative treatment for cornices. As builders came to develop longer rows, variety was created by varying treatments at the roofline, or creating a rhythm by varying the shape of the projecting bays. Corner buildings often received special treatment, often with a larger-than-usual corner turret. Windows were most typically two-over-two sash in the 1870s, and one-over-one sash in the 1880s and 1890s. Decorative multi-pane upper sashes were also used. Entries most often have single doors, although double doors are found as well; most doors have both recessed panels and raised molding.

The buildings at 1909-1917 11th Street are a good illustration of 1880s rowhouse architecture. Each of the five identical houses is two stories above an English basement. The facades are clad in pressed red brick and are dominated by broad rectangular bays with chamfered corners. Decorative molded brickwork caps the segmental-arched door and window openings, and is used to create a decorative spandrel panel between the top two floors. The cornice is composed entirely of specialty bricks corbelled to create a strong crown to each façade, which is topped by a parapet. Each projecting bay has two two-over-two sash windows in the front and one on each side. The entry is reached by a flight of cast iron stairs; the door is surmounted by a transom window. Variations of this type can be found in most blocks in the district, including the 800 and 1500 blocks of T Street, the 1800 block of 9th Street, the 900 and 1500 blocks of S Street, and the 1300 block of Wallach Place. The differences in shape, articulation and fenestration of the projecting bays provide a distinctive richness to the streetscapes within the historic district.

By the late 1880s and 1890s, rowhouses tended to be a full four floors in height, and began to exhibit Romanesque and Classical Revival detailing. The house at 1327 T Street is one of the best examples of the Romanesque style applied to a rowhouse in the Greater U Street area. Three

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floors tall, without an English basement, the building sits on a rusticated stone base with two low round arched openings; one for the door, one for a window. A shallow, elliptical oriel is centered on the façade on the second and third floors, with three windows on each floor. The dark red brick body of the building has small square windows on each floor on either side of the bay. Stylized floral motifs are stamped into the metal bay between each floor. The building is capped by a decorative cast iron railing creating an open parapet atop the pressed metal cornice. The influence of the Romanesque style is also seen in numerous other houses in the use of foliate carving and rustication around the first floor windows and doors. The house at 1427 W Street illustrates how the Romanesque was commonly applied to a rowhouse. The entry has a round-arched transom above the double doors. The transom is capped by a decorative surround with elaborate foliate carving; this is supported by short, stout columns also with Romanesque foliate carving in the capitals. The base of the building is clad in rusticated brownstone, and the first floor windows are capped by rusticated stone lintels. The upper portion of the building is pressed red brick. The houses in the 900 block of Westminster Street similarly illustrate the Romanesque style applied to a four story brick rowhouse, however, the use of classical Adamesque swags in the cornice and Palladian windows in the fourth floors of some units illustrate the reemergence of classical design motifs.

Rowhouse construction was primarily limited to the 19th century; by the turn-of-the-century, most of the area's blocks had been built up. Some of the few remaining vacant lots in residential blocks were developed with small apartment buildings in the early 20th century. The identical Oswego and Exeter Apartments, at 1326-8 and 1330-32 U Street, N.W., were constructed in 1900-04. Classical revival in style, each building is four stories with two flats on each floor. The buildings are clad in a tan, iron-spot brick with limestone trim and a metal cornice. The Mediterranean Revival Nolando Apartments, at 1418 T Street, N.W. was built in 1905. The three story building features two projecting oriel bays on the upper floors atop a rusticated brick first floor. The roof is clad in red tile, with overhanging eaves, exposed rafter heads and decorative dormer windows.

There is not a substantial difference in design in this period between the design of commercial buildings and residential buildings. Commercial buildings along 14th and U streets are three or four stories in height, and are either flat fronted with wood cornices or bay fronted with brick corbelling. Many of the buildings which are in commercial use today, including many of those along 14th Street and the numerous corner stores in the neighborhood, such as those at 15th and S, 15th and Swann, 14th and T, and 13th and T, were constructed as residential buildings which were later converted to commercial use.

Architecture of the "City within the City": 1900-1948

The national change in architectural tastes away from the eclecticism of the Victorian period toward the classical coincided with the emergence of the Greater U Street area as the center for Washington's African-American community. While the neighborhood had been significantly

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developed by 1900, vacant parcels were scattered through the area, particularly along U Street. The blocks fronting U Street are where the African-American community had the greatest impact in constructing commercial and institutional buildings between 1900-1948. In size and stature, these buildings reflect the emergence of the area as the city's African-American "downtown," while stylistically, they illustrate the reemergence of architectural classicism. Many of the commercial and institutional buildings were constructed for specialized and particular services and uses, and often designed by African-American architects and builders.

The True Reformer Building was constructed in 1902 at 1200 U Street as the headquarters for an African-American fraternal and benevolent society. Designed in the Renaissance Revival style by African-American architect John Lankford, the building is five stories high, clad in buff brick with limestone trim. The second and third floors have double-height round-arched windows, expressing the two-story interior meeting room/gymnasium inside. The pressed metal entablature is decorated with stylized wreaths and swags, which is capped by a projecting pressed metal cornice.

The Minnehaha Nickelodeon Theater, erected at 1213 U Street in 1909, was designed by architect P.A. Hurlhaus. The two-story brick building reflects the Renaissance Revival style with a grand semi-circular arched window opening, stepped parapet, molded cornice, and engaged pilasters. The highly detailed façade is characteristic of entertainment facilities, intending to delight and draw in patrons.

The Howard Theater, constructed in 1910 at 620 T Street, was designed by architect J. Edward Storck. Reflecting a variety of fashionable styles, the Howard Theater was largely influenced by the Italian Renaissance Revival style with Spanish Baroque and Beaux-Arts motifs. The building has a massive central arched entry, flanking side doors, imposing tympanum, and heavy broken cornice. Both the cornice and tympanum of the brick building were originally embellished with exposed electric light bulbs, a feature typical of theater architecture during this period. The building was significantly altered in 1940 in an effort to streamline its appearance. A brushed aluminum marquee was installed and much of the façade was covered with stucco.

By the 1910s, the Greater U Street community began to undergo a more rapid metamorphosis of development with the construction of monumental institutional, educational, and entertainment facilities. The non-residential buildings erected after 1910 were generally two- to four-stories in height, constructed of brick or stone with flat roofs, and trimmed with stone detailing. While stylistically different from the Victorian era buildings in the neighborhood, the new commercial and institutional buildings achieved compatibility through their similar use of materials and detailing. Stylistic elements include projecting bays, molded cornices with brackets and modillions, semi-circular arched openings with limestone surrounds and keystones, stringcourses, pilasters, and groups of window openings.

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The 12th Street YMCA, also known as the Anthony Bowen Y, at 1816 12th Street, is a large imposing five story building located one block south of U Street. The building was constructed in 1912 to the designs of W. Sidney Pittman, one of the nation's first African-American architects. The building is a good example of the Italian Renaissance Revival style, clad in buff brick with limestone trim. The entrance is marked by a projecting columned portico; the windows are capped by jack arched lintels. The corners, also executed in brick, are articulated with quoining. The building was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1994.

The U.S. Post Office constructed at 1438 U Street in 1912 (now used as a Masonic Temple) is a particularly good example of neoclassicism. Clad in limestone, the two-story building features a full height classical portico. The four ionic columns support a pediment with an eagle and wreath carved into the tympanum. The building's flanking sections are capped by an open balustrade.

The Industrial Savings Bank at the corner of 11th and U streets was designed by architect Isaiah T. Hatton. Hatton, who trained locally, was one of the nation's first African-American architects. The two-story building, constructed of yellow brick in 1917, is an excellent illustration of the architectural compatibility of the early 20th century buildings with the existing late 19th century residential architecture of the neighborhood. The building has projecting bays, an ornate overhanging cornice with brackets and dentil molding, semi-circular arched openings, stringcourses, and groups of ribbon windows. The main entry, set at the corner of the building, is embellished with Tuscan columns and engaged pilasters supporting the molded pediment of limestone. The opening is surmounted by semi-circular arched fanlight. Hatton was also responsible for the design of the Whitelaw Hotel at 1839 13th Street (1919) and the Southern Aid Society Building at 1901 7th Street (1921). Both were designed in the Italian Renaissance Revival style. The Whitelaw, clad in buff brick with limestone trim, has impressive interior spaces, including a classically styled dining/ballroom with a large stained glass skylight.

The Prince Hall Masonic Temple at 1000 U Street, N.W. was designed by African-American architect Albert Cassell in 1922, and is a forceful use of the neoclassical style applied to a large five-story institutional building. The lower two floors of this corner building serve as a base for the three story piers above. The cornice contains triglyphs and metopes with Masonic motifs. While the spaces between the piers are now exposed, originally they contained metal grilles obscuring the windows. The Odd Fellows Temple, at 1851 9th Street, was also designed by Albert Cassell. Constructed in 1932, this cube shaped, four-story corner building is clad in limestone on the first floor and red brick on the upper floors. The façade illustrates the influence of the art deco and modern styles, with its stylized fluted entrance surround with Aztec column capitals, streamlined piers running up through the upper floors of the building. The stepping back of the roof parapet illustrates the ziggurat motif common in art deco design.

By the 1930s, the Greater U Street community was fully developed. It was comprised of ornamental, late- 19th century residential rowhouses and the early to mid-20th century

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commercial and institutional buildings. Predominately constructed of brick in a variety of colors, the architecture of the neighborhood continued to be stylistically compatible, despite the varying periods of development, architects, and property owners. While some significant buildings were lost during the 1968 riots and subsequent disinvestment in the neighborhood (including the Republic Theater, the Booker T Theater, and the Scurlock Photography Studio), many of the area's landmarks survive intact and continue to characterize the physical nature of the area.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Greater U Street Historic District is significant as a Victorian-era neighborhood, developed largely between 1862-1900. The area consists of a coherent group of row houses constructed overwhelmingly by speculative builders and real estate developers along streets established by the L'Enfant plan. The neighborhood's rapid development was in response to the city's strong demand for housing following the Civil War, the growth of the federal government in the late 19th century, and the expansion of Washington's economy and population. Development was made possible by the laying of streetcar rails along 14th and 7th streets by the Washington and Georgetown Railroad Company in 1862. The new streetcar technology opened up this vast area for residential development, making it convenient for the first time to government employees and others to commute downtown to work and shop. By the end of the 19th century, the transportation corridors along 14th and 7th streets had developed as neighborhood-based commercial strips. Most of the area's brick Victorian-era architecture remains intact along the area's residential streets and commercial corridors.

The Greater U Street Historic District is also significant as the center of Washington's African-American community between c. 1900-1948. While always racially and socio-economically diverse, the area was predominately white and middle class until the turn of the century. As Washington became increasingly segregated, the neighborhood emerged as a "city within a city" for Washington's African-American residents. U Street became the city's most important concentration of businesses, entertainment facilities, and fraternal and religious institutions owned and operated by African-Americans, while the surrounding neighborhood became home to many of the city's leading African-American citizens. This second phase of development is most tangibly evident along U Street, and its immediately adjacent blocks where buildings of significant stature and architectural expression were built by and for the African-American community. While the area remained an important commercial and cultural center for the African-American community through the 1960s, the neighborhood began to change in character after racially-restrictive real estate covenants were declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1948, allowing blacks access to housing throughout the Washington area.

Today, the Greater U Street neighborhood is defined by a variety of architectural styles and building types ranging from the 19th century residential and commercial architecture to the early to mid-20th century African-American fraternities/societies, theaters, and jazz clubs for which the area gained international acclaim. Between the commercial transportation corridors, the streetscapes are defined by rows of 19th century dwellings punctuated by churches, corner stores, and schools. The district meets National Register criteria A and C. The area making up the Greater U Street neighborhood consists of approximately 1580 historic contributing properties, the majority of which are residential resources.

The architectural and cultural research of the Greater U Street neighborhood has revealed that the social and physical development of this section of the city evolved from a sparsely built area of land in the pre-Civil War era to a densely populated residential community in the last three decades of the 19th century. By the early 20th century, as the city became increasingly segregated, the U Street area emerged as an

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important "city within a city," where much of Washington's African-American commercial, social and cultural needs were met.

While platted as part of the L'Enfant city in 1790, the area saw little development in the period between 1790-1861. During this time, there was little turnover of lots, and most holdings were large and generally unimproved. This era is not represented in the existing building fabric. The second phase of development, between the construction of the first extant buildings in the 1860s until the turn-of-the-century involved the resubdivision of the large squares into smaller lots, the sale of these lots, the improvement of the area's infrastructure, and the emergence of a residential neighborhood constructed by small-scale speculative developers. The final phase of extensive development, from 1900-1948, saw the growth of the area from a residential community on the outskirts of the central city to a self-contained, self-sufficient neighborhood that served the residential, commercial, social, cultural, educational, and religious needs of the African-American population of segregated Washington, DC. The area became the most important center of African-American life in the city, with a significant concentration of businesses and institutions, and served as the home for many influential African-American civil rights and religious leaders, intellectuals and educators.

The Greater U Street neighborhood retains many of its original late 19th century residential buildings, the majority of which were designed by local builders and architects. Constructed primarily between 1870-1900, these buildings comprise an intact and cohesive collection of primarily brick, bay-fronted rowhouses executed in a variety of styles and expressions. The new municipal building codes of the period (enacted between 1871-1878), and the mass production of building elements available to the speculative builder fundamentally shaped the buildings of this period. The community is also significant for its many important early 20th century commercial and institutional facilities that were designed by and for African Americans. Several African-American architects, including John A. Lankford, William Sidney Pittman, and Isaiah T. Hatton constructed their most most important commissions in the Greater U Street neighborhood. Collectively, the architecture of Greater U Street has achieved significance as an embodiment of a distinctive period with a high artistic value of ornamentation, style, and form.

