

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE



**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
APPLICATION FOR HISTORIC LANDMARK OR HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION**

New Designation **X**

Property name **No. 7 Grant Circle**

Address **7 Grant Circle, NW, Washington, D.C.**

Square and lot number(s) **Square 3243, Lot 44**

Affected Advisory Neighborhood Commission **4C09**

Date of construction **1915** Date of major alteration(s) **N/A**

Architect(s) **Merrill T. Vaughn** Architectural style(s) **Colonial Revival**


Original use **Residential** Present use **Residential/Condo Conversion**

Property owner **Private Property**

NAME OF APPLICANT(S) **Off Boundary Preservation Brigade**

Address/Telephone of applicant(s) **764 Fairmont Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20011
717.602.5002**

Name and title of authorized representative **Oscar Beisert**

Signature of representative  Date **2.18.2015**

Name and telephone of author of application **Oscar Beisert, Off Boundary Preservation Brigade,
717.602.5002**

Date received **2/18/15**
H.P.O. staff **JAD**
15-08

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

Historic name: No. 7 Grant Circle

Other names/site number: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: 7 Grant Circle NW

City or town: Washington State: District of Columbia County: _____

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

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. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	

<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____ Signature of commenting official:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ Title :</p>	<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

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

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Colonial Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick/Stone/Other

Narrative Description

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

Summary Paragraph

No. 7 Grant Circle is situated on Grant Circle in the Petworth neighborhood of northwest Washington, D.C. Grant Circle and its associated triangle parks are surrounded by private residential and religious properties. Grant Circle is a major urban and visual feature of the Petworth neighborhood, marking the intersection of Fifth and Varnum Streets and Illinois and New Hampshire Avenues, N.W. No. 7 Grant Circle is one of two houses on Grant Circle designed by architect Merrill T. Vaughn and developed by M.L. Gottwals. The home is an important example of Vaughn's residential architecture. As a single-family home it is important part of a repertoire that includes other protected buildings in DC, most of which are larger buildings. Minor alterations have been made in the façade of the property, but overall, it retains the integrity of the original construction.

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Narrative Description

Grant Circle (Reservation 312)¹

Grant Circle, alternately known as Reservation 312, is a 1.84-acre urban park bound by a two-lane vehicular rotary of the same name, with one lane of parking around the outer edge. The circle is located at the intersection of Fifth and Varnum Streets and New Hampshire and Illinois Avenues, N.W., which radiate from the circle's center.

No. 7 Grant Circle is one of seventeen private residential properties with addresses on Grant Circle, which equates to seventeen primary residences and eight associated alley buildings. A majority of these buildings share the same general characteristics: rowhouse-type dwellings of masonry construction with two stories, raised basements, and false mansard roofs. As such, they conform to the basic Washington Row typology, with decorative details that are derivative of Colonial Revival and Italian Renaissance Revival styles.

7 Grant Circle

No. 7 Grant Circle is one of two nearly identical buildings. In a row of seven complimentary houses. It is a two-bay, two-story masonry row house with a raised basement, front porch, and a false mansard roof. Constructed in 1915, the house was designed by architect Merrill T. Vaughn and developed by M.L. Gottwals. The building is clad in variegated buff brick laid in a six-course American bond pattern. The window and door openings are square, with brick soldier course lintels and concrete openings, containing double or triple rows of one-over-one, double-hung windows. The porch and roof designs are similar to those at 4 and 5 Grant Circle, albeit with hipped dormers and slightly more elaborate cornice details.

¹ Both Grant Circle and the associated triangular parks are owned by the National Park Service and are administered through its Rock Creek Park Management Unit.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

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

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Community Planning and Development

Architecture: Architect, Merrill T. Vaughn

Period of Significance

1889; 1913-1939; 1951-1964

Significant Dates

1889 (subdivision)

1913-1939 (development)

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Vaughn, Merrill T.

Gottwals, M.L.

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

No. 7 Grant Circle is significant under National Register Criterion A for its reflection of broad patterns of urban development, both in Washington, D.C., and nationwide, from the late-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries. The period of significance incorporates the subdivision of the Petworth neighborhood (1889); its primary period of development as a residential suburb (1913-1939); and its subsequent integration as it evolved from a predominantly white to African American population (1951-1964). No. 7 Grant Circle is significant under National Register Criterion C for its relationship to Merrill T. Vaughn, a prominent architect and government construction manager in the Washington, D.C. area.

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

No. 7 Grant Circle is significant under National Register Criterion A in the area of *Community Planning and Development*. Its three distinct periods of significance illustrate broad trends in the evolution of urban areas, particularly Washington, D.C., during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as Washington sought to reconcile the legacy of the planned Federal City with the suburban expansion necessary to support its growing population. In 1889, Petworth became the first suburban subdivision in the District of Columbia to conform to the pattern of the L'Enfant Plan for the City of Washington, extending its nomenclature of broad avenues, streets, and circles into former Washington County. Together with Sherman Circle, Grant Circle was one of only two traffic circles outside the boundaries of the L'Enfant Plan that corresponded to the scale and character of the original circles. The form and monumentality of Petworth and Grant Circle reversed a trend of incompatible, speculative subdivision that had characterized the earlier three decades.

Despite its subdivision in 1889, both Grant Circle and its associated private development experienced a lag between planning and realization. The neighborhood's streets and avenues existed largely on paper until the early 1910s, when houses began to populate the parcels around the circle. Grant Circle itself and its associated triangle parks were not improved and landscaped until the 1910s and 1920s. The properties that developed on and around the circle between 1913 and 1939—with their successful comingling of vernacular and speculative dwellings against stylistically refined religious buildings—contributed to the unique sense of the monumental, yet domestically scaled, atmosphere that defined the neighborhood. Together, Grant Circle, the triangle parks, and the additional contributing buildings display a remarkable physical integrity to this period of development, allowing them to convey their significance as an early-twentieth-century residential suburb.

Also, the demographic and racial shift witnessed by the Petworth neighborhood in general, and Grant Circle in particular, between 1951 and 1964 are reflective of national trends in urban migration and integration and the establishment of an urban African American middle class. These changes were particularly well documented at Grant Circle, and continue to resonate with the neighborhood's residents.

Furthermore, No. 7 Grant Circle is significant under National Register Criterion C for architecture, as one of the only works of Architect Merrill T. Vaughn in the Petworth area and one of his few projects that was not geared to ward the upper classes.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Early History of the Grant Circle Site: 1772-1887

Long before European settlement, the Washington, D.C., region was inhabited by two Native American tribes—the Anacostank and the Mattapantient Indians. Evidence of this habitation is illustrated on the John White map of 1585, as well as the John Smith map of 1608, encompassing a much larger area of land in the region. More than a decade later, present-day Washington, D.C., would undergo its earliest period of European settlement. In 1772, King George III granted a 536-acre tract to James White, who then built a log cabin within the vast wilderness and named the tract “Pleasant Hill.” The 536-acre tract encompassed the present-day site of Petworth and Grant Circle. Despite King George III's generous land

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grant, White pledged his allegiance to the revolutionary cause and became an officer in the Continental Army.²

During White's ownership of the 536-acre tract, "An Act for Establishing the Temporary and Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States," more commonly known as the Residence Act, was passed by Congress. The act authorized President George Washington to select a site for the capital, which became a Federal district measuring ten square miles on the Potomac River. In addition to the selection of a site for the capital, the Residence Act allowed ten years for the acquisition of land and the construction of adequate buildings to accommodate the president, Congress, and various other public offices. In December 1800, the seat of power would relocate from its temporary home in Philadelphia to the District of Columbia.³

Washington enlisted Major General Pierre Charles L'Enfant to design the city and specify the sites for its major public buildings. L'Enfant's plan, produced in 1791, was defined by avenues, radiating diagonally from fifteen public squares and circles, overlaid with an irregularly spaced grid. Modeled on Baroque planning and landscape principles, L'Enfant's plan took advantage of the geographic diversity of the land to inform the city's boundaries and the placement of major buildings. Although L'Enfant was later dismissed and replaced by surveyor Andrew Ellicott, who simplified the design and altered it to conform with more accurate survey information, the basic structure of radiating avenues laid atop on irregular grid was preserved.⁴ White's 536-acre tract was located within the District of Columbia but outside the boundaries of L'Enfant and Ellicott's plans.

In 1801, the District of Columbia Organic Act legally incorporated the District of Columbia, dividing it into two counties: Washington County to the north and east of the Potomac River and Alexandria County to the west and south. The newly formed District of Columbia also included the cities of Alexandria, Georgetown, and Washington, each independently incorporated with their own charters and set apart from the unincorporated counties. The land that encompasses present-day Petworth and Grant Circle was within Washington County, north of Boundary Street (now Florida Avenue). That same year, James White died and his heirs sold the 536-tract to Captain Balch, who himself died in 1803.⁵

The 536-acre tract was then sold to Colonel John Tayloe III of Mount Airy, Virginia. Colonel Tayloe renamed the tract "Petworth," presumably in reference to a country seat and earldom near Sussex, England—an estate with which the English-educated Tayloe may have been familiar. The English version of Petworth had been laid out by the eminent landscape gardener Lancelot "Capability" Brown in the 1750s. The name Petworth has been assigned to a portion of the 536-acre tract ever since. Like many wealthy planters of the pre-Civil War period, the Tayloes owned slaves, who likely cultivated the land at Petworth.⁶ Between 1803 and 1828, like many of his class level at the time, Colonel Tayloe divided his time between town and country, living at his home, the Octagon House, at the corner of Eighteenth Street and New York Avenue, N.W., in the Washington City and at his country seat, Petworth, in Washington County. Little is known of Petworth in this period; however, it is said that his estate was enclosed, in part, by a post and rail fence, containing both a manor house and racetrack. However, the precise details of the

² Antonia Gordon, "An inquiry into the Petworth area: its origin, history, and some aspects of the present" (unpublished manuscript, 1979).

³ John W. Reys, *Monumental Washington* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 4-5.

⁴ John W. Reys, *Monumental Washington* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 4-5.

⁵ "Draft: Sherman Circle, Rock Creek Park – DC Street Plan Reservation" (unpublished report, National Park Service, Cultural Landscapes Inventory, 2011), 32.

⁶ Harriet D. Hill, "Petworth Named for Sussex Town," *Washington Post*, February 6, 1921, 47.

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manor house are unknown. In 1828, Colonel Tayloe died and the family subdivided the 536-acre tract, selling off a 286-acre portion.⁷

In 1847, the City of Alexandria and Alexandria County were retroceded to Virginia, leaving Washington County as the only unincorporated section of the District of Columbia. The ownership of the 286-acre tract was unclear; however, by 1855, the tract had been further subdivided, and Theodore Mosher owned roughly 186 acres that would eventually be the site of Petworth, in part, and Grant Circle. Between 1855 and 1857, Mosher built a large house on the tract, which was located approximately two blocks north of present-day Sherman Circle in what would become the 600 block of Delafield Place, N.W. This house remained one of the few buildings in the area until the early twentieth century.⁸ By 1868, Mosher's 186-acre tract was acquired by Marshall Brown, the second-generation proprietor of the Indian Queen Hotel on Pennsylvania Avenue.⁹ Twelve years after purchasing the 186-acre tract, Brown's principal residence was at 1801 Eye Street, N.W., which indicates that Brown, like Tayloe, used the residence in Washington County as a country seat, unlike Mosher, whom census records listed as a farmer.¹⁰

In 1871, Congress passed the second District of Columbia Organic Act, revoking the individual charters of the cities of Georgetown and Washington and merging them with Washington County under one government of the District of Columbia.¹¹ Brown died in 1881, stipulating in his will that his Petworth estate be sold. Jesse Brown and Rosa Wallach sold the estate for the sum of \$47,500 in 1886 to the "Marshall Brown Syndicate," a newly formed investment group. Between 1886 and 1899, the Brown family continued to occupy the former Marshall Brown mansion and its immediate grounds. After the family's occupation of the Brown Mansion ended, the house was repurposed as the Columbia Golf Club, which would later become the Columbia Country Club. In 1887, the Marshall Brown Syndicate merged with another investment syndicate, which had recently purchased the 250-acre tract from the heirs of Colonel Tayloe. The Tayloe tract was located south of the Brown tract. With the merger, the subdivision

⁷ "Draft: Sherman Circle, Rock Creek Park – DC Street Plan Reservation" (unpublished report, National Park Service, Cultural Landscapes Inventory, 2011), 32.

⁸ In 1860, the Mosher household included Theodore Mosher, recorded as a thirty-six-year-old male farmer with fifty thousand dollars in real estate holdings and five thousand dollars in personal property with his place of birth as "Wash Co D.C."; Mary Brent Mosher, recorded as a thirty-two-year-old female born in Maryland; the Mosher children—Theodore, Imogene, May, Eliza, Robert, and James, ranging from thirteen to two years of age, all of whom were born in Washington County; and Catherine Moore, a sixty-year-old Governess, born in Pennsylvania. Mosher's closest neighbors were young laborers and their families. However, another wealthy farmer was also nearby, William McMorrison from New Hampshire, who owned \$80,000 worth of real estate and \$10,000 in personal property. Although the Moshers would sell their land holdings in 1868, they could still be found in the area through the 1880s. *Seventh Census of the United States* (1850), *Eighth Census of the United States* (1860), and *Ninth Census of the United States* (1870) (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 29).

⁹ An early account of Marshall Brown can be found in the 1850 census, showing Brown as a thirty-three-year-old "Hotel Keeper" worth nearly \$60,000.

¹⁰ *Seventh Census of the United States* (1850), *Eighth Census of the United States* (1860), and *Ninth Census of the United States* (1870) (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 29).

¹¹ At the time of the 1874 tax assessment, the Marshall Brown estate consisted of 182 acres, indicating either a mistaken account, or that four acres had been sold since 1868. "County of Washington Assessment Records for 1868, District of Columbia Government," Entry 193 (Washington, D.C. National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 351).

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of “Petworth” was announced by the syndicate. Interestingly enough, much of the original 536-acre tract had been reunited at this time, even though it would soon be subdivided.¹²



Detail of 1881 Carpenter Map, Plate 14. The 182-acre Marshall Brown Property is outlined in red. *Map of the Real Estate in the County of Washington, D.C...* (B.D. Carpenter, 1881).

The Development of the Subdivision and the Early System of Highways in the District of Columbia

The beginnings of urban planning in relation to the control of private and public development were not established in Washington until the 1880s. The L’Enfant Plan encompassed 6,100 acres of potential urban space, satisfying the demands of public and private development throughout much of the nineteenth century. As Washington City gradually exhausted its supply of vacant land and improved forms of transportation became available, however, expansion into the formerly rural Washington County became both practically and economically viable.¹³

In the 1870s and 1880s, property owners in Washington County began to subdivide their land into smaller lots destined for residential and commercial development. These property owners were a mixture of investors and the heirs of large estate holders. This development occurred in two stages: speculation, subdivision, and sale of the land; and purchase and development of the actual parcel by builders or individuals. To enhance the properties’ attractiveness, some of the land speculators chose to subdivide in a manner that delineated potential streets.

This did not necessarily mean that a paved road was completed or even that the land was fully cleared, but it was an easement that developers could work with to plan and build their communities.¹⁴

Due to the topographic changes beyond Florida Avenue and outside the Washington City boundaries, developers strayed from L’Enfant’s plan due to the difficulty in following the lines of the broad avenues within the outlying terrain. Alternative roads were created that conformed to the topographic conditions of the area rather than the radial plan. Furthermore, L’Enfant’s grand layout of wide streets was not only expensive for developers to create, but it also reduced the amount of land that could be sold as private

¹² “Draft: Sherman Circle, Rock Creek Park – DC Street Plan Reservation” (unpublished report, National Park Service, Cultural Landscapes Inventory, 2011), 32-33.

¹³ Michael R. Harrison, “The ‘Evil of the Misfit Subdivisions’: Creating the Permanent System of Highways in the District of Columbia,” *Washington History* Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2002): 27-29.

¹⁴ Michael R. Harrison, “The ‘Evil of the Misfit Subdivisions’: Creating the Permanent System of Highways in the District of Columbia,” *Washington History* Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2002): 28-29.