Early History of the Greater U Street Area: 1790-1850

Prior to the founding of the City of Washington, the territory that became the federal city was part of approximately thirty tracts of land, known in their entirety since 1715 as *Rock Creek Hundred*. *Rock Creek Hundred* was originally part of Charles County and later, Prince George's County, MD. Most of the settlers of the territory were farmers who raised tobacco, wheat, corn and cattle.¹ Others, including merchants, bricklayers, and carpenters who worked and lived in Georgetown or in neighboring Montgomery County, MD, began in the mid-18th century to purchase land in the area as a speculative venture. By the late 18th century, as the area became identified as a possible site for the federal city, speculation on the land increased dramatically; in 1791, when the site was officially decided, nearly half of the original proprietors who had deeded their land in trust for the new city were the merchants and businessmen who had anticipated the birth of the city.

¹ Priscilla W. McNeil, "Rock Creek Hundred: Land Conveyed for the Federal City." *Washington History*, Vol. 3, No. 1, Spring/Summer 1991, p. 35.

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At this time, the area that would become the Greater U Street neighborhood was part of a tract of land known as *Flint's Discovery* and *The Addition to Flint's Discovery*.² *Flint's Discovery* consisted of two hundred acres that were patented in 1725 by John Flint. In 1760, Georgetown tobacco merchant Robert Peter purchased 121 acres of the property; he conveyed forty-eight of these acres in 1791 to James M. Lingan. *The Addition to Flint's Discovery*, patented in 1738 by John Flint, was a tract of approximately eighty-three acres, part of which lay outside the future boundaries of the federal city. Robert Peter also purchased this tract of land in 1760 and combined the tract with *Flint's Discovery* in 1792.³

Robert Peter built a house on his *Flint's Discovery* tract, located in Square 234 (bounded by 13th, 14th, W Street and Florida Avenue). Today's Florida Avenue was established as a roadway in the mid-18th century, and was undoubtedly a factor in the siting of the house. The house was of log construction, 36' x 22' and having quarters and outbuildings. The "quarters" suggests that it was a plantation with slaves. Peter also owned a house called "Mexico" across Rock Creek from Georgetown, as well as other speculative houses which he built in Georgetown and Washington; just how he divided his time between these houses is not known.

The land making up *Flint's Discovery*, which included what is today known as the Greater U Street neighborhood, was platted into large city squares that were subdivided into lots. However, none of these plots had sold by the time of Peter's death in 1806, as they were simply too remote from the fledgling small town which was slowly developing between the White House and the Capitol. Despite the city's attempts to promote development in Washington, DC in the late 18th and early 19th centuries by auctioning off the subdivided parcels, few lots were improved even in the areas around government buildings, let alone at the northern limits of the city. Consequently, the spongy marshy land of what is now Greater U Street was host to stands of white oak, and little else, during the first half of the 19th century. Through this period, it was known as "Peter's Slashes" and "White Oak Slashes."

Beginnings of Development: 1850-1861

A report prepared by General Montgomery C. Meigs attests to the area's undeveloped character prior to the Civil War. Only eleven houses, and no shops, existing in the area in 1853.⁴ The existence of just a few buildings, located within four squares scattered throughout the neighborhood, indicates that the territory was primarily rural despite having been platted. This rural character is also illustrated on the 1857 Boschke Map of Washington City, which shows a few scattered buildings along 7th Street, N.W.⁵ The

² McNeil, p. 41.

³ McNeil, pp. 41, 46.

⁴ The 1853 Meigs Survey can be found in the *Report of the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, 1875*.

⁵ Despite evidence elsewhere in the city that frame buildings were occasionally moved when later development was proposed for their original sites, there is no indication that any of the 1850s buildings remain in the historic district.

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first street in the city to be paved by the government, 7th Street was already well established as an important transportation corridor leading to Rockville and Baltimore.

While not yet widely developed in the 1850s, the land in the Greater U Street area was not sitting idle. The Boschke map of 1857 shows three cemeteries in the area: St. Matthew's parish cemetery in Square 236 (bounded by U, V, 13th & 14th); a Methodist cemetery in Square 235 (bounded by V, W, 13th & 14th); and the Free Young Men's Cemetery for free African-Americans in Square 272 (bounded by V, W, 12th & 13th). St John's Episcopal Cemetery was located just to the south in Square 276 (bounded by R, S, 12th & 13th).

The spongy loam in the area proved hospitable to the nursery trade as well as burial plots. Joshua Pierce utilized a number of squares in the upper part of the city to grow trees, creepers, grapes, flowering shrubs, roses and bulbs. At least part of the nursery, the largest in Washington at the time, was located between S, T, 11th and 15th streets. His fruit trees were sold both locally and nationally. According to a March 7, 1825 advertisement in the Daily National Intelligencer:

He has now on hand a choice collection of Fruit Trees, consisting of Apple, Peach, Pear, Nectarine, Apricot, Plum, and Cherry Trees: with a variety of Garden Fruit, such as Currant, Gooseberry, and Raspberry Bushes, etc.

John Saul, who in 1854 purchased Maple Grove Farm from Richard Wallach, began another nursery in the area. The house faced east on 7th Street; its 80 acres stretched westward into the Greater U Street area. Saul was an experienced horticulturalist, having been brought up in that family trade in Ireland before immigrating to Newburgh, New York at the request of Alexander Jackson Downing. In 1851, he accompanied Downing to Washington to work on the improvement of the public grounds of the Mall and Lafayette Square. When Downing drowned in 1852, and Congress failed to appropriate more money for the completion of the plans, Saul launched his own business. Saul's nursery was located just north of Pierce's, between 11th, 15th, T Street and Florida Avenue.

Saul continually experimented with new varieties, and published eight catalogues offering 276 varieties of apples, 164 types of peaches, 282 varieties of pears, and 150 kinds of grapes. He was a regular contributor to *The Horticulturalist*, originally edited by Downing, and became a member of the city's Parking Commission (described in full later in the text) from its founding until his death in 1897. It is quite likely that Saul furnished many of the thousands of trees planted by the Territorial Government in the 1870s. His son described Saul's business:

His lower nursery [in the Greater U Street neighborhood], which also contained many peach, pear and apple trees, was nevertheless devoted mainly to ornamental trees, both evergreen and deciduous. He not only grew all the large evergreens, such as Norway spruces, balsam firs, European silver fir, Nordmann fir, hemlock, spruce, Japanese and Chinese arborvitae,

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all kinds of pines, and all kinds of Japanese maples and shrubs, but every variety of small fruit.

Due to the widespread development of the area during and after the Civil War, no aspect of these early cemeteries and nurseries are known to survive in the historic district.

The Civil War, Reconstruction and the Coming of the Streetcar: 1861-1870s

The Civil War provided the first impetus for settlement and development in the northern-most sections of the city of Washington, particularly in the Greater U Street neighborhood. Although the rural nature of the area persisted until the 1870s, the War spurred significant changes to the physical make-up of the neighborhood.

Between 1860 and 1865, the population of the City of Washington increased from 75,000 to 125,000. This dramatic increase included the freedmen and war refugees fleeing the deep South, and government employees relocating to the capital to support the Union. Civil War camps and hospitals were established in and around the city, providing a safe haven for the vast number of freedmen relocating to the capital city. The undeveloped nature of the Greater U Street area provided the perfect setting for numerous camps and villages, establishing the area a haven for African-Americans. Three such camps and hospitals were located in the general vicinity of the U Street area -- the Wisewell Barracks at 7th and P streets, N.W., Campbell Hospital on Florida Avenue between 5th and 6th streets, and Camp Barker at 13th Street between R and S streets. The war resulted in the destruction of the area's natural character, with the cutting of trees, erosion and increased traffic over the ungraded and unpaved roads. The population increase during the War years stabilized in the Reconstruction era as many southern refugees and former slaves who had fled their homes remained in Washington, DC. Additionally, many of the federal employees and soldiers who had relocated to the area to aid in the defense of the nation's capital chose to remain, spurring permanent development. By the war's end, the City of Washington had grown from a small, tightly grouped town centered around government-related buildings to a burgeoning city with a significant need for housing and improved amenities.

Despite a general reduction in public works projects and the curtailed funds for government construction, some street improvements and major construction projects continued during the Civil War. Most important was the construction of a horse-drawn streetcar system. On May 17, 1862, Congress granted the Washington & Georgetown Railroad the exclusive right to construct streetcar lines along 7th and 14th streets, thus making this largely undeveloped area of the city newly accessible and establishing the foundation for future growth and expansion. The 7th Street streetcar line ran from the wharves on the Potomac River along 7th Street to Florida Avenue where it ended at a barn (1905-1915 7th Street, razed c. 1895). The 14th Street line also extended to a barn on Florida Avenue (1326 Florida Avenue; constructed 1877, remodeled as the Manhattan Laundry in 1905), connecting it to downtown, Georgetown and the Navy Yard. The purpose of a horse-drawn transit system was two-fold: to transport freight for use during the Civil War and to give citizens efficient transportation in a city of rough and unpaved roads. The gauge of the rail was to be the same as the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad so that the two systems could be linked.

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Stock shares were sold in the company, and the draconian schedule of eight months mandated by Congress was met five days ahead of schedule. The Washington & Georgetown Railroad commenced operations on November 15, 1862. The 14th Street line initially had 14 cars along the line, but was reduced to five cars in the early years, no doubt reflecting the initial lack of demand and sparse development along its route. Nevertheless, development of the first speculative housing in the area began immediately in response to the construction of the streetcar line, and would soon provide customers for the new mass transit system.

As the economy of the growing city gained momentum, horse-drawn street railways emerged as an integral part of urban progress. Expectedly, real estate values were directly tied to a lot's proximity to the streetcar route.⁶ A September 1872 article in the *Evening Star* captured the optimism of the era:

Among the more important agencies that tend to materially promote the prosperity of a city are street railways. To say nothing of their convenience as a cheap mode of transit for all classes of people and especially for the middle and poorer classes whose means will not permit them to indulge in the luxury of private traveling equipages, they bring those residing in the suburbs into easy communication with the central and business portions of the city, facilitate the transaction of business, enhance the value of property, give employment to a large number of clerks, conductors, drivers, laborers, etc., and finally bring people into closer social intercourse, and offer encouragement to foreign capital, which otherwise shun the town as holding out no special inducement to speculative investments. Within a short time past, under the stimulus of great work of improvement being carried on by the Board of Public Works, Washington has received an impetus in the direction of street railway enterprises which will very soon make our local traveling facilities at least equal to those of any other city of its size in the United States, and commensurate with its necessities as the capital city of the nation.⁷

With the streetcar lines along 7th and 14th streets, the area's Civil War camps and hospitals, and the establishment of Howard University in 1867 to the northeast of the community, the Greater U Street neighborhood was well equipped to receive the influx of residents. Unlike the developing area between Massachusetts Avenue and P Street which remained in the hands of a few wealthy individuals interested in land speculation, the land at the northern end of the city was subdivided and sold in small parcels or squares to less prominent individuals. According to the Faetz and Pratt tax records of 1873-1874, each subdivided square in the Greater U Street neighborhood was owned by one or more different persons. Many of these land owners were merchants, lawyers, clerks and other professional types who lived and worked downtown, or were not residents of the District of Columbia. Some land owners were associated with or entered into the building industry to take advantage of the growing economy and demand for

⁶ LeRoy O. King, Jr. *100 Years of Capital Traction: The Story of Streetcars in the Nation's Capital*. (College Park, MD: Taylor Publishing Co., 1972), p. 4.

⁷ *The Evening Star*, September 27, 1872. (From Truax collection).

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housing. For example, Elisha Falconer, who owned part of Square 274, was listed as having a wood and coal yard in 1870, but had become a carpenter by 1878. George Francis, the owner of the majority of lots in Square 275, operated a house furnishings store. The partnership of Martin and Walker, listed as carpenters and builders, owned part of Square 306. Walter M. Pumphrey, the owner of Square N334, was listed as a carpenter, and the firm of Starr and Metcalf, owners of Square 302, was listed as a real estate partnership in 1868.

After 1870, the volume of land turnover remained high and squares were commonly re-subdivided to provide smaller lots. Investors often leapfrogged over the densely-built areas closer to downtown to buy cheaper, undeveloped land farther away. Because of the area's distance from downtown and the lack of service amenities, many subdivided lots were not built upon immediately, but were improved only after the city's infrastructure was enhanced or as signs of improvements began to surface. Until the establishment of the Territorial Government in 1871 when an effort to modernize the city began, this far northern area of the city lacked roads, water mains, sewer and gas lines, and other services required for development. Although located amidst the important 7th Street and 14th Street streetcar lines, the Greater U Street neighborhood was still well removed from the center city and initially lacked the service amenities needed for systematic growth and development.

The first significant phase of development in the Greater U Street area took place after 1862, when the streetcar line was constructed along 14th Street, and lasted until the early 1870s, when the introduction of municipal building codes significantly changed the appearance of the speculative rowhouse being erected in the area. Built individually or in small groups or pairs, these early buildings had relatively unadorned flat facades with limited decorative details. While influenced by the bracketed Italianate style, some of the earliest houses are quite spare and represent a builder's vernacular interpretation of the style. Examples can be found at 1901-1905 12th Street (c. 1865) and at 1909 9th Street (c. 1870), which was originally part of a row. A continuous row of buildings dating from this early period can be found at 1205-1233 T Street. The facades are flat-fronted, with ornamentation limited to bracketed cornices and door surrounds. Adjacent rows, such as the 1800 block of 12th Street, are more highly decorated. Further examples can be found in the 1200 block of V Street, in the 1200 block of S Street, and at 1345-49 Florida Avenue.

The most architecturally noteworthy residential row from this early period are the dwellings at 1413-1431 S Street, dating perhaps as early as 1864. This row of ten brick houses forms a unified terrace, with a three story center capped by a mansard roof connected by recessed flat roofed two story hyphens and flanked by pedimented two story terminal pavilions, with each of the five elements being a duplex. The houses were originally unified by a continuous bracketed one story porch, with a second story deck emphasizing the center mansarded pavilion. While the architect/builder is unknown, the buildings may have been influenced by the Washington City Orphan Asylum (1865, demolished) designed by John Harkness immediately across the intersection of 14th and S streets.

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The Territorial Government & the Board of Public Works: 1871-1874

The biggest boost to city improvements and amenities occurred during the short-lived administration of the Territorial Government. In February 1871, Congress passed a bill establishing a new government for the District of Columbia that was composed of a legislative assembly, a five-member Board of Public Works, and a governor. Under Commissioner Alexander R. "Boss" Shepherd, the Board of Public Works began a massive program to modernize the city and improve the intolerable road conditions. The Board let contracts for laying public sewers and water mains, planting thousands of trees, and grading and paving streets. The \$20,000,000 ultimately expended by the Board was intended to ensure that the City of Washington would remain the national capital.

Targeted for immediate and rapid improvements was the "center city," an area defined by the Mall on the south, P Street on the north, New Jersey Avenue on the east, and New Hampshire Avenue on the west.⁸ In addition, special consideration was paid to the improvement of certain thoroughfares in order to facilitate the transport of farm produce to market. Seventh Street, the main road extending north into the country, was graded and macadamized. Fourteenth Street, also a significant northerly route, was graded and leveled. While previous attempts to improve Washington's poor street conditions took place in the period between 1848 and 1850, this work was much more limited in scope and did not extend to the Greater U Street area.⁹

Although the Board of Public Works focused its major efforts on the central city, some improvements reached the far northern areas. By 1872, a few streets in the Greater U Street area had been graded and paved, including Florida Avenue, 7th, 9th, and 11th streets. Sewer lines, gas mains, and water pipes were laid along 9th Street by 1874.

Municipal Building Codes: 1871-1878

Section 37 of the Congressional act establishing the Territorial Government gave the city the power to enact and enforce building regulations. The first regulations were enacted in 1872 for construction in the city of Washington (the regulations did not affect the outlying area of Washington County). The regulations prohibited wood construction and wood cladding, mandated 9" thick masonry party walls, and required that all new houses have a water closet or outhouse.¹⁰ A building permit was required for the first time, to ensure compliance with the new laws. While the regulations initially proved difficult for the city to administer, they quickly took hold and the character of new buildings in the city was transformed, as clapboard frame buildings were no longer permitted. After the demise of the Territorial Government, the some minor amendments to the building regulations were made in 1877, with approval given by Congress in 1878.

⁸ William M. Maury, *Alexander "Boss" Shepherd and the Board of Public Works*. (Washington, DC: George Washington University, George Washington Studies, No. 3, 1975), p. 29-35.

⁹ Work included the laying of cobblestones on Pennsylvania Avenue west of the Capitol and on just six blocks of 7th Street and 12th Street. Much of this work was destroyed by the vast numbers of troops, horses and wagons that used Washington streets during the Civil War. Maury, p. 34.

¹⁰ Alison K. Hoagland, "Nineteenth Century Buildings Regulations in Washington, DC," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*.

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The immensity of the L'Enfant plan and the width of its streets proved to be an enormous challenge to the Board of Public Works in their quest to improve the city. It was soon realized that the expense of grading, paving and maintaining the streets, as established by L'Enfant, would be prohibitive. A Parking Commission was appointed by the Board on September 4, 1871, which was charged with managing the planting of thousands of trees between the sidewalk and street. Architect Alfred B. Mullett suggested that the grading and paving of streets be done just in the center part to save money, while John Fall proposed that house owners be given the extra land in front of their houses, called "the parking." On June 20, 1872, the Legislative Assembly passed an act putting the parking under the care of adjacent property owners while ownership would be retained by the Federal Government. Two years later, architect Adolph Cluss, who had become the city's chief engineer, wrote:

The system of improvements adopted by the Board, with its prestige of verdure-bordered footways by the sides of the wide streets, has been developed to such an extent that Washington, beyond its business streets, is fast becoming one vast garden....Public gardening has closely followed the street builders, the newly made streets having been planted with trees as fast as the season allowed,....Gardenesque K Street and Massachusetts Avenue are types of worthy means of communication, where the changeless lines of architecture are in a pleasant contrast with the foreground of vegetable life.

This parking, with its variously shaped terraces, now forms one of the most prominent, pleasing, and distinguishing features of the national capital, a leading feature of rare beauty which must remain her own "par excellence" for a long time to come. The magnificent distances, and the imperial width of avenues and streets, such as no other city can boast of, so long a rebuke and reproach to Washington, have been made superlative attractions by the introduction of parking.

Most notable for its impact on the physical form of buildings in the Greater U Street area was the passage of the Building Projection Act in 1871. This act allowed builders to erect projecting bays as much as four feet deep past the building line into the parking area. Architecturally, the first bays were tentative in design, typically only one story in height, of wood construction, and appearing as if tacked on to existing flat fronted brick houses. The continuous row of houses on the south side of the 1400 block of T Street (1874) illustrates early bay design. These houses are quite similar to the flat-front rowhouses built prior to 1871, except for the introduction of the small, polygonal wood bay. The houses in the 1400 block of Swann Street, also from the mid-1870s, are more resolved in their proportions and detailing. During the 1880s and 1890s, the bay was almost universally used in Washington rowhouse construction, and builders constructed them to be larger and better integrated into the body of the house.

The Victorian Building Boom: 1870s-1900

Despite the short life of the Territorial Government, the Board of Public Work's improvements and enactment of building codes, together with the construction of the streetcar lines, worked together to spur Washington's growth and development. Combined with a strong, rapidly-growing national and local

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economy throughout much of the last quarter of the 19th century, Washington experienced a tremendous building boom. By 1875, the boom had transformed the Greater U Street area. Compared with the eleven buildings in 1853, by 1875 the area had 706 dwellings, 48 stores, 7 offices, 2 schools, 2 restaurants, a saloon, bakery, barbershop, church, and a dye house.¹¹ While some squares were almost completely developed, the majority still contained less than 20 buildings.

The almost uniform residential development pattern consisted of rows of buildings joined by party walls with architectural emphasis placed only on the street-fronting facades. Builders took advantage of an economy of scale in building rows of identical houses, using mass-produced building elements. Fireplace mantels, windows, doors, interior wood work, stair elements, gas light fixtures, bathroom fixtures, as well as brackets, finials, molded bricks and cast iron stairs were all mass produced elements which were purchased and pieced together by residential builders in infinite varieties. Often entire blocks of rowhouses were designed and constructed at the same time, typically with identical massing and architectural detailing whose repetition was offset by projecting bays, turrets, oriels, dormers, and applied ornamentation in wood, brick, stone and metal. Rows range from two houses to an entire block throughout the Greater U Street neighborhood. Most of the houses in the area were designed, and often financed, by small-scale speculative builders. Many of the developers were carpenters, masons, and other building craftsmen who evolved into developers, but frequently interchanged between the role of tradesman, hired builder, and equity-holding builder/developer.

Stylistically, row buildings in the 1880s and 1890s were inspired by eclectic, medieval sources, including the English Gothic and Queen Anne, Romanesque, French Second Empire, and even Japanese design motifs. Houses tended to be asymmetrical in form – emphasized by projecting bays – and constructed in a dark palette of red brick, brownstone, black iron, and wood and metal trim painted in somber tones. Architectural emphasis was placed on the fronts of the buildings (and sides, for corner structures); rear elevations were utilitarian, most often with ancillary ells. While houses prior to 1875 were typically two stories in height, houses constructed in the late 1870s and 1880s tended to be three stories (two floors above a raised English basement). By the 1890s, houses in the area were more typically four full floors (three above an English basement).

These speculative ventures were financed by friends and relatives in the case of small builders, and by neighborhood-based building and loan associations that lent more economically and freely, and required no commission or bond against liens. In general, larger builders relied on traditional banks; these men frequently had the connections to find out where the government was planning road grading and sewer laying, permitting them to buy up land ahead of the crowd. Partnerships, formed by builders, investors, relatives, and friends for the expressed purpose of development, were the norm. As time progressed, the building industry in Washington became increasingly divided between very large and very small

¹¹ Report to the District Commissioners, 1876.

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construction businesses, while speculative building grew dramatically. During the 1870s, approximately 50% of all building in the city was done on speculation; by the mid-1880s, the percentage jumped to 75%.¹²

One of scores of such small speculative rows can be found at 1521-1525 S Street, constructed in 1879 by builder James B. Robbins. These identical three-story, red brick rowhouses have full-height polygonal bays, extensive brick corbelling, castellated metal work at the roof line, and decorative iron stairs. Robbins added three more essentially identical houses to the row between 1881 (1527-1529) and 1883 (1531). Robbins was also responsible for the construction of the 1500 block of Swann Street between 1878-1882, as well as other scattered smaller rows of houses throughout the neighborhood. Diller B. Groff was another developer who designed small and large rows of speculative houses. Groff's work includes the north side of the 1500 block of T Street, the 1900 block of 15th Street, and the 1500 block of Caroline Street, all located in the same square. His paired duplex design on Caroline Street (1879), with a central bay shared by the two houses and entrances located set back on the sides is unique in the area. Located on the outer fringes of the neighborhood when constructed, these duplexes with side yards separating the houses are similar to suburban houses in LeDroit Park and other areas on the fringes of the city limits developed during the 1870s.

The career of speculative builder James B. Robbins is illustrative of the numerous small-scale developers who constructed rowhouses in the Greater U Street area. Robbins was born in the District of Columbia in 1835. His father, a laborer, had been born in Ireland in 1800, and by 1860 was living in a house he owned and had amassed real estate holdings worth approximately \$3,000 -- a tidy sum in an era when most rowhouses were valued under \$1,000. James first appears in city directories as a carpenter in 1860 when he was 25 and living on his own. As both he and his brother became carpenters, it is likely that they had learned the trade from their father or had perhaps worked under a local carpenter. James disappears from the directories between 1863-65, when he was presumably off fighting in the Civil War. Between 1866-72, he was in partnership with carpenter Edward Medler ("Robbins and Medler, Carpenters & Builders"), no longer building for others, but financing speculative construction themselves. In 1873, now on his own, he was prosperous enough to have built an imposingly large Second Empire house for himself and his wife at 1314 Vermont Avenue in what was emerging as an block just off Logan Circle. The house is part of a row of three nearly identical houses, however, Robbins made his own the most impressive. Building permit records indicate that Robbins built at least 48 houses in the contiguous Greater 14th and Greater U Street historic districts between 1878-1900. However, he had been professionally active for at least 17 years prior to the issuance of permits, making the total number perhaps a good deal higher. Other than a single small apartment building he constructed on Massachusetts Avenue, all of his work appears to have been rowhouses. Toward the end of his career, with Washington real estate increasingly dominated by deep-pocketed investors developing subdivisions on a much larger scale, Robbins appears to have retreated from speculative building to for-hire building and contracting. When he died in 1909, his estate was valued in excess of \$25,000.¹³

¹² McLoud, *The Industrialization of Building in Late Nineteenth-Century Washington, D.C.* unpublished paper presented at the 102 annual meeting of the American Historical Association, Dec. 27, 1987. Washington, DC

¹³ Callcott, "1525 S Street, N.W.: Building History and Neighborhood Context" unpublished paper.

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The tax assessments from the 1880s-90s indicates that new brick dwellings ranged greatly in value between a low of \$600 up to \$5,000 in a few instances, while pre-1871 frame dwellings tended to be assessed from \$100 to \$1,000.¹⁴ One could generally buy a house in the 1870s with an income of \$750 a year. The most expensive houses in the city, according to newspaper advertisements in 1879-80, fronted Lafayette Square (\$65,000), while a mansion along Vermont Avenue just south of Logan Circle was listed for sale at \$16,000. In the Greater U Street area, a brick rowhouse could cost anywhere between \$2,500-\$10,000 depending on size, location and number of rooms. The house at 1442 S Street (with ten rooms and modern plumbing) cost \$5,000, an 8 room house with a stable at 13th & T was listed for \$3,500, while the newly completed row at 1827-1845 12th Street (6 rooms each) were each listed for \$2,700.

Renting a house was equally common at all economic levels during the Victorian period. Costs varied greatly depending on size and location. As with sales prices, the area around the White House was the most desirable and expensive; a house on Lafayette Square with 17 rooms cost \$200/month, while furnished houses on F Street and 16th Street rented for \$100-\$125/month. In the Greater U Street area, comprised overwhelmingly of brick rowhouses for the middle class, houses with gas lighting and a bathroom cost between \$20-\$60/month. The more modest, earlier frame houses cost between \$6-\$18/month. In all sizes of house, the inclusion of furnishings greatly added to the cost, often doubling the rent. In 1880, the house at 1529 T Street rented for \$32.50/month, while 1813 15th Street rented for \$20. A furnished house at 14th & T in the same period rented for \$60/month.

An interesting example of large-scale speculative development in the area is in Square 363, constructed between 1876 and 1887. Bounded by 9th and 10th streets between R and S streets, Square 363 was purchased in the 1850s by George W. Riggs. According to tax assessment records, the square remained unimproved until 1875, when it was subdivided into 80 lots by then-owner Henry S. Vanderbilt. Vanderbilt then sold the unimproved lots to individuals and companies that began to construct houses. The first section to be developed was along French Street, which bisects Square 363, and was owned by the Citizens' Building Company. The company hired several different architects to design houses. Architect James H. McGill, with Jonathan G. Nailor as the builder, designed the buildings at 928-940 French Street, while John Fraser designed 914-926 French Street with Dave and Coppersmith as the builders. The rows of dwellings designed by these two distinct architects are quite complementary, each constructed of brick with Italianate detailing, perhaps indicating a coordinated effort by the Citizens' Building Company. Three bays wide, the facades of the rowhouses are marked by one-story bay windows, slightly raised foundations with basement windows, and ornamental cornices of wood. The only indication that two architects designed the row is the slightly raised roofline of 914-926 French Street. Also owned by the Citizens' Building Company, 900-912 French Street appear to have been designed with similar architectural guidelines and stylistic requirements as these two-story buildings are virtually identical to the rows designed by Fraser and McGill.