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lots. Other grids were created to suit the immediate needs of the developers, and the deviation from the L'Enfant Plan soon became apparent in numerous suburbs throughout Washington.¹⁵

Examples of the early subdivisions established between 1854 and 1888 included Uniontown (now Anacostia), Barry Farm, LeDroit Park, Mount Pleasant, and Trinidad. The 1854 Uniontown subdivision was comprised of 700 small lots created from a one-hundred-acre tract. The site of this development was near the foot of the Navy Yard Bridge across the Eastern Branch of the Potomac River (now the Anacostia River). Beginning in 1873, the development of LeDroit Park consisted of the subdivision of a fifty-five-acre tract, which is now cradled by Howard University and Florida Avenue. Beginning in the mid-1860s and continuing into the early twentieth century, Mount Pleasant was subdivided from the former estate of the same name. In 1888, William Wilson Corcoran's 165-acre Trinidad estate was purchased and subdivided by the Washington Machine Brick Company. Immediately adjacent to the Institute of the Deaf and Dumb and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad right-of-way at the west, the company used sixty-five acres for business operations and subdivided the remaining hundred acres into individual lots that were sold with the promise of "streets were being opened."¹⁶

Without delving into their intricate histories, each of these subdivisions developed a system of streets that deviated from the L'Enfant Plan, and laying out such streets would go unregulated until 1888. Prior to this time, the District of Columbia Board of Commissioners made miscellaneous decisions regarding streets and roads in the District of Columbia. This organization stemmed from the earlier 1791 agreement that the land acquired for the city gave Congress control over its "streets and avenues." The system of the Board of Commissioners was created as a result of the Organic Act of 1874, abolishing the territorial government. The Organic Act shifted power over the streets from congress to the Engineer Commissioner. In time, this commissioner managed the repair and improvement of all thoroughfares including the publicly dedicated county roads—then known as "highways." Between 1874 and 1887, this was the system of government for public streets. However, in 1887, property owners sued at the proposed widening of Columbia Road. The property owners won the suit, and it was declared that only Congress could create or extend a county street or improvement through an official appropriation of funds. Therefore, all future improvements by the Commissioners were sanctioned by Congressional appropriations. In the 1890s, the following highways were opened and/or improved by Congress: Thirty-Seventh Street, opened below Tenallytown Road; North Capitol Street, completed to the Old Soldiers Home; and Observatory Circle, created along the new course of the extended Massachusetts Avenue. Facing limited authority, the Commissioners were unable to pass numerous other street proposals that involved access to existing suburban developments.¹⁷

In concert with the course of Washington's suburban development, there also existed a growing advocacy for comprehensive planning. As early as 1879, Army First Lieutenant Francis V. Greene, an assistant to Engineer Commissioner Major William J. Twining, called for government intervention. Greene and many others advocated for a plan that would respect the grandeur of Washington City's layout, calling to everyone's attention the havoc created by uncontrolled development. Greene even read a petition signed by 107 Washingtonians demanding control over what would become urban planning. Between 1886 and

¹⁵ Michael R. Harrison, "The 'Evil of the Misfit Subdivisions': Creating the Permanent System of Highways in the District of Columbia," *Washington History* Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2002): 28-29.

¹⁶ Michael R. Harrison, "The 'Evil of the Misfit Subdivisions': Creating the Permanent System of Highways in the District of Columbia," *Washington History* Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2002): 29-34.

¹⁷ Michael R. Harrison, "The 'Evil of the Misfit Subdivisions': Creating the Permanent System of Highways in the District of Columbia," *Washington History* Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2002): 34-38.

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1889, the House and Senate District Committees would hear at least ten bills related to comprehensive street planning.¹⁸

Congress approved an act (45 Stat. 451) that led to a more comprehensive approach to street planning on August 27, 1888, requiring new subdivisions to conform to the plan of the City of Washington. Subsequently, the Board of Commissioners published orders for platting and subdividing in compliance with the terms of the Subdivision Act, as it was generally called. The orders spelled out the precise widths for all thoroughfares, requiring that avenues and streets correspond to the direction and dimension of those in the city.¹⁹

After the Subdivision Act went into effect, City Engineer Frederick P. Spalding approved sixteen subdivisions, including Petworth, Brightwood, the Palisades, and Ingleside. And while new subdivisions were developed under the new law that created vast neighborhoods such as Petworth and Brightwood, problems began to unfold as a result of too many years of non-compliance, in addition to differences in topographic conditions between Washington City and its outlying areas. For example, roughly forty three of the older, non-conforming suburbs pre-dated the act, encompassing 4,100 acres. Opinions regarding the feasibility of maintaining the plan of Washington City fluctuated. However, in 1891, Spalding called for a comprehensive plan yet again, urging that new subdivisions be made a part of the whole.²⁰

Spalding organized prominent members of the community to support the effort, and a bill was finally introduced by Augustus S. Worthington to create a street plan for the undeveloped portions of the District, also working in the non-complying suburbs whenever possible. The bill included that the local contribution to complete the work would be financed through a \$3.2 million bond issue. And while this was debated for several years, it never actually passed in this format. Finally, on March 2, 1893, a law was passed by congress that authorized the creation of a permanent system of highways.²¹

Initial Platting and Development of the Petworth Subdivision and Grant Circle

Debates surrounding the passage of the 1888 Subdivision Act occurred simultaneously with the purchase, platting, and formal subdivision of Petworth. In 1888, the two real estate syndicates that had purchased the former Tayloe and Brown estates merged, forming a 387-acre tract. The syndicates hired William Forsyth, the District Surveyor, in a private capacity to extend the L'Enfant Plan into their new subdivision, which retained its historic name of Petworth. A controversy arose in August 1888, when the syndicate was accused of attempting to evade the pending legislation by reducing the widths of certain streets and avenues and eliminating others entirely. However, their intentions were foiled by the passage of the Subdivision Act on August 27. On January 16, 1889, plats of the Petworth subdivision were formally recorded as the first planned development under the new laws regulating such development,

¹⁸ Michael R. Harrison, "The 'Evil of the Misfit Subdivisions': Creating the Permanent System of Highways in the District of Columbia," *Washington History* Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2002): 37.

¹⁹ EHT Traceries, Inc. *The Extension of the City: The Highway Plan of 1893 and the Permanent System of Highways in the District of Columbia* (Washington, D.C.: D.C. Historic Preservation Office, June 2009), 24-25.

²⁰ Michael R. Harrison, "The 'Evil of the Misfit Subdivisions': Creating the Permanent System of Highways in the District of Columbia," *Washington History* Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2002): 42.

²¹ EHT Traceries, Inc. *The Extension of the City: The Highway Plan of 1893 and the Permanent System of Highways in the District of Columbia* (Washington, D.C.: D.C. Historic Preservation Office, June 2009), 31-32.

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effectively making Petworth the first subdivision in the District of Columbia to be planned in accordance with the L'Enfant Plan.²²

Apart from minor deviations, the layout of Petworth was so much akin to that of Washington City that it effectively became an extension of the L'Enfant Plan. The continuation of the grid arrangement was traversed by three diagonal avenues: New Hampshire and Kansas Avenues, which ran northeast-southwest, and Illinois Avenue, which ran northwest southeast. Where the avenues intersected, Fortsyth established two new traffic circles. The circles were initially named for Civil War Union Generals William Tecumseh Sherman and Philip Henry Sheridan. After a new Sheridan Circle was dedicated along the Massachusetts Avenue extension in June 1889, Sheridan Circle in Petworth was renamed Grant Circle, in the memory of Union Commanding General and two-time President Ulysses S. Grant. Also in June 1889, the owners of the subdivision formally donated the circles and their associated triangle reservations to the United States Government.²³



1894 Hopkins Atlas,
Volume 3, Plate 21.

The newly subdivided
Petworth plat stands in
sharp contrast to the
surrounding properties.

*Real Estate Plat-Book of
Washington, D.C.*
(Philadelphia: G.M.
Hopkins, 1894).

The naming of the circles was in keeping with the nomenclature of Washington City's original circles and squares, which memorialized military and political heroes. Ironically, neither circle received a monument to either of the generals, as was the general custom. A statue of General Sherman was installed south of the Treasury Building in 1904. After this, the "Grant Circle" organization was founded to honor the memory of General Grant. Despite the name, the organization had no connection to the physical Grant Circle, but was rather a women's civic society. This organization would eventually erect a Grant Memorial in Washington, but not at the site of Grant Circle.

²² Matthew B. Gilmore and Michael R. Harrison, "A Catalogue of Suburban Subdivisions of the District of Columbia, 1854-1902," *Washington History* Vol. 14, No. 2 (Fall/Winter 2002): 49.

²³ "At the District Buildings," *Washington Post*, January 21, 1889, 8.

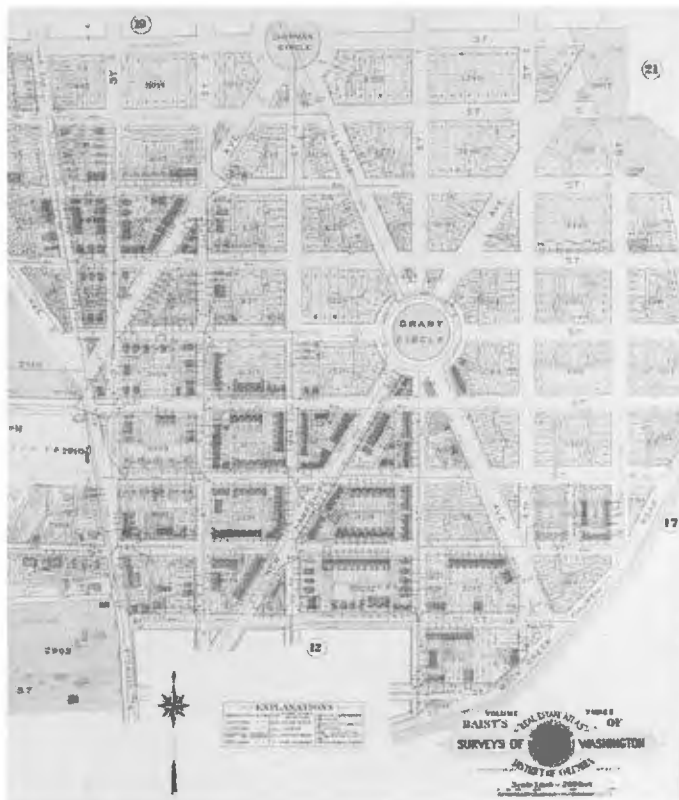
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Residential Development in Petworth, 1880s-1910s

In 1888, Congress authorized the Brightwood Railroad Company to construct a horse-drawn streetcar line along Seventh Street, the western border of Petworth, between Boundary Street and the District line. The company was owned and funded by the Petworth real estate syndicate, which also spent \$40,000 on construction preparation in the southernmost section of the subdivision. Although Petworth seemed poised to flourish as a suburban residential community, the Panic of 1893 halted the developers' ambitions. Development in Petworth and the improvement of Grant and Sherman Circles would languish until the twentieth century.

Also during this period, the northern portion of Petworth continued to be occupied by the Brown Family, who evidently rented the old Marshall Brown mansion from the syndicate. After the family departed the property in 1899, the syndicate leased the building to the Columbia Golf to be used as a clubhouse. When the syndicate proposed a dramatic increase in rents, the club relocated to its present location in Chevy Chase, Maryland, reorganizing itself as the Columbia Country Club. A second golf club, the Washington Suburban Club, redeveloped the golf course and associated amenities, although a 1913 fire severely damaged the Brown mansion and the course and grounds languished until they were developed as residences in the 1920s.²⁴



Detail of 1913 Baist Atlas, Volume 3, Plate 18, showing the concentration of development in the southwestern corner of Petworth, just barely reaching Grant Circle.

Baist's Real Estate Atlas Surveys of Washington, D.C.
(Philadelphia: G.W. Baist, 1913).

In the first decade of the twentieth century, development in Petworth moved forward, beginning in pockets in the southwestern corner and gradually extending north and east. *Baist's Real Estate Atlases*, published in multi-year intervals during a good portion of the twentieth century, provided a visual representation of the growth and character of residential development in Petworth. The first stride towards the current density of Petworth was made between 1900 and 1910, including the construction of semi-detached houses of masonry or frame construction, masonry rowhouses, and the occasional detached frame or masonry house. The housing shortage experienced in Washington during the 1920s and the corresponding demand for new apartment buildings and single-family rowhouses prompted a surge in development in Petworth. By the 1930s, the neighborhood had been built out almost to capacity.

Residential Development on Grant Circle

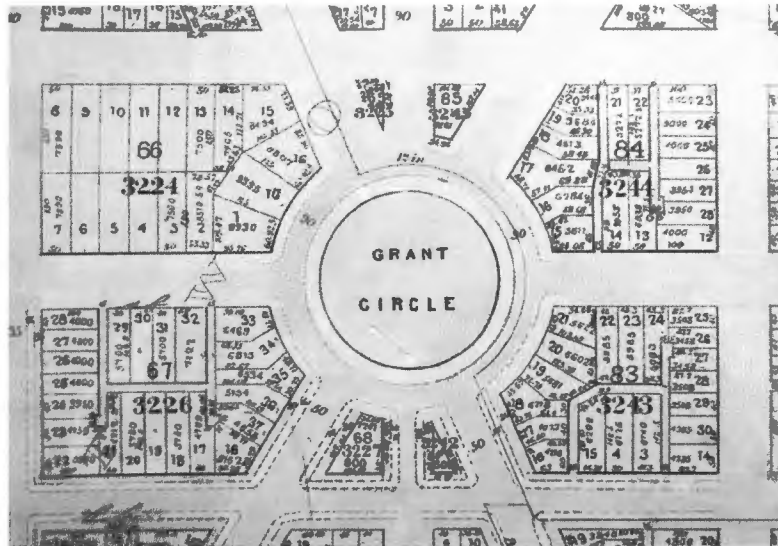
reservation" (unpublished report, National Park

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Between 1913 and 1929, Grant Circle and its adjacent blocks were fully developed. Unlike later development that would occur in Petworth after 1920, the development of Grant Circle was completed by several small developers, two religious organizations, and one individual.

As originally subdivided, the squares around Grant Circle had fifteen parcels facing the circle, including two on the triangular parks. Lot 17 (then known as 4307 New Hampshire Avenue, later 16 Grant Circle) on the northeast curve of the circle was the first of these to be developed. Leo J. Long, whose profession is listed in contemporary city directories as a carpenter and later a contractor, filed a permit for the



Detail of 1907 Baist Atlas, Volume 3, Plate 18, showing the original subdivision of squares around Grant Circle.

Baist's Real Estate Atlas Surveys of Washington, D.C.
(Philadelphia: G.W. Baist, 1907).

construction of the house in June 1913, acting as the architect, owner, and builder. Long's house, which followed the American Foursquare typology with Colonial Revival influences, had a frame structure, pebbledash exterior, generous front porch, and hipped roof.

In the year that intervened between the completion of Long's house circa 1914 and the filing of the permits to construct the next set of residences on the circle, the scale and character of buildings around the circle changed. In February 1915, the builder B.H. Gruver filed a permit to construct ten houses on lots 33-42 (subdivided from former lots 8 and 10) facing Illinois Avenue and Grant Circle.²⁵ Unlike Long's detached frame house, these were masonry buildings constructed in attached rows, on parcels only twenty feet wide.

The character of construction around the circle continued to follow this rowhouse pattern. In July 1915, the builder M.L. Gottwals filed a permit to develop the two parcels adjacent to Gruver's (lots 43 and 44, at the southeast corner of the circle).²⁶ Designed by Washington architect Merrill T. Vaughan, these houses were all but indistinguishable from their counterparts to the west. Near the end of that same year, the development company Charles E. Wire, Inc. filed permits to construct four houses facing the southwest corner of the circle, on lots 63-66.²⁷ These buildings were somewhat more grandiose than their residential counterparts to the north and east, but otherwise followed the same essential pattern.

The final set of private residences developed on the circle was constructed in 1919. In March, Gruver filed permits for a row of five houses on lots 29-33.²⁸ Sharing a square with Long's house, these buildings were designed by well-known Washington architect George T. Santmyers. Later that month, the

²⁵ Permit #3015, February 1, 1915.

²⁶ Permit #325, July 21, 1915.

²⁷ Permit #2590, December 3, 1915.

²⁸ Permit #2533, March 11, 1919.