¹⁴ The rate of assessment during most the late 19th century was \$1.00/\$100.

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This modest two-story brick dwelling form was constructed throughout the neighborhood in the 1870s. Predominately Italianate in style, the form remains intact along the east side of 12th Street between S and T streets. Constructed by builder J.E. Mandley for owner J.C. Rumsey in 1877, the rowhouses are two-stories in height with imposing cornices detailed by brackets, dentil moldings, and modillions. The window openings, several of which were originally elongated, are segmental arched with projecting hood lintels of brick. Each has a one-story projecting bay. Virtually identical in form and ornamentation is the intact row on the north side of S Street between 11th and 12th streets. Marked by one-story bay windows with elaborate dentil molding, the buildings were erected in 1872-1874 by owner J.M. Wright. The facades are three bays wide and substantially set back from S Street. The continuous cornice has brackets, modillions, and plain architraves.

In 1884, Square 363 was under development again as local architects and builders purchased rows of unimproved lots on which to display their own architectural designs. C.V. Trott owned and designed 940 and 950 S Street in 1884, while Brainard H. Warner was doing the same at 917-931 French Street. Distinct in architectural style and form, the rows of buildings designed by Warner are two-stories in height with projecting two-story bays rising up to the buildings' cornice. The buildings are two bays wide with single and paired window openings ornamented with segmental arched lintels. The dwellings are alternatively distinguished by corbelled brick cornices or pedimented parapets with raked cornices. Constructed in 1887, 901-915 French Street was owned and designed by various persons, including Nicholas T. Haller, Jonathan Henderson, Jr., and W.S. MacGill. Despite the different designers, the buildings are quite similar to those adjacent dwellings designed by Warner in 1885, but distinct changes can be seen when comparing them to the Italianate houses from the 1870s on the south side of French Street. This architectural continuity suggests the strong design fashion, the homogenization of the building industry, and the powerful sense of community development in the Greater U Street neighborhood during this period.

By 1882, the city's streetcar system had been greatly expanded and included several new lines that extended into the U Street area. The Metropolitan Line ran north on 9th Street to terminate at Florida Avenue; the 11th Street line was extended from its former terminus at P Street to Florida Avenue; and an east-west route ran from North Capital Street to 18th Street. This line followed Florida Avenue from North Capital to 9th Street and then west on U Street to 18th Street. Improvements in streetcar technology in the 1890s made commuting quicker and easier for residents in the Greater U Street neighborhood. The raised T-shaped proved to be treacherous to pedestrians, while horse manure built up between the rails. In general, the cars were thought to be dirty, slow and overcrowded. On August 6, 1890, Congress passed a bill forcing the streetcar companies to convert to electricity or cable or give up their franchises. When the companies lobbied Congress to permit overhead wires for power, they were met with massive resistance from the public which objected to the defacing of Washington's streetscapes. In 1895, Congress voted in favor of the aesthetic public good, requiring that the projecting rails be replaced with flush rails with underground electricity. During the 1890s, streetcar lines were also extended well beyond the city boundaries to Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant. By 1907, 23 cars ran along the 14th Street route, connecting Colorado Avenue to the Senate Office Building on Capitol Hill. The introduction of new

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streetcar lines and the improvements to the existing lines further encouraged settlement in this northern section of the city.

As the additional streetcar lines were laid on 9th and 11th streets, and as the need for housing continued, development continued to spread significantly throughout the neighborhood. Eventually, by 1890, all of the squares making up this far northern end of the city were improved with rows of dwellings and individual commercial buildings. The final, culminating development to occur in this area, and reported in *The Evening Star*, was the construction of houses on Square 362, bounded by 9th, 10th, S and T streets:

An important feature of the property transactions during the past week was the sub-division of square 362 by the owner, Henry A. Willard. This square is known as the old circus ground or Athletic park, and lies between 9th and 10th and S and T streets. It is the only entire square that remains unimproved in that section of the city. Mr. Willard proposes to begin at once the erection of houses. He will first build up the S street front, and has plans prepared for the twelve three-story houses which he will build early in the spring. A street to be known as Westminster street will be opened through the square from east to west, and there will be alleys fifteen feet wide in the rear of all the lots.¹⁵

As reported, Willard began in 1881 with the erection of two groups of brick dwellings along S Street and continued with the construction of houses on the other streets at the perimeter of the square by 1891. In improving it, Willard built several different groups of dwellings, each designed by a different architect or builder. Among the many hired by Willard were Thomas Franklin Schneider, William P. Lipscomb, R.L. Parry, and Thomas M. Haislop. The dwellings were three stories above a basement with a myriad of rooflines. Like Square 363, Square 362 was architecturally unified with individuality achieved in the use of alternating turrets, projecting square and octagonal bays, and imposing pedimented dormers obscuring the continuous mansard roof. Architectural detailing is illustrated by the segmental and jack-arch lintels, single and paired window openings, limestone stringcourses and sills, and corbelled brick cornices.

Between 1883 and 1886, this building form was freely utilized throughout the neighborhood along 8th, 9th, 11th, and T streets. The brick rowhouses were set on the lot line with projected square bays. Architectural ornamentation included corbelled brick cornices, segmental-arch openings, projecting lintels, and paired window openings. Similar in design and form to the three-story dwellings erected on Square 362 by Willard, the two-story models had flat roofs or modest pyramidal roofs that capped only the projecting bays. As illustrated throughout the community, the rowhouses were designed and constructed by a variety of architects and builders for various property owners, including Diller B. Groff, George W. Utelehle, W.H. Germain & Co., and W.H. Sleeper.

¹⁵ "Building Up Athletic Park", *The Evening Star*, January 19, 1889.

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As the residential development between 7th Street and 14th Street intensified, so too did the commercial corridors serving the neighborhood. Selected as two of the city's principal streetcar lines in the mid-19th century, these transportation corridors were developed with small neighborhood-based commercial establishments that included hardware stores, paint suppliers, drugstores, real estate offices, grocery stores, and coal and wood distributors. Most other goods and services, including clothing, fabric and shoes, were available downtown, a quick streetcar ride away. The commercial buildings in the Victorian period were similar in overall massing and detail to the residential architecture of the same period, most often designed in an Italianate style and featuring both flat-fronted and bay-fronted facades with bracketed cornices and molded window hoods. Extant examples of commercial buildings constructed within this predominately residential neighborhood stand at 1123 S Street (1870-1874); 1905 9th Street (1888); and 1801 Vermont Avenue (1888-1903). Later in the 19th century and into the 20th, some dwellings on corner lots were rehabilitated for use as commercial businesses. Rehabilitated models are found 1802 S Street (1913); 901 S Street (1892); 1700 10th Street (1874-1888); 945 R Street (1885); 1708 9th Street (1880), and at 1501 S Street (1878); and the corner of Swann and 15th Street (1879).

A noteworthy non-residential building is the Engine Company #7 Firehouse at 931 R Street. Constructed in 1884, the building is one of seven extant firehouses dating from the Victorian era in Washington, and stands as the only firehouse from that period to be erected on a narrow residential street. The two-story red brick building is distinguished by its ornate corbelled brick cornice with brackets, pedimented parapet, and round arch openings. As originally designed, the building had two paneled wood garage doors, which opened inward. The wide openings were formed by arches that were outlined with thick limestone surrounds. Believed to be the oldest in Washington, DC, the hose tower of Engine Company #7 was not visible from the exterior. Embedded within the building, the tower is approximately thirty-five feet high with fifteen wooden dowels at the top. Erected in response to the development of the Greater U Street community, the firehouse is architecturally compatible with the residential neighborhood with its Queen Anne style ornamentation.¹⁶ The building has since been rehabilitated for use as a dwelling.

Social and Cultural Characteristics: 1862-1900

In the 1870s and 1880s, Greater U Street was a new neighborhood, which primarily attracted the city's emerging middle class. The enactment of the federal civil service system in the 1870s gave government workers a greater sense of job security, expanding the number of federal employees from approximately 7,800 in 1870 to over 26,000 in 1900, and thus greatly expanded the pool of potential homebuyers in the city. At the same time, the city's growing economy fueled the creation of additional private sector jobs. The formation of saving and loan institutions in this period also gave the middle class a new way to obtain mortgages. The city's growth, fueled by widespread public improvements, the growth of the government, a prosperous national economy, and a commitment by the federal government to pay half the city's expenses, all worked to give Washingtonians the confidence to invest in real estate as never before.

¹⁶ Sally Berk, "Old Engine Company 7," (Unpublished paper), pp. 9-10.

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These new unpretentious houses were bought or rented by an assortment of people in a variety of trades. Census records for the area list a wide variety of middle-class professions: shoemakers, blacksmiths, real estate brokers, grocers, civil servants, teachers, and the ubiquitous Victorian-era clerks. Representative of these early inhabitants is Paul Clendenin, who at age 21 moved to Washington with his wife and two young daughters to take a job at the Bureau of Statistics. The family was the first to move into 1522 Caroline Street, paying \$20 a month in rent. Letters written by Clendenin to his family in the fall of 1881 provide a snapshot of a young family just arrived in the brand new neighborhood:

Sept. 29, 1881....I have been busy house hunting since a week ago Wednesday and have at last found a house that will suit I guess. It has 6 rooms & a bath, range, latrobe [stove], hot & cold water and gas....The house has not been occupied since built and in fact has not been fitted up yet with the gas fixtures & water faucets, etc. It will take a couple of days to fix it all up...Every agent says that there never was such a demand for houses as now. One man said he could rent 100 or 150 houses from \$20 to \$40 if he had them. So if you have any surplus capital that you want to be earning 10% or thereabouts and value increasing all the time, you had better build a block of small houses here. I will take good care of them for you and collect the rents & pay the taxes and keep good tenants in them. Property is going up very rapidly in the northwestern section of the city as you know from Carry's W St. property...Susie and the babies are getting along very nicely though we all & every body suffers from the intolerable heat.

October 19, 1881....Mr. Thompson's house is right back of ours & the women folks can run across the alley any time. It is about 1 1/4 miles from the office & a mile from the lecture room. We moved a week ago Tuesday and are nicely settled though put to some inconvenience at first by varnishing and other finished touches being put on. We are within one square of the 14th St. line which connects with the Avenue line of street cars...I got 6 tons of coal & put in my cellar at \$6.25. I get my groceries at "Brother Elphonse Young" as Dr. Rankin calls him. I like studying medicine very much. I attend 2 lectures every evening & 3 Sat.

The first residents of Greater U Street most typically were born in the District of Columbia, Virginia or Maryland; only a few were foreign-born. Families generally consisted of between 2-5 children with a wife "keeping house"; many black women also worked outside the home as servants or seamstresses. Many households were comprised of three generations, with an elderly parent living with their grown children. Census figures indicate that some households took in boarders (who were given meals) and roomers (who were not). Letting rooms had been extremely common in Washington since its founding, providing income for the homeowner and affordable housing for single people and young families in an era prior to the widespread development of the apartment building. Some houses in the Greater U Street area indicate a surprising number of people under a single roof. The modest three-story house at 1521 S Street, for instance, had 12 inhabitants in 1880 -- a widow, five of her children, two daughters-in-law, and four grandchildren. Few households had live-in servants. Census data for Caroline Street reveals that there were 93 residents in 1900, 22 of which were children. The majority of houses were rented. There was only one boarder on the street, and only three families had servants.

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This newly developing area appealed not only to a variety of middle class residents, but to different racial groups as well. The 1880 census for Square 333, the block between T, U, 10th and 11th streets, illustrates a racially and economically mixed area with an equal number of African-American and white households. Thomas Steel, a retail grocer, and J. Frank, who worked as a clerk at the Treasury Department, resided at 1900 and 1902 10th Street, respectively. African-American B. Smith, listed, interestingly, as a beggar in the census records, lived at 1904 10th Street. Prominent builder Diller B. Groff lived at 1901 11th Street, next door to War Department clerk J. Gibson. Several doors to the north lived African-Americans Daniel Taylor, a laborer, at 1923 11th Street and candymaker Thomas Robinson at 1931 11th Street.

Nevertheless, while African-Americans and whites could be found on the same streets in 1880, African-Americans were generally clustered further away from the streetcar lines, in less expensive areas, while white residents were more conveniently located adjacent to the principal corridors. The 1880 Census shows that along the U Street corridor, the residents were predominately African-American laborers, many of whom worked within the neighborhood. On the west side of the neighborhood, west of 12th Street to 16th Street, between S and U, the residents were middle-class and professional whites, who utilized the transportation system to travel downtown to work. This social and racial clustering can be seen when comparing the 1900 census records for 12th Place and Westminster Street. Located between 12th, 13th, W Street and Florida Avenue, 12th Place was predominantly occupied by working-class African-Americans in 1900. In contrast, Westminster Street, which is located between 9th and 10th street in Square 362, was exclusively white with a combination of middle-class and professional persons.

The 1400 block of S Street saw the arrival of several immigrant families around the turn-of-the-century, such as the Elefsiades, who moved into 1415 S Street in 1901 not long after arriving from Greece. Their daughter Mary, who was born in the house, recalls the thrill as a child of seeing the sphinxes being dragged down the street and hoisted in place on the Scottish Rite Temple on 16th Street in 1912; a memory shared by Gladys Scott Roberts, whose father was one of the first African-Americans to move into the block at 1447 S Street at the beginning of the century. Census records in 1910 show that the block housed a mixture of blue and white collar workers, including a tailor, fireman, teacher and draftsman.