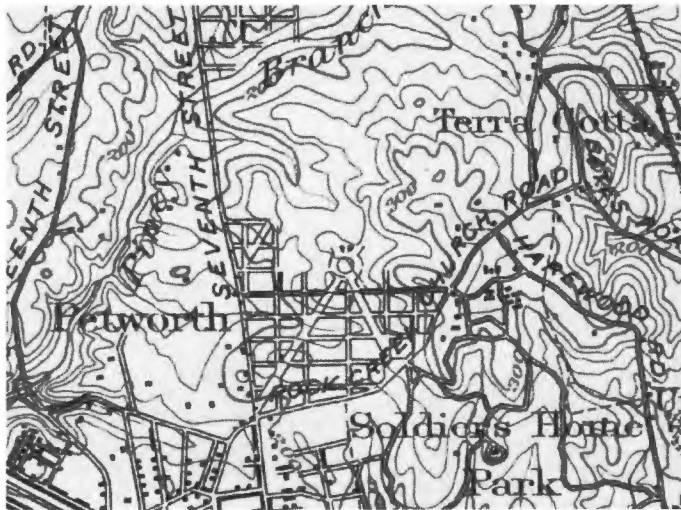
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developer Harris Shapiro enlisted Santmyers to design three matching rowhouses on lots 45, 46, and 47 (now lots 45, 48, and 49).²⁹

Alley Development

Like much of Washington, Petworth was platted to include alleys that corresponded with the primary streets in the neighborhood. Given the irregular organization of the squares around Grant Circle, the alleys did not align with the prototypical H- or T-configuration, and it appears that adjustments to their plans were made over time to ensure access. Many owners erected garages at the rear of their properties facing the alley, most within one to five years of construction of the primary building. These buildings, although vernacular and utilitarian in nature, nevertheless complemented the architectural character of their houses. Some, like those behind 11 Grant Circle, featured molded concrete blocks that added a decorative flair to the building.



1900 USGS Map, showing gradual improvement of the Petworth Subdivision (Grant Circle at center, Sherman Circle not yet developed).

United States Geological Survey

Landscaping of Grant Circle and Triangle Parks

Much like the residential development within the Petworth plat, the subdivision's actual avenues, streets, and circles experienced a delay between their subdivision in 1889 and actual eventual improvement in the 1910s and 1920s. The southern portions were the earliest to develop. As late as 1916, however, parts of the vicinity of Grant Circle were still lacking in major improvements. That year, the Commissioners of the District of Columbia made several recommendations for improvement, including: grading, paving, and laying sidewalks along Varnum Street from Seventh Street to Grant Circle; macadamizing Fifth Street between Rock Creek Church Road and Grant Circle; and improving Grant Circle itself.³⁰

These improvements likely included grading the circle, laying a concrete sidewalk around its perimeter, and paving the traffic rotary (of the same name) around the circle. A plan for the permanent improvement and landscaping of Grant Circle was produced in April 1921 by Irving W. Payne, a landscape architect for the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds of the National Capital.³¹ In 1922, an article published by the *Washington Post* recorded the tension between neighborhood children—who enjoyed the unimproved park as a play and ball field—and residents, who regarded them as a nuisance:

²⁹ Permit #2745, March 26, 1919.

³⁰ "Officers Re-elected by Petworth Citizens," *Evening Star*, September 20, 1916.

³¹ "Reservation 312: Grant Circle General Plan." Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. April 30, 1921. National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 79, Records of the National Park Service.

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Improvement of Grant Circle at the intersection of New Hampshire avenue and Varnum streets is planned by the office of public buildings and grounds. This will remove it forever as a possible play space for the hundreds of little children of that section. At the present time the large circle is nothing but a circle of unimproved land, but when the children went there to play this year they found a number of "base ball forbidden" signs surrounding the circle.³²

These plans, however, were not implemented, but rather were superseded by a later set of drawings in March 1924.³³ These drawings, also produced by Payne, were largely identical to the earlier, 1921 set. A majority of planting and some additional grading of Grant Circle appear to have been conducted between 1925 and 1926. The 1926 annual report of the Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks noted that, by this time, a majority of improvements had been completed, but recommended that an additional \$5,000 be spent to complete them. In that same report, the Director allocated \$15,000 for the improvement of Sherman Circle and its four associated triangle parks (although these were not permanent improvements, which would occur later).³⁴



"Their' Playground"—cartoon accompanying 1922 article, showing children sitting on the curb of Grant Circle. *Washington Post*

Concurrent development of the Grant Memorial at the foot of the U.S. Capitol necessitated the removal of the Bartholdi Fountain, an elaborate figurative fountain which until then was located on the site of the old Botanic Garden. From 1925 to 1926, the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts recommended that the fountain be installed in Grant Circle, although this recommendation was never acted upon, and the fountain was later relocated to a new site south of the current Botanic Garden.³⁵

The following year, a large flower bed in Grant Circle was replaced with a grove of evergreen trees and shrubs.³⁶ Soon after this landscaping was completed, an automobile accidentally plowed through the circle, necessitating the replacement of five of the large evergreen trees and one deciduous tree.³⁷ A 1927 survey of public reservations, completed by the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, captured a very open landscape at Grant Circle, with immature plantings (including no trees in the center) and no paving

³² "Children To Lose Another Play Site by Improvements," *Evening Star*, April 6, 1922, 1.

³³ "Reservation 312: Grant Circle General Plan." Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. March 28, 1924. National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 79, Records of the National Park Service.

³⁴ *Annual Report of the Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1926), 32.

³⁵ "Grant Circle Urged for Bartholdi Fount," *Washington Post*, March 9, 1926, 22.

³⁶ *Annual Report of the Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1927), 32.

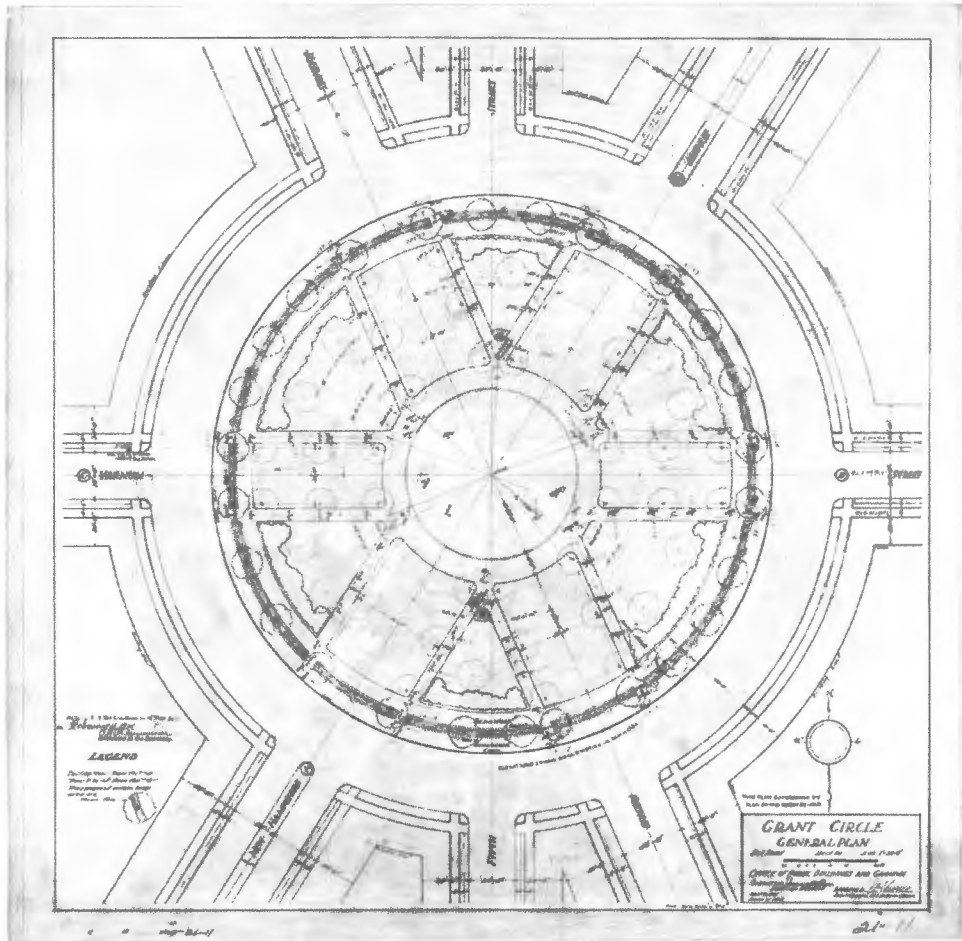
³⁷ *Annual Report of the Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1928), 23.