The Rise of the "City within the City": 1900-1948

Despite Reconstruction-era reforms and laws that were aimed at protecting the civil rights of African Americans, intense segregation reemerged in Washington in the last decades of the 19th century. By the 1880s, the city began retreating from the limited protections it had offered during the Reconstruction period, and laws that had been in effect since the Civil War were ignored and ultimately dropped from the city's legal code in 1901.

The early decades of the 20th century saw a dramatic increase in racial hostility, segregation and restrictions barring African-Americans from housing, employment and economic opportunities. At the same time, the extension of the streetcar lines beyond the city boundaries made commuting possible to newer suburban neighborhoods. While many whites began moving to these communities, exclusionary covenants were widely used to prohibit the sale of new houses to blacks. The coexistence, if not full

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integration, of African-Americans and whites illustrated by the 1880 and 1900 census records in the Greater U Street area became increasingly rare as whites relocated to new restricted neighborhoods. Simultaneously, many older residences in the old downtown area, often inhabited by African-Americans, were being demolished to make way for commercial construction.

Out of necessity, Washington's black population of all socio-economic levels coalesced in distinct areas of the city that were open to them. These areas included Brookland, and the contiguous neighborhoods of LeDroit Park, Strivers Section, and Greater U Street. Given the racial tensions of the period, the influx of African-Americans into these neighborhoods hastened the exodus of many whites. Greater U Street emerged in this period as the city's most important African-American neighborhood, with a significant concentration of commercial and institutional buildings built by African-Americans to serve the neighborhood, as well as serving as the home to a significant number of African-American civic, educational, literary and religious leaders.

Census records illustrate that in a relatively short period, between 1900-1920, the Greater U Street area was transformed from a racially-mixed neighborhood into a predominately African-American section of the city. In 1900, Wallach Place was a predominantly white middle-class street; in 1910, it had become a mixed-race street with a variety of working and middle class occupants, and by 1920, the street was composed entirely of African American working and middle class residents. This change in racial configuration was also apparent in the areas further east, along the 7th Street and 9th Street streetcar lines. Squares 361, 362 and 394 between 8th and 10th streets and between S and U streets had been occupied entirely by middle-class, white residents in 1900. By 1910, several of the streets forming these squares were occupied by both African American and white residents. Residential streets further south, such as Westminster and French streets, remained predominantly white until the 1920s. Unlike most other blocks surrounding it, Caroline Street remained exclusively white through the 1920s, but became more densely inhabited. By 1920, there were 124 residents on the block, 17 of whom were boarders.

The emergence of the U Street area as a distinctly African-American neighborhood occurred simultaneously with a philosophical shift by many black leaders and organizations which were abandoning the idea of integration, and instead began promoting a new sense of racial solidarity and self-sufficiency. Having suffered the injustices of segregation and discrimination over the years, the concept of an exclusively African-American community, with its own businesses and institutions, appealed to many African-Americans. Influential leaders, such as W. Calvin Chase, editor of *The Washington Bee*, Washington's preeminent African-American newspaper; Andrew Hilyer, founder of the Union League of the District of Columbia; and organizations such as the NAACP, as led by W.E.B. DuBois, preached unity within the community and the essential importance of working together in order to achieve advancement. In the 1880s, Chase, a resident of the area, wrote in his newspaper *The Washington Bee*:

Every avenue of trade is closed to us; we are not permitted to enter establishments owned or controlled by white people. They have got to look out for their own race. What is the

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remedy? We must learn to patronize each other. We must encourage our own enterprises.
If we make establishments, we can place our boys and girls in them.

Chase and others believed that self-help groups, the formation of building and loan associations and racial solidarity would lead to the achievement of full citizenship rights and integration first promised during Reconstruction. These focused efforts resulted in exhortations by the African-American newspapers, and by clergymen, civic leaders and intellectuals. Chase heaped opprobrium on Negro businessmen who catered exclusively to whites, such as George Preston, whose Pension Building barbershop advertised "strictly to the white trade." "Chase hoped that General Black, a white man who ran the Pension Office, would bounce 'this Negro so far that he will not be able to shave rats.'"¹⁷

At meetings of the Bethel Literary and Historical Association, spirited discussion between older black leaders, who advocated an integrationist approach with an emphasis on civil rights, and younger leaders, who espoused a business-oriented separatist approach, characterized meetings as early as the 1880s. Many speakers at the Association encouraged the formation of businesses and boycotting of white businesses that refused to hire black help. Bethel programs in 1882-3 included lectures on topics such as "Self-Made Men," "Race Pride," "The Negro in Business," and "The Freedman's Bank." Members at the turn-of-the-century included John Wesley Cromwell, Andrew Hilyer, Lewis Douglass, Frederick's son and president of the Industrial Building and Loan Association; Kelly Miller, professor of sociology at Howard; and civil rights leader Mary Church Terrell.

Owning property, including rental property, emerged as an important strategy for economic self-help in the African-American community. Prior to this time, it had been difficult for blacks to purchase or finance the purchase of real estate; renting poorly-maintained alley dwellings or older houses were typically the only choices. The demographic changes in the U Street neighborhood, where many white residents were eager to sell their houses, presented the first opportunity for many African-Americans to own a home. Organizations, such as the Mutual Housing Corporation, were established to acquire apartment buildings and houses for resale or rental to African-Americans, while African-American owned banks and savings and loans, such as the Industrial Savings Bank, made it easier for many to obtain mortgages and business loans. In his speculative rowhouse development at nearby 17 & U streets, Frederick Douglass illustrated the role that property ownership could play for middle class blacks in providing income for the owner and an opportunity to provide housing for tenants in need. Many in the Greater U Street area followed his lead. As the neighborhood was increasingly occupied by the new homeowners, an important sense of pride in the area emerged in the African-American community that is still evident today.

The concept of the Greater U Street area developing as the center of Washington's African-American community fully surfaced around the turn-of-the-century. It gained international recognition through the American Negro exhibit at the Paris Exposition of 1900 in a display entitled "Negro Homes, Churches and Businesses in Washington, D.C." The exhibit featured a photograph of the row of two-story brick houses

¹⁷ Fitzpatrick, p. 56

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on the 1900 block (even) of 11th Street between T and U streets.¹⁸ The concept came to full fruition in the early decades of the 20th century, as significant numbers of black-owned businesses and institutions located in the area. While there had been little more than a dozen black-owned businesses in the Greater U Street in 1880, by 1920, there were over 300 such businesses clustered along 14th, U, 7th and 11th streets.¹⁹

Building an African-American Community: 1900-1948

As the residential building stock of the neighborhood had been almost fully developed in the latter part of the 19th century, African-Americans focused their attention on the construction of community resources to support their commercial, intellectual, fraternal and religious needs. During this period, Greater U Street was transformed from a primarily residential neighborhood to a self-sufficient community. U Street began to take on a cultural identity of its own, and ultimately became the focal point of Washington's African-American community. While the rows of dwellings behind the major corridors remained largely intact, U Street gained new and varied businesses on its remaining vacant parcels. The existing small groceries and drugstores that were typically located in rehabilitated dwellings on corner lots were complemented in this period by churches, hotels, restaurants, banks, fraternal organizations, theaters, jazz clubs and other entertainment and commercial facilities that catered to the African-American community. These commercial and institutional buildings did not follow the established architectural trends of the previous decades, but reflected the national movement toward classical revivalism. Many of the commercial and institutional buildings were constructed for specialized services and uses, and were designed, constructed and financed by African-Americans. Contributing to the area's architectural and cultural significance, many of these buildings are freestanding structures that rise several stories higher than the adjacent rowhouses. Extant examples within the Greater U Street neighborhood include the True Reformer Building, the Prince Hall Masonic Lodge Building, the Southern Aid Society Building, the Whitelaw Hotel, the Industrial Savings Bank, the Lincoln and Howard Theaters, the Odd Fellows Hall, and the Anthony Bowen YMCA, as well as the area's churches and schools.

One of the first examples of this early commercial/institutional development was the True Reformer Building at 1200 U Street. Erected on two lots at the corner of U and 12th streets. The True Reformer Building, historically known as the Pythian Hall Reformers Building, was constructed in 1902. The United Order of True Reformers was founded as a fraternal and benevolent organization that served the economic and social needs of the African-American community to foster racial solidarity. The building was the first major commission of architect John A. Lankford, the first registered African-American architect in the District of Columbia. The Renaissance Revival style building stands five stories high with buff colored

¹⁸ Photograph in the Prints and Photographs Collection at the Library of Congress. Lot 11303.

¹⁹ Michael Andrew Fitzpatrick, "A Great Agitation for Business", *Washington History*, Vol. 2, Number 2, pp. 49-50.

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brick exterior walls. Contrasting the brick is limestone detailing, used in the semi-circular arched openings, continuous sills, and stylized entablature with wreaths and swags. The building became an important meeting space for the African-American community, hosting speakers on the advancement of blacks and civil rights throughout its history. The True Reformers Building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1989.

The Prince Hall Masonic Temple at 1000 U Street was the home of the first African-American Masonic order in the south, founded in 1825. The six-story neoclassical style building is faced with cast stone, and was designed by Albert I. Cassell, a prominent African-American architect who taught at and designed many of the buildings at Howard University. Erected between 1922-1930, the building has been continuously associated with the lodge, which provides services for African-Americans, such as a social club and commercial office space. Recognized both for its architectural merits and its contribution to the African-American heritage of the city, the Prince Hall Masonic Temple was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.

The Anthony Bowen YMCA Building, originally known as the Twelfth Street YMCA and since renamed the Thurgood Marshall Community Center, was constructed between 1908 and 1912 to designs prepared by African-American architect William Sydney Pittman at 1816 12th Street. The imposing four-story building is the earliest surviving YMCA built by and expressly for African-Americans. The building was undertaken by the first African-American branch of the YMCA movement in the United States -- founded by abolitionist Anthony Bowen in 1853. The Bowen YMCA attracted financial support from Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears, Roebuck and Company, who also contributed one-third of the costs for the construction of over 5,000 African-American schools throughout the south. As an organization, the YMCA offered character building programs and athletic facilities not available to African-Americans through any other association; the programs were designed to promote the growth and development of Washington's African-American community. The building was constructed for a cost of \$100,000, raised from donations received from Rosenwald, community leaders and organizations, and local citizens; President Theodore Roosevelt laid the cornerstone. The Anthony Bowen YMCA was recognized as a National Historic Landmark in 1994.

The fraternal organization known as the Odd Fellows originated in England in the 18th century, and was established in this country in 1819 by an English immigrant in Baltimore. The first Odd Fellows Lodge in Washington, DC was begun in 1828. The Odd Fellows Hall building at the corner of 9th and T streets, designed by architect Albert I. Cassell, was erected in 1932, and survives as one of the several African-American "self-help" societies in the area.

The Southern Aid Society Building is located at the eastern edge of the Greater U Street community, at the intersection of 7th and T streets. Designed by African-American architect Isaiah T. Hatton, the building was constructed for the Society as a mixed use building to provide the African-American community with office space, a first run movie theater (the Dunbar Theater), commercial space, and hotel rooms. The Society was founded in 1893 in Richmond, Virginia and was the first African-American owned and

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operated insurance company in the country. The building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987.

An early example of commercial architecture in the community is the Minnehaha Theater, erected at 1213 U Street in 1909 by the District Amusement Company. The modest theater was the first of many entertainment facilities constructed in Greater U Street between 1900 and 1940. Designed by architect P.A. Hurlhaus, the two-story brick building was detailed in the Renaissance Revival style with an imposing semi-circular arched window opening, stepped parapet, molded cornice, and engaged pilasters.

Recognizing the impact the motion picture industry would have in the Greater U Street neighborhood, and the nation in general, Baltimore-based property owners Rosenthal and Benedict erected the Howard Theater in 1910 at 620 T Street. The Howard Theater, designed by architect J. Edward Storck, was the first legitimate theater erected specifically for African-Americans in the nation. The building reflected a variety of fashionable styles, including the Italian Renaissance Revival, Spanish Baroque and Beaux-Arts styles, as seen in its massive central arched entry, flanking side doors, imposing tympanum, and heavy broken cornice. Both the cornice and tympanum of the brick building were originally embellished with exposed electric light bulbs, a feature typical of theater architecture during this period. In the 1920s, the theater became the most important venue for jazz artists outside of Harlem. The 1,500 seat theater, the center of African-American entertainment until the 1970s, was significantly altered in 1940 to exhibit the then-fashionable streamlined appearance seen today.

Historically, African-American churches have played an important role in American society and have done much to foster leadership and civic pride. Prior to the Civil War, African-Americans and whites, although segregated during the services, attended the same churches. With the spirit of freedom following the War, African-Americans established their own churches. In Washington, DC, several African-American churches that grew out of this spirit were established. Four important congregations with purpose-built churches exist in the Greater U Street neighborhood, including the Berean Baptist Church (Christian Tabernacle Church), Lincoln Congregational Church, St. Augustine's Catholic Church, and Freedom Baptist Church.

Berean Baptist Church was founded in 1877 by a group of twenty-two African Americans who split from the bi-racial Nineteenth Street Baptist Church. The group first met at the Sumner School, but moved to the newly erected church building at 2033 11th Street in 1901. The Romanesque Revival Berean Baptist Church located itself in the heart of Washington's preeminent African American community, remaining at that location for sixty-six years. The Berean congregation, relocating to 924 Madison Street, N.W., sold the church building in 1968 to the congregation of the Star of Bethlehem Church, which eventually sold it to the Christian Tabernacle Church of God.

Saint Augustine's was constructed as St. Paul's in 1893-4, designed by architect Philip N. Dwyer in the English Gothic style. Its twin white limestone towers, while missing their spires today, lend a dramatic accent to the neighborhood. Its vaulted interior is lit by handsome stained glass windows by Mayer & Co.