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on the interior. The interior sidewalks were probably not added until after 1928, as recorded in a jointing plan produced by the Office of Public Buildings and Public Grounds.³⁸

Therefore, it appears that the improvement of Grant Circle was completed in phases between 1921 and 1928. The design of the paving and planting within the circle was first planned in 1921 and again in 1924, was implemented between 1925 and 1927, and underwent major alterations to the planting of the central bed in both 1927 and 1928. Although not explicitly mentioned in available reports or drawings, it is likely that the existing Cedar of Lebanon was planted in the circle in 1927 or 1928.³⁹



"Grant Circle:
General Plan,"
Produced by the
Office of Public
Buildings and
Grounds,
landscape
architect Irving
W. Payne, April
1921.

*National Archives
and Records
Administration,
Record Group 79,
Records of the
National Park
Service*

³⁸ "Grant Circle: Jointing Plan," Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital. June 13, 1928. National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 79, Records of the National Park Service.

³⁹ To obtain a more complete understanding of the development of Grant Circle and its associated triangle parks, additional research should be conducted at the office of the National Capital Region, National Park Service, which maintains detailed land records regarding the improvement and maintenance of its public reservations.

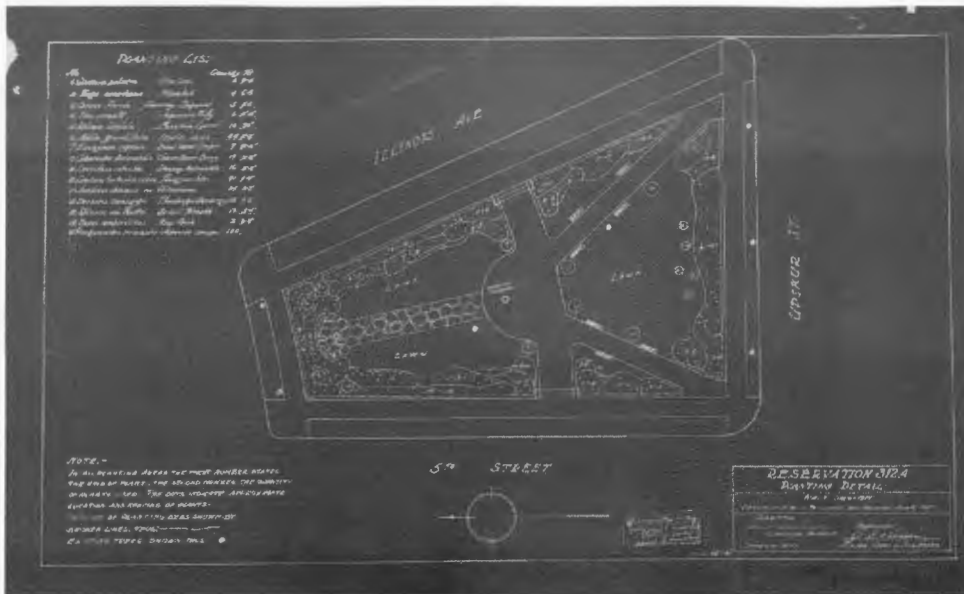
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1927 Photograph facing northeast along New Hampshire Avenue toward Grant Circle.

Historical Society of Washington, D.C.



“Reservation 312A: Planting Detail,” Produced by the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds.

National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 79, Records of the National Park Service.

The improvement of Reservation 312A (south of Grant Circle) appears to have been conducted in tandem with the circle. A plan was produced in August 1920 to pave and plant the triangle park.⁴⁰ Although it is not clear when these improvements were completed, the existing configuration of the park is largely faithful to this original design. As late as the 1960s, Reservation 312I (north of the circle) had some planting but no interior paving, and therefore it is not clear when that triangle was improved.

⁴⁰ “Reservation 312A: Planting Detail,” Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. August 10, 1920. National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 79, Records of the National Park Service.

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1954 Aerial
Photograph over
Grant and
Sherman Circles

*Evening Star
Collection,
Martin Luther
King, Jr.
Memorial
Library*

Later Development of Grant Circle

To the north of Grant Circle, Sherman Circle was later to develop. Permanent improvement of the circle was completed by 1936, with plans prepared in 1928.⁴¹ The two parks had strong formal similarities, both featuring simple yet attractive designs of concentric circles connected with radial paths. In contrast to Grant Circle, however, whose massive Cedar of Lebanon acted as a central focal point, the center of Sherman Circle was left open to preserve the viewshed along Illinois Avenue. Nevertheless, the landscape of Grant Circle was always compared favorably to that of Sherman, both in appearance and general condition.⁴²

In the early 1990s, extension of the Metro's Green line proposed tunneling under New Hampshire Avenue and Grant Circle. Amidst fears that the landscaping on Grant Circle would be damaged by Metro construction, the residents rallied to ensure protection of the circle and its mature trees. Tunneling under the circle was completed in 1997, and the park was subsequently rehabilitated with new concrete sidewalks, turf, and trees. Four mature conifers, including the Cedar of Lebanon at the center, were protected during construction. Today, the only visual reminder of this disruption is a set of metal grates on the southern side of the circle.⁴³

⁴¹ "Draft: Sherman Circle, Rock Creek Park – DC Street Plan Reservation" (unpublished report, National Park Service, Cultural Landscapes Inventory, 2011), 13-14.

⁴² "Draft: Sherman Circle, Rock Creek Park – DC Street Plan Reservation" (unpublished report, National Park Service, Cultural Landscapes Inventory, 2011), 62-63.

⁴³ Stephen C. Fehr, "Grant Circle Warily Eyes Going Green," *Washington Post*, March 7, 1992, E:1; Alice Reid, "Refurbished Park Is a Reward for Petworth," *Washington Post*, December 26, 1997, B:3.

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Early Domestic History of Grant Circle

From the time of its primary development as a residential neighborhood, Grant Circle and the larger Petworth neighborhood were home to a predominantly middle class population interspersed with upper- middle-class residences and housing suited for working class families. Just a few blocks to the west of Grant Circle, a large complex of schools was built during the time the neighborhood was developed. One-story shops could be found on Upshur Street a few blocks east or west of the circle, and near the schools were larger commercial venues.⁴⁴

The early families of Grant Circle were solidly middle class, as most of the houses were for purchase from the time they were constructed, and most rentals were the result of Washington's transient population. By 1930, the houses that faced onto Grant Circle included the following households: an electrotype moulder for the U.S. Government (4 Grant Circle); a railway clerk (5); a foreman carpenter for a building contractor (6); an audit reviewer for the U.S. Government, insurance clerk, and stenographer (7); a clerk for the U.S. Government (8); an accountant (9); and a detective (10).⁴⁵

During this period, Petworth developed a reputation for being a tight-knit community with a strong sense of civic engagement, having numerous large community groups that were highly vibrant during its first fifty years of existence. In 1939, the *Washington Post* published a lengthy article on the culture of the neighborhood, which merits an extended quotation here:

Petworth, which is centered by Grant Circle and has within its boundaries the biggest group of public educational buildings in the District, has been a long time a-growing. And now it is demanding a peaceful middle age in which to enjoy its development.

By the time Petworth Branch Library was opened last January, almost everything the community had been fighting for—except playgrounds—had become realities. Since the turn of the century, civic and religious groups had been fighting to get first one street paved and then another to get first one plot set aside for schools then two.

... Since Petworth residents like their community and have no desire to be forced "out into the suburbs" against their wishes, they remaining organized. Their Citizens' Association of 1,300 members is the second largest in the District. Their Women's Club this year celebrated its silver anniversary, stronger and more civic-minded than ever. Their Home and School Association, their churches, and numerous other groups are geared for trigger action when the "threat of invasion" is breathed.

⁴⁴ The Roosevelt and McFarland School complex was actually located outside the boundaries of the original subdivision, but are usually considered as part of the neighborhood.

⁴⁵ *Fifteenth Census of the United States* (1930) (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 29).

Grant Circle —It's a Sunday Kind of Place

By Matt McDade
Post Reporter

Take a quiet country village from the hinterlands, place it in the heart of this glittering metropolis — and the effect would be that of Grant Circle on Sunday.

The Circle is a Sunday kind of place, a placid island where Illinois and New Hampshire aves. meet with a hopscotch of cross streets.

Not a traffic signal or neon sign intrudes on the pattern of green in the Circle, or its perimeter of snug, brick row homes and two imposing houses of worship. The center of Petworth, Grant Circle is an insular and middle-aged area which, in appearance at least, has remained remarkably remote from the traffic that flows about it.