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of Munich and New York. The building was constructed for a white congregation, many of whom lived above Florida Avenue. Their black chauffeurs were permitted to attend mass, but had to sit in simpler back-row pews, which still remain today. Archibald Grimke described the old St. Augustine's at 15th & M streets (demolished) as, "perhaps the only church in the city where the races worship side by side on terms of Christian equality."²⁰ In 1961, the largely white congregation of St. Paul's and the largely black congregation of St. Augustine's were merged. Gladys Scott Roberts, a longtime member of the church, recalled, "It was at first uncomfortable after we moved to St. Paul's after the integration, because it didn't feel like our church, so the Negroes all sat in the back. But the priests told us to move up, and we did. It took a little while for everyone to get used to it, but not very long."²¹ The church was renamed St. Augustine's in 1982. The former Convent of Perpetual Adoration, adjacent to the church on V Street, has been converted to a school.

Freedom Baptist Church at 1519 U Street (formerly Epiphany Lutheran) is a small Gothic Revival church designed by Macueil and Macueil in 1911. Situated on an oddly-shaped triangular lot, the architects solved the problem by rotating the building's footprint so that the corner of the square is chamfered and fronts U Street.

The Lincoln Congregational Temple United Church of Christ at 1701 11th Street, N.W. was constructed in 1928 to the designs of architect Howard Wright Cutler. The building served as the home of an influential congregation that traces its beginnings from the Lincoln Industrial Mission, an educational and social aid mission built on this site in 1868, and Park Temple Congregational Church. Through the years, the temple was the site of significant events including the founding of the American Negro Academy, the first major African-American learned society, and civil rights activities. Constructed of brick with a gable roof, the Basilican-planned building is an unusual local example of Italian Romanesque Revival architecture. The building was listed on the National Register in 1995.

Like churches, schools provided an important foundation for African-American society. Originally racially-mixed, segregated schools were imposed upon the African-American population by the city's school system in the years after Reconstruction. The first African-American school in the neighborhood was erected in 1880 at 10th and U streets. The school was named the Garnet School in honor of prominent abolitionist Henry Highland Garnet. In 1893, Patterson School was built adjacent to Garnet School and, in 1929, the two schools were replaced by Garnet-Patterson Junior High School.

The oldest extant school building in the Greater U Street neighborhood is the Phelps School, erected in 1887 as a white school. The school was transferred into the African-American school system in 1911 and renamed the Grimke School in 1934. The white students who originally had attended the Phelps School were transferred to the Cleveland School, erected in 1911 to the designs of Municipal architect Snowden

²⁰ As quoted in Willard Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color*, p. 296.

²¹ Interview with Anne Sellin, October 5, 1979.

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Ashford. Named after Grover Cleveland, the school was similarly segregated but, in 1936, was expanded and transferred to the African-American school system to accommodate the growing population of the neighborhood.

The picturesque multi-turreted corner building at 1800 Vermont Avenue, constructed in 1879, was originally constructed as a dwelling but served as the home of Frelinghuysen University in the 1920s and 30s. Founded in 1917 and led by educator Anna J. Cooper, Frelinghuysen University provided academic, vocational, and religious education for African-American working-class adults. The building has since been renovated to serve again as a dwelling, and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1995.

John Whitelaw Lewis, an African-American entrepreneur and financial pioneer, was the embodiment of the success possible in this environment of racial solidarity. He was responsible for the construction of two important institutions in the Greater U Street area. After arriving in Washington as a hod carrier, Lewis saw the need to provide financial opportunities for the black community. Having become president of the hod carriers' union, Lewis formed the Laborers' Building and Loan Association, dedicated to helping the black working class "save a part of their small earnings to provide homes for them," and to assist in purchasing houses. With an initial stock offering at \$25 a share, Lewis raised \$250,000 to finance the company. Their first purchase, in 1908, was nine newly-completed rowhouses on 13th Street between U and V streets. The association had offices at 1906 12th Street, before moving to a building at 11th and U streets. In 1917, they constructed a new building, now known as the Industrial Savings Bank, at 2000 11th Street. In 1930, W.H.C. Brown, President of the Industrial Savings Bank commented:

Our bank has earned and strives to maintain an enviable place in the affectionate regard of the people of Washington. We serve and hope to contribute to the welfare of laborers, mechanics, government workers, business and professional men and women. To stimulate and encourage thrift and savings, to assist in creating added and enlarged avenues of employment for those of our young people...This is the task of the Industrial Savings Bank.²²

The Industrial Savings Bank was designed by African-American architect Isaiah T. Hatton. Trained locally, Hatton was one of the nation's first registered African-American architects. The two-story building, constructed of yellow brick in 1917, is an excellent illustration of the architectural compatibility of the early 20th century buildings with the existing late 19th century residential architecture of the Greater U Street neighborhood. The building has projecting bays, an ornate overhanging cornice with brackets and dentil molding, semi-circular arched openings, stringcourses, and groups of ribbon windows. The main entry, set at the corner of the building, is embellished with Tuscan columns and engaged pilasters

²² "Monument to Late Founder." *The Pittsburgh Courier*, January 4, 1930.

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supporting the molded pediment of limestone. The opening is surmounted by a semi-circular arched fanlight.

In 1918, Lewis commissioned Hatton to design another building for him, the Whitelaw Hotel, at 1839 13th Street, which quickly became an important social center of African-American life. The building was constructed at a cost of \$158,000 by the Whitelaw Apartment House Corporation, which was composed entirely of African-American stockholders. It was described as "the only lodging facility in the city designed especially for African-American patronage, worthy of the name 'hotel.' It was the Embassy of the out of town visitor."²³ The hotel hosted many celebrities, including Joe Lewis, Cab Calloway and George Washington Carver, as well as countless other guests. Completed in 1919, the Renaissance Revival Whitelaw has impressive interior spaces, including a classically-styled dining/ballroom with a large stained glass skylight.

Other private businesses specifically established to help African-American Washingtonians emerged in this section of the city as well. In 1920, the Mutual Housing Company was organized with the purpose of acquiring apartment houses and blocks of residential property owned and occupied by whites in order to rent them to African Americans. The Mutual Housing Company, whose offices were located at 1232 U Street. (now demolished), undoubtedly had an impact on altering those few remaining white and bi-racial streets that existed in the area as late as the 1920s.

One of the first businesses owned, built and run by African-Americans in the area was the Murray Brothers Printing Company at 922 U Street. Founded in 1908, the company published Washington's most influential African-American newspaper, the *Washington Afro-American and Tribune*, and eventually became the city's largest press owned and operated by African Americans. The building at 922 U Street was designed by architect Isaiah T. Hatton and was built entirely by African-American workers. The Murray brothers also owned the Murray Palace Casino and the Minnehaha nickelodeon theater (now Ben's Chili Bowl), two of the many entertainment spots along U Street.

Numerous entertainment facilities, including theaters, night clubs, jazz clubs, billiard halls and nickelodeons were constructed between 1900-1940 providing a "downtown" for African-Americans throughout the region. Talents such as Nat "King" Cole, Pearl Bailey, "Jelly Roll" Morton, Duke Ellington, and Ray Charles were frequent entertainers in the theaters and jazz clubs of U Street. At the center of the area's physical and cultural development, U Street became known as the Great Black Way, Black Broadway, and the Blackman's Connecticut Avenue by the 1920s. The Howard Theater at 620 T Street was the first and most important theater in the area. In the next ten years, several other theaters were built. The Dunbar Theater was constructed as part of the Southern Aid Society Building at 7th and T streets, in 1919-20. The Lincoln Theater, erected 1921-1923, was considered by *The Afro-American* to be

²³ Patricia Cook, "Like the Phoenix, the Rebirth of the Whitelaw Hotel," *Magazine of the Historical Society of Washington, DC*, vol. 7, no.1, p. 7. Also see Fitzpatrick.

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"perhaps the largest and finest theater for colored people exclusively anywhere in the U.S."²⁴ Constructed as a first-run movie house specifically for an African American clientele, the building was a significant collaboration between noted theater architect Reginald W. Geare and leading Washington, DC theater operator Harry M. Crandall. The Republic Theater at 1343 U Street (demolished) was built shortly after the erection of the Lincoln.

Other entertainment facilities such as restaurants, night clubs, dance halls, and billiard halls grew up along the U Street corridor, stretching from 7th to 14th streets. Bohemian Caverns, located in the basement of the drug store at 2001 11th Street, was considered the "doyenne" of U Street and catered to Washington's African-American elite.²⁵ The three-story brick building in which it was located was built in 1922 by John Whitelaw Lewis. Other popular clubs included the Turf Club at 1228 U Street; Zanzibar Restaurant at 2107 14th Street; the Green Parrot at 1218 U Street; the Jungle Inn at 1211 U Street; Club Louisiana in the 2000 block of 14th Street; Club Cimmarron at 1914-1/2 U Street; the Casbah at 1211 U Street; and the Brass Rail at 14th and T streets.

A vivid description of the U Street corridor on New Year's Day 1921, published in *The Washington Bee*, captures the area's dynamic street life during its apogee:

I stood at the corner of Seventh and You streets Saturday evening--in fact, I alternated from Sixth and T to Fourteenth on You--from sunrise to sunset, and, in fact, until midnight, and you speak of fashions of every description--they could be seen.

Speaking about Paris gowns, they could not be compared to those that were seen to enter the Howard Theater on New Year's night. No sooner had the vast audience been dismissed than the theater was refilled for the night show.

Across the street is the Dunbar, and it had a line that reached from Seventh and T, opposite the main entrance of the Howard Theater...As I strolled up You street to Ninth there was a crowd making its way to the opening of the Murray Casino. I had to go in. I saw the blondes, brunettes and the dainty high browns, dressed in the height of fashion.

I strolled to the Hiawatha...I boarded a Seventh Street car after I had strolled to Dudley's You Street Theater, where the crowd was too great for me to enter....²⁶

²⁴ *The Afro-American*, January 4, 1929.

²⁵ Fitzpatrick and Goodwin, p. 212

²⁶ "Coloured Boulevard Alive -- The Theaters Full and the People Happy." *The Washington Bee*. January 8, 1921.

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African-American Cultural and Literary Life: 1900-1948

As with other aspects of Washington at the time, the cultural, literary and entertainment realms were segregated as well. Washington's intellectual life greatly benefited by the excellence of its public school system and the prominence of Howard University, both of which attracted many of the best African-American scholars, teachers and administrators. Many families, particularly from the south, relocated to the District in order to send their children to the city's schools. The success of the local school system was based almost entirely on its faculty who, lacking employment opportunities elsewhere, were attracted to the relatively well-paying District school system. Of the 30 staff members at M Street High School, 20 had received degrees from northern colleges and 5 from Howard University. At Dunbar High School, the academic credentials of the faculty compared favorably with those of professors at many universities.²⁷ Howard University's presence attracted African-Americans from throughout the country, both as students and as faculty members. Accordingly, there was an active cultural and literary life which was centered in the Greater U Street area between the late 19th century and 1940s, which served as the home and/or work environment for a number of prominent African-Americans who made significant contributions to the educational, entertainment, intellectual and literary life of the District of Columbia and the nation.

Francis L. Cardozo was the first principal of the M Street High School (1884-1896), after having first served as the principal of the Miner Normal School. Born free in North Carolina to a Jewish father, Cardozo attended Glasgow University in Scotland, where he won scholarships in Greek and Latin, and the London School of Theology. After serving as principal of the Avery Institute in Charleston, South Carolina, he joined the Reconstruction government to become Treasurer of the state of South Carolina, and ultimately its Secretary of State before coming to Washington, DC. Miner and M Street High School were among the nation's first public high schools for African-American students, and represent an important benchmark in the development of the city's educational system. As principal, Cardozo helped develop a rigorous curriculum and oversaw an exceptionally talented and well-educated faculty. The school produced a high percentage of college graduates, and numerous prominent educators and public figures. Cardozo commissioned two houses at 1437-1439 Swann Street in 1886; he lived at 1439, and later moved to 2216 13th Street.

Francis J. Grimke lived with his wife Charlotte Forten Grimke at 1419 Swann Street during the 1890s.²⁸ Born into slavery in South Carolina, the son of a white planter, Francis and his brother Archibald Grimke were "discovered" by their white abolitionist aunts Angelina and Sarah of Boston who subsidized their graduate school education. Francis earned a doctorate at Princeton Theological Seminary, and Archibald earned a law degree from Harvard. Archibald lived in Boston before being named U.S. Ambassador to Santa Domingo, but always maintained a presence in Washington, staying with his brother while in the city. As a writer and forceful speaker, Archibald championed constitutional rights for Negroes and for

²⁷ Fitzpatrick, Sandra and Marcia Goodwin, *The Guide To Black Washington*, p. 88-90.

²⁸ After her husband's death, Charlotte Forten Grimke moved to 1608 R Street, N.W., a National Historic Landmark located just outside the historic district.

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women's suffrage. Francis Grimke served as pastor of the 15th Street Presbyterian Church for thirty years, and was an important voice both locally and nationally. His wife, Charlotte Forten Grimke, was from a prominent free Philadelphia family, and had spent time during Reconstruction setting up schools for freed children in South Carolina. Both Francis and his wife were prominent members of the DC School Board. Archibald's daughter, Angelina Grimke, a graduate of Wellesley College, was also prominent in the neighborhood during her years that she taught at the M Street School and at Dunbar High School. She went on to become a noted poet who published with many of the Harlem Renaissance writers in the 1920s. Her play *Rachel*, receiving critical praise upon its production in 1916, revealed the humiliating treatment of African-Americans in America at that time.

Robert and Mary Church Terrell moved from their house in LeDroit Park to 1323 T Street just after World War I. When the Terrells moved to the 1300 block of T Street, the block had already become home to a group of elite African-American professionals, including the families of Dr. St. Clair Francis, Dr. C.P. Carmichael, Dr. Carroll Brooks, educator Edward Syphax and Dr. Robert Tyler. Robert Terrell had earned his Ph.D at Catholic University and, as a lawyer, became the city's first black municipal judge serving from 1909 until his death in 1925. Mary Church Terrell became a member of the Colored Women's League, organized in Washington in 1892. Five years later, this group would organize with other African-American women's clubs around the country to form the National Association of Colored Women, of which Mrs. Terrell was the first president. The club worked to establish hospitals, libraries, orphanages, homes for the aged, as well as holding anti-lynching campaigns. Mary Church Terrell was a tireless civil rights activist, leading successful demonstrations well into her 80s.

Another luminary in the legal field was William L. Houston, dean of the law school at Howard University. He was also father of civil rights lawyer Charles H. Houston, who went on to become chief counsel for the NAACP. Charles Houston successfully represented the organization in the 1948 Supreme Court case in which the court refused to uphold the use of racially restrictive covenants. The Houstons lived at 1314 V Street.

Christian Fleetwood, a Civil War soldier and recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor, was an influential businessman and civic leader. His musical endeavors included serving as choirmaster of St. Luke's Episcopal Church and at the 15th Street Presbyterian Church. Fleetwood moved into 1419 Swann Street when the Grimkes moved to 1415 Corcoran after the turn-of-the-century.

John Wesley Cromwell was born into slavery in 1846 in Portsmouth, Virginia. He was taken to Philadelphia in 1851 by his parents, who had gained their freedom. Graduating from Oberlin College, he returned to Portsmouth to open a school. Despite being shot at and the school burned, he continued to teach in Virginia in Richmond and Southampton before moving to Washington. After graduating from Howard Law School in 1874, he organized the *People's Advocate*, an African-American weekly newspaper that supported the development of black-owned businesses. Cromwell was a founder of the Bethel Literary

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and Historical Association in 1881, and the American Negro Academy in 1897.²⁹ He was an early member of the Washington branch of the NAACP and a strategist with Francis Grimke on methods for preserving civil rights. He was the author of *The Negro in American History*, published in 1914. His son, John Jr. graduated from Dartmouth College and was a teacher of German, Latin and mathematics at the M Street High School for many years. The Cromwells lived at 1430 Swann Street.

John Lankford, who lived at 1210 V Street, was the first black registered architect in Washington, D.C. He advertised in the *Washington Bee* that he had \$500,000 worth of work in Washington. Besides the True Reformer Building at 1200 U Street, his known buildings include the Haven M.E. Church at 1404 Independence Avenue, SE; the Central M.E. Church at 1215 Fifth Street, NW; the old John Wesley A.M.E. Zion Church; and an Odd Fellows Building.³⁰ Lankford was a proponent of the Tuskegee movement, which promoted industrial training and self-sufficiency of African-Americans. He was a founder of the Negro Business League, which met regularly in the True Reformer Building, sponsoring lectures that promoted the ideas of Booker T. Washington, including the role of Tuskegee as a training ground for black architects and builders.

Duke Ellington lived as a teenager in a house his parents Daisy and James rented at 1212 T Street. In his autobiography, Ellington describes his musical education, beginning unfortuitously with piano lessons at Mrs. Clinkscales and blossoming under the tutelage of Oliver "Doc" Perry, a conservatory-trained professional musician, and Henry Grant, who gave him the foundations of musical harmony. Playing for Louis Thomas at his cabaret at 9th and R streets, in the True Reformers Building, and at various clubs along U Street, Ellington began to hire himself out as a pianist for society functions and dances, earning enough money before he was out of high school to buy himself a car and a house (2728 Sherman Avenue, N.W.). After moving to New York in the 1920s, Ellington remained a strong presence in the neighborhood, and often returned to play the clubs along the U Street strip and to visit his extended family in the area.

Madame Evanti (Lillian Evans-Tibbs) was a pioneering black opera diva who lived at 1910 Vermont Avenue from 1904 until her death in 1967. Lillian Evans was born into a prominent black family in Washington in 1890. Her great-great uncle was Hiram Revels, the first African-American to serve in the U.S. Senate; her father, Dr. Wilson Bruce Evans, was a leading national advocate of the technical-vocational educational system of Booker T. Washington who became the first principal of Armstrong High School, the District's first vocational school for African-Americans. Miss Evans received a bachelor's degree in music from Howard University in 1913, and married her music teacher, Roy W. Tibbs, in 1918. Before the Civil War, blacks in America were accepted as spiritual, minstrel and blues singers. Lillian Evans-Tibbs was part of a pioneering group of classically trained performers that included Marian Anderson and Leontyne Price. After studying in Paris in the mid-1920s, Madame Evanti became the first

²⁹ The Bethel Literary and Historical Association was a forum for examining Negro history and the problems faced in the ongoing pursuit of civil rights. With Cromwell as president, the association met frequently at the Metropolitan AME Church at 15th and M streets.

³⁰ The location of these last two buildings has not been identified.

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African-American to perform with an organized European company. While racial attitudes in the United States made it impossible for her to join an American company, her career flourished through performances at churches and theaters. She performed at the White House for Presidents Roosevelt, Truman and Eisenhower, as well as giving USO performances for black troops during World War II. President Roosevelt appointed her a Goodwill Ambassador. During the 1940s and 50s, she helped establish the Negro National Opera Company in Philadelphia, and worked throughout her life to promote the careers of African-Americans in the world of classical music. Her house was an important meeting place for artists, politicians and scholars who comprised Washington's black intelligentsia, and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987.

Early beginnings of Washington's African-American literary movement can be traced to the Mu-So-Lit Club (Music, Society and Literature), founded by Francis Cardozo and W. Bruce Evans in 1905.³¹ The club had its own clubhouse in the 1900 block of 9th Street. Its membership was restricted to men who were largely from the African-American elite, and the club evolved in a direction that was more social than creative. Another early milestone was the founding of *The Stylus*, a literary magazine begun by Alain Locke, who began his teaching career in the philosophy department at Howard University, and Montgomery Gregory of the drama department. Zora Neale Hurston contributed to this venture during her year and a half as a student at Howard. While suspended during World War I, it resumed publication in 1921 until 1929. A number of Washington writers who lived in the Greater U Street area contributed to the magazine during this period, including Langston Hughes, Willis Richardson, Jean Toomer and Georgia Douglas Johnson. Outside contributors included W.E.B. DuBois, Charles Chestnut and Countee Cullen.

Georgia Douglas Johnson lived with her husband Henry Lincoln Johnson, the recorder of deeds for the District of Columbia, at 1461 S Street. Born in Atlanta in 1880, she was educated at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. Working full time in the Department of Labor and raising two children, Georgia Johnson published several volumes of poetry including *The Heart of a Woman* (1918), and *Bronze* (1922) and a play, *Plumes, A Folk Tragedy* (1927). Well known in literary circles for her contributions to the *Sphinx*, *Minaret* and *Music and Poetry* magazines, Johnson hosted an influential weekly literary salon, the "Saturday Nighters" in the 1920s and 30s. As Langston Hughes remembered years later, they gathered, "to eat Mrs. Johnson's cake and drink her wine and talk poetry, books and plays."³² Hughes associated these evenings with his more happy moments while in the District. He was not alone. A lesser known writer of the period, Albert Rice, a native-born Washingtonian and graduate of Dunbar, thought the capital "a center of Babbitts, both black and white," but did not despair because, "Georgia Douglas Johnson was there and on Saturday nights at the Johnson home brought together an unappreciated and otherwise ignored group of individuals." The group read their works, exchanged criticisms, and argued views on literature, art and politics, finding intellectual encouragement and nurture. Regulars to Mrs. Johnson's salon included

³¹ For a description of Washington's literary scene, see Ronald Johnson, "Washington Black Writers of the 1930s," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, vol. 50, pp. 484-499.

³² Johnson, p. 494.

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Alain Locke, Jean Toomer, Langston Hughes, Willis Richardson and Angelina Grimke, some of whom eventually moved to New York and became prominent participants in the Harlem Renaissance.

Jean Toomer grew up in the home of his grandfather Pinckney Pinchback, a Reconstruction-era lieutenant governor of Louisiana who was elected to the U.S. Senate but was refused a seat. Toomer, who lived at 1314 U Street, wrote part of his powerful book, *Cane*, while living in Washington. Part poetry, part prose, the book was published in 1923 and proved a tremendous success. However, he found respectable Washington unappreciative of his work, with the exception of the circle found at Johnson's salon. He generally preferred the raw, commercial character of 7th Street to the refined society scene. His description of 7th Street is that it was a "crude-boned, soft-skinned wedge of nigger life breathing its loafer air, jazz songs and love, thrusting unconscious rhythms, black reddish blood into the white and white-washed wood of Washington."³³ Eventually, Toomer relocated to New York to participate in the Harlem Renaissance.

Langston Hughes was the great-nephew of John Mercer Langston, the black president of Howard University whose wife Caroline Wall Langston was social arbiter of the Black 400 for many years. Hughes wrote much of *Weary Blues* (1926) and *Fine Clothes to a Jew* (1927) while staying at the 12th Street YMCA. In a letter to Angelina Grimke, Hughes wrote of *Fine Clothes*, "Most of its poems were written in Washington and, I suppose, reflect a personal mood, -- I was often hungry and 'broke.'"³⁴ Like Toomer, Hughes found Washington society "unbearable snobbish" and preferred 7th Street where there were "ordinary Negros...with practically no family tree at all....they played the blues, ate watermelon, barbeque, and fish sandwiches, shot pool, told tall tales, looked at the dome of the Capitol and laughed out loud."³⁵

Other regulars at Mrs. Johnson's salon included playwright Willis Richardson, who lived at 2023 13th Street (his plays, written mostly in the 1920s, included *Compromise*, *The Chip Woman's Fortune* and *The Broken Banjo*); novelist Jessie Fauset, who taught at Dunbar; Lewis Alexander; poet Albert Rice³⁶; May Miller; Marita Bonner; historian Carter Woodson; and artists Dutton Ferguson³⁷ and Richard Goodwin. Visitors from out of town included W.E.B. DuBois, who wrote the preface to Johnson's *Bronze*; James Weldon Johnson; Claude McKay; Contee Cullen; and Edna St. Vincent Millay.

³³ Johnson, p. 493.

³⁴ Johnson, p. 492.

³⁵ Johnson, p. 486.

³⁶ Rice gave up his government job and left for New York in 1926. His favored form of poetry was haiku.

³⁷ Ferguson left for New York to become the art editor for *Opportunity Magazine*, but returned to Washington and lived in the 1700 block of U Street after World War II.

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The Desegregation of Washington and the Decline of the U Street Neighborhood: 1948-1954

Racially restrictive covenants had been a major legal tool enforcing segregation in Washington, preventing African-Americans from living in many of the city's neighborhoods and forcing them to coalesce in, and create, distinct neighborhoods such as Greater U Street. Covenants were used to restrict ownership and/or occupancy of a property, and were drawn up by land companies, developers, homeowner groups, and citizens' associations, ostensibly to protect property values. In 1926, the Supreme Court upheld the use of racial covenants in *Corrigan v. Buckley*, letting a decision of the DC Court of Appeals stand.³⁸ The Court of Appeals had found that, "The constitutional right of a negro to acquire, own, and occupy property does not carry with it the constitutional power to compel sale and conveyance to him of any particular private property."³⁹ The case was reflective of the legalization of segregation by the courts that stood until after the second world war.

However, in 1948, the Supreme Court agreed to hear a group of covenant cases, including one that originated in Washington. The Washington case, *Hurd v. Hodge*, involved a restrictive covenant filed in 1906 by Shannon & Middaugh, developer of a neighborhood just west of North Capitol Street. The NAACP, which had worked on the Supreme Court appeal of *Corrigan v. Buckley* in the 1920s, had been preparing for a fight against restrictive covenants ever since, awaiting the right time, court and case. The lawyer in the case was Charles Hamilton Houston, who lived in the Greater U Street area at 1314 V Street.⁴⁰

In *Hurd v. Hodge*, the Supreme Court reversed its previous rulings, finding the covenant unenforceable by the courts. Chief Justice Fred M. Vinson wrote that the enforcement of a restrictive covenant would violate the Federal Civil Rights Act, and would be contrary to the public policy of the United States. The decision would be the first of many in the next decade which would erode legalized segregation. The Supreme Court continued to chip away at the power of the covenant in a decision in 1953, ruling that the award of damages by the courts by violating a racial covenant was contrary to the 14th amendment.⁴¹

While not immediate, the court's refusal to uphold racial covenants had a dramatic impact on the racial geography of Washington, and particularly on the U Street area. Legally, African-Americans were now free to buy anywhere in the city. Flight from the older neighborhoods of Washington was no longer restricted to whites. As many African-American families began moving out of the Greater U Street area in the 1950s, including many of the most affluent who were best able to afford houses in newer neighborhoods, the neighborhood began to lose some of its desirability. Its aging housing stock was

³⁸ The case had involved the use of racial covenants in the 1700 block of S Street, just outside the historic district. Mara Cherkasky, "For Sale to Colored," *Magazine of the Historical Society of Washington, DC*, v. 8, num. 2, pp.40-57.

³⁹ Cherkasky, p. 40-57.

⁴⁰ Cherkasky, p. 40-57.

⁴¹ *Barrows et al. V. Jackson*, *Ibid.*

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increasingly being rented out, rather than owner-occupied, and many single family houses were cut up into apartments and rooming houses for a more transient population. Increased density, overcrowding, and poverty began to plague the once middle-class area.