Sunday Sights, Sounds

As befits a village square, the Circle is dominated by a great Cedar of Lebanon, in place of man-made statuary.

Yesterday, the only sign of commerce was the bustling enterprise of four newsboys, stationed near St. Gabriel's Church with a stack of Sunday papers. Worshipers of both St. Gabriel's and nearby Petworth Methodist Church lined up to buy.

The sights and sounds were those of Sunday, too. Beginning at 7 a. m., when the first mass was celebrated, arrivals and departures at St. Gabriel's marked the passing of the hour. Services at Petworth Methodist got under way with church school at 9:30 a. m. Shortly after morning worship opened at 11, the strains of "Jesus, Stand Among Us" rolled from the open church doors.

The natives of Grant Circle and immediate area are proud of their beautifully landscaped Circle—one of the largest in Washington—and the two churches. They are faithful churchgoers.

"Grant Circle—It's a Sunday Kind of Place,"
Washington Post,
December 10, 1951

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...No Washington section has more community consciousness, nor works harder to keep it. Petworth is distinctively Petworth. Other sections might work to get a piece of statuary for the circles in their neighborhood, for instance; but Petworth has worked to keep statuary out of Grant Circle—preferring Cedar of Lebanon.⁴⁶

White Flight and the Emergence of an African American Middle Class in Grant Circle

On November 11, 1950, one of the first advertisements of its kind was published by the *Evening Star* in relationship to Grant Circle:

COLORED

Grant Circle, N.W.

First offering on this circle for colored. Must sell quickly. Dignified 6-rm, brick, concrete front porch, 2 inclosed back porches; gas h.w.h.; full bsmt., garage and large back yard. Excellent condition. Call Mr. Selden. Sun, and eves., FR. 9256. Weekdays.

John R. Pinkett, Inc.

1302 New Jersey ave, n.w. DU, 0707.⁴⁷

An earlier similar advertisement had been placed in the same paper in May of 1950 for the corner house on New Hampshire Avenue, abutting Grant Circle, but the outcome of this advertisement is unclear.⁴⁸ Prior to 1950, advertisements for houses in Grant Circle and Petworth were worded very similarly; however, there was one major difference—the word “Colored” was not spelled out in bold at the top line in relationship to the neighborhood. Grant Circle was one of the “white” middle class neighborhoods in what was basically a southern town. This advertising format was the standard at the time, specifying to African American buyers where they were and were not welcome. While African Americans suffered from this injustice perhaps more than any other group in America, this type of discrimination was not exclusive to blacks. For example, Jews were discriminated against in the same manner with traditional Judaic symbolism. For example, a developer might use a Star of David at the top of the advertisement or in one of its corners. These were common forms of printed discrimination in most American newspapers through the time of the Civil Rights Movement. In the aftermath of the movement, words like “Colored” became less common and discrimination took on new forms. For example, instead of “No Jews,” an advertisement might simply read “churches nearby.”⁴⁹

In late 1950, Samuel B. Harris made one of the boldest moves of his life, when he became one of the “first purchasers” on Grant Circle. As an African American, Harris’s decision to buy 5 Grant Circle was one that took incredible courage at a time when his actions were seen by his new neighbors as completely alien to their social order. Harris’s reception to the neighborhood was entirely negative. Not only would no one speak to him, but he received threats in writing and over the telephone for the first year or two that he owned the home. Naturally, this was frightening to a relatively quiet, but well-dressed postal worker. Nevertheless, Harris persevered.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Christine Sadler, “Our Town: Petworth Really a Community Conscious Area,” *Washington Post*, October 3, 1939, 15.

⁴⁷ “Colored,” *Washington Evening Star*, November 10, 1950.

⁴⁸ “Colored Special,” *Washington Evening Star*, May 1950 (various dates).

⁴⁹ Irwin Richman, telephone interview by Oscar Beisert, January 28, 2015.

⁵⁰ Paul E. Logan, interview by Oscar Beisert, February 9, 2015.

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Nearly one year later, James and Anna Lewis, a young African American couple, purchased the corner house at 4215 Illinois Avenue, which had been advertised as being available in the *Evening Star*.⁵¹ When the Lewises moved in, there was heavy opposition that eventually was tied up in legal proceedings with neighbors. The Lewises won the lawsuit and, as a result, centenarian Anna Lewis is to-date one of Grant Circle's first African American residents. In 2015, Lewis celebrated her 103rd birthday; having lived on Grant Circle for nearly sixty-five years, she is also the circle's longest inhabitant.⁵²

Just four months after Samuel B. Harris purchased 5 Grant Circle, Ella Elizabeth Wing, a sixty-four-year-old first generation American of German and Swiss parentage, discreetly approached Harris, her new neighbor, to let him know that the following advertisement had been placed in the *Evening Star* on April 15, 1951:

COLORED
4 Grant Circle
\$14,950
20-ft. row brick home in excellent condition: living rm., dining rm., fine kit., 3 bedrooms, bath, inclosed porch and basement with front and back entrances and lavatory; awnings and storm windows; terms available.
OPEN TODAY
1 TO 6
WAGGAMAN-BRAWNER
ME.3860; Eves., JU. 7-8864.⁵³

Several decades earlier, Clinton Franklin Wing, an Electrotype Molder at the U.S. Government Printing Office, probably felt as though he had arrived when he purchased 4 Grant Circle in the 1920s. He and his wife, Ella Elizabeth Wing, moved into the house and would live there, like many people did at the time, for many years until African Americans began moving into the neighborhood in late 1950.⁵⁴ When "Mrs. Wing," by then a widow, approached her new neighbor, Harris contacted his brother-in-law, Alphonso Logan, who had married Harris's sister Jane. Born in 1906, Alphonso Logan was the son of Ellis Logan, who worked in a furniture store and rented house for his family at 1220 Twelfth Street, N.W. After the untimely death of her husband, Mary Logan, Alphonso's mother, would remain in this house with where she would raise her five children. Alphonso was single for many years before he married Jane Harris, but the two would move on to purchase 4 Grant Circle. Paul E. Logan, remembering the day that he, then a young child, accompanied his parents to see the house in the spring of 1951: "Mrs. Wing offered us the high quality living and dining room furniture for just \$125. There was one of those curved breakfronts in the dining room. It was like she wanted out of there as quickly as possible and couldn't even take all of her possessions."⁵⁵

⁵¹ "For Colored, Grant Circle and Ill. Ave.," *Washington Evening Star*, November 1, 1951, 59.

⁵² Paul E. Logan, interview by Oscar Beisert, February 9, 2015.

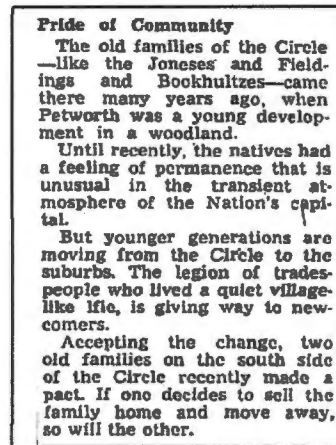
⁵³ "4 Grant Circle," *Washington Evening Star*, April 15, 1951, 99; Paul E. Logan, interview by Oscar Beisert, February 9, 2015; *Sixteenth Census of the United States* (1940) (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 29).

⁵⁴ *Fifteenth Census of the United States* (1930), *Sixteenth Census of the United States* (1940) (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 29).

⁵⁵ Paul E. Logan, interview by Oscar Beisert, February 9, 2015.

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“Grant Circle—It’s a Sunday Kind of Place,”
Washington Post,
December 10, 1951

(continuation of previous article)

Near the end of the “white exodus,” in 1953, George E. Newport, then forty-three, and his wife Vernah made, what their daughter later described as, the hardest decision of their lives. “They focused on the stand up shower and the right to vote. Father became a democrat and mom a republican, having not seen a reason to think of it before. Although they were upset when Harry Truman replaced FDR,” said Vernah Newport Williams of her family’s removal from Petworth to Maryland, as one of the last “white hold-outs” in the neighborhood.⁵⁶ The Newports had been a Grant Circle fixture since 1917, when Williams’s grandfather, Admiral John F. Newport, a lifelong naval officer and Tennessee transplant, moved into the corner house at 432 Upshur Street. After the previous owner foreclosed on his new house, the Newports bought the place, built a garage for their “Model A,” joined the Petworth Citizens Association, and raised three generations of their family.⁵⁷

Shirley Otesia Barr was just a girl when her parents bought what would become their family home at 11 Grant Circle. In 2015, when Ms. Barr stands at the oblong branch of the Cedar of Lebanon in Grant Circle; she remembers when it was low enough to sit on. Otis Barr, her father, bought the house in the early 1950s, just like the Harrises and the Logans, as one of the early African American buyers. “My parents loved the house when they bought it. It was beautiful,” said Ms. Barr, recollecting her early days in Grant Circle.⁵⁸

An important part of the history of Grant Circle is the story of the demographics that changed in 1950. The “white flight” that occurred is a representation of how white, middle-class Washingtonians felt about living near African Americans in the mid-twentieth century. This was a national trend throughout American cities that occurred from the post-World War II period through the 1950s and 1960s. At Grant Circle, this change led to more than just a change in demographics, it documented the emergence of an African American middle class.

Merrill T. Vaughn (6 and 7 Grant Circle)

No. 6 and 7 Grant Circle were designed by Architect Merrill T. Vaughn. Vaughn had been known in Washington, D.C. as an architect as early as 1900, but wouldn’t be fully licensed until roughly 1912. Among his early works as an architect were two of the early buildings on Grant Circle. Vaughn would go on to establish himself as a prominent architect in the District of Columbia.

While born in Dover, Delaware on September 29, 1883, Merrill Thomas Vaughn was about four years old when his family arrived at Washington, D.C. Native of Delaware, William A. Vaughn was a building contractor who had established a construction company in Washington, D.C. after 1888, relocating his wife, Annita White; her parents—William H. and Anna E. White; and their sons—Merrill T. and William D. Vaughn to the Federal City. As early as 1900, Vaughn was listed as an architect, then just sixteen-

⁵⁶ Verna Williams, interview by Oscar Beisert, February 8, 2015.

⁵⁷ Petworth Citizens Association Pamphlet, circa 1920 (Historical Society of Washington, D.C.).

⁵⁸ Shirley Otesia Barr, interview by Oscar Beisert, February 5, 2015.

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years-old, and the three-generations lived at No. 1546 Columbia Street, NW, where two other children, Eva W. and Walter W., had been born. William H. White, then 70-years-old, still considered himself an active carpenter, making him the patriarch of three generations of construction in the family.

Between 1900 and 1901, Vaughn attended Lehigh University in Allentown, Pennsylvania, then known as a school that produced stellar architects and engineers, but Vaughn’s attendance was brief. After leaving Lehigh, Vaughn became a professional baseball player for the Western Association and, by 1905, he was manager of the Leavenworth Baseball Club, in Kansas. During his childhood in Washington, D.C., Vaughn had met his wife May Rosalind at Taylor Elementary School. The two were married in 1904 during Vaughn’s involvement with professional baseball. Vaughn returned to Washington, D.C. in 1908 at which time he worked for three years as a “cartoonographer” for the Federal government.

In 1911, Vaughn was hired by the Post Office Department and, after three years, worked in the Inspector’s Office. During his time in the Inspector’s Office, Vaughn would become the Assistant Chief of the Engineering and Research Division. On Vaughn’s World War I Registration Card, his present occupation is listed as “In Charge of Building Construction Work.”

The Vaughns eventually built a house at No. 3011 25th Street, NE. Construction was apparently something that ran through his veins. While working full time for the Post Office Department, Vaughn was an active design professional in the District of Columbia. His works included a range single-family dwellings, stores, flats and apartment buildings.

The following buildings were designed by Vaughn in Washington, D.C.:

Architectural Works of Merrill T. Vaughn			
Address	Date of Construction	Building Type	Status
1816 Kalorama Road NW	1909	Apartment House	Extant
1882 Columbia Road NW	1910	Apartment House	Extant
1884 Columbia Road NW	1911	Apartment House	Demolished
1826 Wyoming Avenue NW	1911	Dwellings	Extant
1828 Wyoming Avenue NW	1911	Dwelling	Extant
1840 California Street NW	1907	Apartment House	Extant
1842 California Street NW	1907	Apartment House	Extant
1840 Vernon Street NW	1910	Apartment House	Extant
1846 Vernon Street NW	1910	Apartment House	Extant
1822 Vernon Street NW	1909	Apartment House	Extant
1812 Vernon Street NW	1917	Apartment House	Extant
2119-2121 18 th Street NW	1915	Commercial Building	Extant
2315 18 th Street NW	1910	Commerical Building	Altered
2317 18 th Street NW	Unknown	Commerical Building	Altered

Vaughn was noted in particular for the latter category of building, including the Colonnade at 1822 Vernon Street, N.W. (1910, within the Washington Heights Historic District); the Knickerbocker at 1840 Mintwood Place, N.W. (1909, within the Kalorama Triangle Historic District), and the Saint Regis at

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2219 California Street, N.W. (1912; within the Sheridan Kalorama Historic District).⁵⁹His works at Grant Circle were designs that were used for houses of middle class people, while much of his other work was for upper middle to upper class. Nevertheless, like much of Grant Circle's tradition, the building at No. 6 and 7 Grant Circle feature elements of grandeur, including large brick fire places akin to the works of Frank Lloyd Wright, offering additional fashionable detail for the period of construction.

Vaughn retired from the United States Post Office in 1944, but was an active citizen in Washington, D.C. until his death in 1967.

⁵⁹ *District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Sites, Alphabetical Version* (Washington, D.C.: D.C. Historic Preservation Office, 2009), 36-141.

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Interviews

Irwin Richman, telephone interview by Oscar Beisert. January 28, 2015.

Paul E. Logan, interview by Oscar Beisert. February 9, 2015.

Shirley Otesia Barr, interview by Oscar Beisert. February 5, 2015.

Verna Williams, interview by Oscar Beisert. February 8, 2015.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

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10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property less than one

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 38.944055° | Longitude: -77.021176° |
| 2. Latitude: 38.943580° | Longitude: -77.018183° |
| 3. Latitude: 38.942493° | Longitude: -77.018267° |
| 4. Latitude: 38.942426° | Longitude: -77.020544° |

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

NA

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

NA

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Oscar Beisert
organization: Off Boundary Preservation Brigade
street & number: 764 Fairmont Street NW
city or town: Washington state: DC zip code: 20001
e-mail bill.marzella@traceries.com
telephone: (717) 602-5002
date: February 16, 2015

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

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

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



9th

No 7

No 8



VARNUM

R-4

RECREATION CIRCLE

5TH ST

ILLINOIS AVE

5th St NW

UPSHUR ST

VARNUM ST

SQ. 32800

SQ. 32260

SQ. 3244

SQ. 3243

SQ. 3245

SQ. 3242

SQ. 3227

SQ. 3225

45 46 47 48

44 43 42 41

58 59 60 61

57 56 55 54

39 38 37 36 35 34

801

33 32 31 30 29

49 48 45 44 43

40 41 39 38 37 36 35 34 33

805 806

33 32 31 30 29

34 35 36 37 38

37 38 39

24 23

49 48 47 46

43 44 45

233

1918

44

81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89

39 38

79 74 73 72 71 70 69 78

807

47 48 49 61 62 62

42 43

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Photo 1 of 26: DC_Grant Circle Historic District_001.tif
4-10 Grant Circle, facing northeast



Photo 2 of 26: DC_Grant Circle Historic District_002.tif
4-7 Grant Circle, facing east

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Photo 16 of 26: DC_Grant Circle Historic District_016.tif
Grant Circle from roadway, facing east



Photo 23 of 26: DC_Grant Circle Historic District_023.tif
Grant Circle, facing east

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Photo 24 of 26: DC_Grant Circle Historic District_024.tif
Grant Circle, facing northwest



Photo 25 of 26: DC_Grant Circle Historic District_025.tif
Reservation 312A, facing northwest

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Photo 16 of 26: DC_Grant Circle Historic District_016.tif
Grant Circle from roadway, facing east



Photo 23 of 26: DC_Grant Circle Historic District_023.tif
Grant Circle, facing east

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Photo 24 of 26: DC_Grant Circle Historic District_024.tif
Grant Circle, facing northwest



Photo 25 of 26: DC_Grant Circle Historic District_025.tif
Reservation 312A, facing northwest