Other cases heard by the Supreme Court in the 1950s would continue the desegregation of Washington, and ironically, further contribute to the economic decline of the Greater U Street area. In the early 1950s, Mary Church Terrell, then in her 80s, and Annie Stein formed the Coordinating Committee with the purpose of forcing segregated establishments to integrate. The committee cited laws still on the books in the District of Columbia from the Reconstruction era which prohibited racial discrimination in public facilities, but which had not been enforced since the 1890s. The group focused on restaurants and stores in downtown, starting with Thompson's Cafeteria downtown, which had refused to serve them. With the backing of the District government, a law suit was filed against the restaurant. The Coordinating Committee broadened their activities, targeting any and all establishments that only served whites. At an early meeting, "ignoring assertions of the uselessness and vulgarity of picketing and warnings that it could provoke riots and racial violence, she [Mary Church Terrell] put on her ankle-length fur coat, wrapped a scarf around her head, and with her cane in one hand and a sign in the other, led the first picket line in a snow storm."⁴² Within eight weeks, Kresge's capitulated. A campaign against Hechts Department Store and Murphy's brought success in 1952. When the Court of Appeals ruled against the plaintiffs, finding that the Reconstruction-era laws guaranteeing equal access were invalid, the Coordinating Committee appealed to the Supreme Court. In 1953, the Supreme Court ruled that the "lost laws" were valid. The Washington Post described the victory as a decision that would destroy "all enforced segregation and discrimination." At the age of 89, Mary Church Terrell had lunch at Thompson's Cafeteria for the first time.

As with the 1948 Supreme Court decision, this important advance for African-Americans ultimately proved detrimental to the economic stability of the Greater U Street neighborhood. The unintended result of the desegregation of public facilities was that businesses in the Greater U Street area had to compete as never before with downtown businesses. With the dissemination of the African-American population throughout the city, the shops and businesses along U Street weren't as convenient to many of the city's African-Americans as they had once been. Following their customers, many existing and new businesses began locating in other areas of the city, including along Georgia Avenue and H Street, NE, in Anacostia, and elsewhere. While its entertainment facilities and fraternal organizations remained strong and active, the commercial character of the Greater U Street neighborhood began to wane.

In 1966, the portions of the neighborhood east of 15th Street were targeted as part of the larger Shaw urban renewal zone, and federal funds for the area's redevelopment were made available. While the area had never been thought of as a single neighborhood before or known by a single name, it became lumped together under the name Shaw after a local junior high school named in honor of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw. The area comprising the Greater U Street Historic District, located in the northern area of the Shaw

⁴² Marvin Caplan, "Eat Anywhere!", p 26.

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Urban Renewal district was designated "Cardozo" after Cardozo High School.⁴³ In April 1968, the riots that followed the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. devastated much of the social and economic infrastructure of the neighborhood, with the area around 14th and U streets particularly hard hit by looting and burning of buildings. Federally-funded urban renewal projects in the late 1960s and early 1970s began to rebuild the neighborhood, with new housing units and social service initiatives. Unlike the Southwest urban renewal, the neighborhood had a voice in the effort under the leadership of Reverend Walter Fauntroy, who created the Model Inner City Community Organization as a vehicle for citizen participation. In recent years, the opening of the Metro's Green Line and the construction of the Reeves Municipal Center have encouraged the economic growth and vitality of the area. The erection of new buildings on vacant lots, the multi-million dollar restorations and landmark designation of historic buildings such as the Lincoln Theater, the Whitelaw Hotel, and Anthony Bowen YMCA, along with the recognition of the area's cultural and architectural heritage, have made great strides in rejuvenating U Street and the Greater U Street neighborhood.

⁴³ Henry S. Robinson, "The M Street High School, 1891-1916," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society of Washington, DC* Volume 51 (Washington, DC: Columbia Historical Society, 1984), p. 120.

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Verbal Boundary Description

Commencing at 16th and S streets, the district is bounded by the rear lot lines of the properties fronting 16th Street (abutting the boundaries of the 16th Street Historic District), runs north to New Hampshire Avenue and runs down the center line of New Hampshire Avenue to its intersection with Florida Avenue and W Street. The boundary runs along the rear lots lines of the properties on the north side of Florida Avenue to 13th Street, down the center line of 13th to Florida, down the center line of Florida to 12th Street and down the center line of 12th Street to V Street. The boundary runs west along the center line of V Street, turning south at the eastern alley, midblock through square 273 and east at the rear lot lines of the properties fronting U Street. The boundary extends south down the center of 12th Street to U Street, down the center of U, and north in midblock of square 304 to include the corner building only on this square. The boundary extends north down the center of 11th Street to V Street, east down the center of V to Florida Avenue, south on Florida to U Street, and east on Florida to T and Wiltberger streets. Moving south on Wiltberger, the boundary turns west to 7th Street between S and T streets midblock in square 441. At 7th Street, the boundary extends north to T Street, turns west to the alley, and south down the alley to S Street, bisecting square 417. At S Street, the boundary continues west to 9th Street, south down the center of 9th to R Street, and west on R Street to Vermont Avenue. The boundary continues northeast down Vermont Avenue to S Street, and west to 16th Street (abutting the boundaries of the Greater 14th Street Historic District to the south). Squares included, in part or whole, in the Greater U Street Historic District are: 189, 190, 191, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 304, 305, 306, 308, 332, 333, N334, 334, 335, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 393, 394, 416, 417, 440, 441, 2660, and 2868.

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Boundary Justification

On the south, the S Street boundary of the proposed district abuts the northern boundary of the Greater 14th Street Historic District. While the Greater U Street area has a similar development history and architectural expression, its 20th century African-American cultural history, centered on U Street, is distinct from that of the Greater 14th Street neighborhood. While not historically significant, the southern boundary also corresponds to modern day ward and community association boundaries.

On the west, the district abuts the 16th Street Historic District, which has a distinctly different architectural, developmental and social history. Sixteenth Street is an important linear district; its Victorian-era mansions, early 20th century apartment buildings, national churches and institutional buildings developed in response to their location along an important L'Enfant street extending from the White House. This history is largely unrelated to the extension of streetcar lines and the development of a middle class Victorian neighborhood and the African-American community which characterize the history of Greater U Street.

On the north, the district follows Florida Avenue, which marks the original boundary of the L'Enfant city. Florida Avenue is both an important historical boundary to the Greater U Street neighborhood, and demarcates a significant topographical boundary for the city. Along several blocks, the district includes buildings along the north side of the avenue when that development was contemporaneous with that in the proposed district. The neighborhood to the north, Columbia Heights, was developed largely after 1900 when the streetcar lines were extended up the hill north of Florida Avenue. This neighborhood has a distinctly different architectural and developmental character from the Greater U Street neighborhood.

On the east, several blocks within the L'Enfant city between V and 12th streets and Florida Avenue have experienced sufficient demolition, industrial and auto-related new construction, and loss of integrity of remaining resources to warrant exclusion from the proposed district. The district boundary continues along Florida Avenue to Wiltberger Street (between 6th and 7th streets). The loss of building fabric along 7th Street due to extensive demolition and urban renewal prevents the district boundaries from including significant frontage along what had been an important transportation corridor in the neighborhood. The boundary runs south and west to 9th and R streets, excluding several blocks of mid-20th century urban renewal construction, and runs west along R Street to Vermont Avenue where it rejoins the southern boundary established at S Street.

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The boundaries were developed based on an intensive-level archival and on-site survey of the area's building stock, conducted in a two-phase neighborhood-based survey effort in 1991-93. A color-coded map is attached (Appendix 1) which illustrates the boundaries of the proposed district, the surrounding historic districts, and the vacant land and non-contributing modern construction which abut the proposed district.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Non-Contributing Buildings:

**GREATER U STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT
WASHINGTON, DC**

-1851 7th Street, NW	-2118 14th Street, NW
-1900-1920 7th Street, NW	-2119 14th Street, NW
-1919 9th Street, NW	-2120 14th Street, NW
-1708 10th Street, NW	-2122 14th Street, NW
-1719 10th Street, NW	-2125 14th Street, NW
-1721 10th Street, NW	-2211-2217 14th Street, NW
-1726 10th Street, NW	-2202 14th Street, NW
-1731 10th Street, NW	-1819 15th Street, NW
-1733 10th Street, NW	-2001 15th Street, NW
-1735 10th Street, NW	-945 R Street, NW
-1802 10th Street, NW	-1001 S Street, NW
-1812 10th Street, NW	-1233 S Street, NW
-1816 11th Street, NW	-1325 S Street, NW
-1826 11th Street, NW	-1443 S Street, NW
-1830 11th Street, NW	-923 T Street, NW
-1927 11th Street, NW	-925 T Street, NW
-2002 11th Street, NW	-927 T Street, NW
-1806 12th Street, NW	-929 T Street, NW
-1817 12th Street, NW	-1307 T Street, NW
-1829 13th Street, NW	-1309 T Street, NW
-1901 13th Street, NW	-1419 T Street, NW
-2020 13th Street, NW	-900 U Street, NW
-2200 13th Street, NW	-1300-1324 U Street, NW
-1801 14th Street, NW	-1351 U Street, NW
-1803 14th Street, NW	-1442 U Street, NW
-1802 14th Street, NW	-1447-1449 U Street, NW
-1804 14th Street, NW	-1000 V Street, NW
-1810 14th Street, NW	-1310 V Street, NW
-1816-1818 14th Street, NW	-1414 V Street, NW
-1905-1911 14th Street, NW	-1440-1450 V Street, NW
-1924 14th Street, NW	-1400 W Street, NW
-1926 14th Street, NW	-1441 Florida Avenue, NW
-1933-1935 14th Street, NW	-1443 Swann Street, NW
-1934-1938 14th Street, NW	-1501-1503 Swann Street, NW
-2000 14th Street, NW	-1920 Vermont Avenue, NW
-2015 14th Street, NW	-1329 Wallach Place, NW
-2114 14th Street, NW	

The district contains 62 non-contributing buildings, however, some individual buildings have multiple addresses.

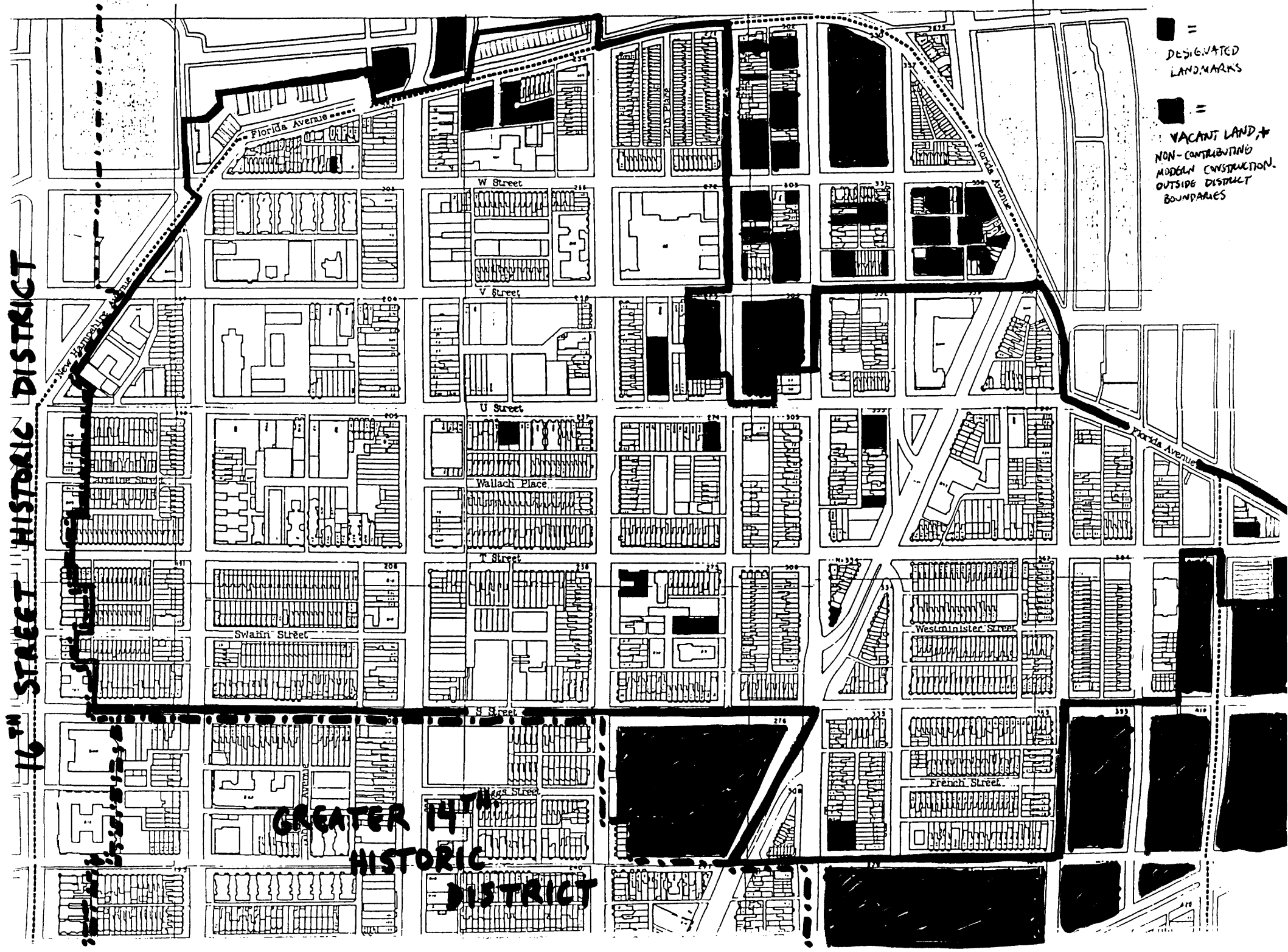
APPENDIX I
GREATER U STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

16TH STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

GREATER 14TH HISTORIC DISTRICT

■ = DESIGNATED LANDMARKS

■ = VACANT LAND, + MODERN CONSTRUCTION OUTSIDE DISTRICT BOUNDARIES



WASHINGTON, DC

PREPARED BY DC HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION

12/98

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APPENDIX 1

GREATER U STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

BOUNDARIES, WITH ABUTTING HISTORIC DISTRICTS, VACANT LAND + MODERN CONSTRUCTION SHOWN