

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Barney Circle Historic District

Washington, D.C.

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

Section number Amendment Page 1

Barney Circle Historic District Nomination Amendment (Boundary Increase)

Introduction

This amendment to the proposed Barney Circle Historic District expands the boundaries of the proposed historic district to the south to include a large lot, Lot 130 in Square 1077, located at intersection of Pennsylvania and Kentucky Avenues and Barney Circle. The amendment is being made because the lot fronts Barney Circle from which the neighborhood derives its name, and because the lot was first developed during the proposed period of significance and relates to the transportation significance of the circle.

As currently proposed, the southern boundary of the historic district ends at the side wall of the house at 833 Kentucky Avenue and excludes the adjacent vacant Lot 130. This amendment would include Lot 130 as detailed below.

Boundary Description

Most of the boundaries of the district would remain the same, but the western and southern boundaries would be extended to encompass Lot 130 of Square 1077. The boundary would continue from its current edge on Kentucky Avenue to and around the arc of Barney Circle to Pennsylvania Avenue, then head northwest along Pennsylvania Avenue to the western lot line of Lot 130, then would extend northeasterly along the lot line to the center of Freedom Alley where it would intersect with the originally proposed boundary.

History of Lot 130

Prior to 1890, present-day Lot 130 consisted of several large, unimproved lots, designated Lots 1-6 and Lots 23-29. In 1890 and 1896, most of these and others on Square 1077 were subdivided into smaller lots, designated 30-36, 48-52 and 53-57, all intended for rowhouses fronting on Kentucky and Pennsylvania Avenues. Additional Lots 52 and 53 remained larger ones fronting on Barney Circle.

This subdivision was consistent with the pattern of speculative development in the neighborhood following the first promises of water and sewer infrastructure. By the first decade of the 20th century, Square 1077 consisted of some larger, unsubdivided lots, and some already built-upon smaller lots. By 1919, most of the larger lots on Square 1077 had been subdivided and many of them had been improved with rowhouses. Although the lots comprising present-day Lot 130 were clearly subdivided for row house development at the end of the 19th century, the lots remained undeveloped into the 20th century.

With the rise of the automobile and the growth of Pennsylvania Avenue, SE as a major transportation route, this edge of Barney Circle offered an ideal site for automobile services and other light industrial operations. In 1924, Hoffman & Company opened a dry cleaning plant on a portion of Lot 130 facing Pennsylvania Avenue, and in 1927, the Lord

Baltimore Company located a filling station next to it, at the intersection of Pennsylvania Avenue and Barney Circle. In July 1927, Lord Baltimore advertized its newest filling station at Barney Circle, offering a “free Eversharp Pencil With Clip” to every purchaser of five or more gallons of gas. The company invited readers to,

“Drive down to Barney Circle and see how well we’ve planned for the convenience of motorists passing through that section of Washington. You’ll find a station which incorporates all the features which we have found desirable and advantageous in building our stations and you’ll find Lord Baltimore service at its best.”

A perspective rendering of the station shows that it followed the company’s standard architectural model, distinguished primarily by its hipped roof, clad with Spanish tiles of tin. Perhaps due to its modest size, this station did not, however, include the porte-cochère found at other Lord Baltimore stations of the period.

Both the gas station and dry cleaning facility remained on the site until at least 1960. Both of these buildings and associated structures were then demolished. In 1989, all of the individual lots were consolidated to become present-day Lot 130. Today, Lot 130 remains devoid of buildings, though a used-car business operates on the site, and it is locally known as “the used car lot.”

Boundary Justification

The application for the Barney Circle Historic District did not include Lot 130 within its boundaries primarily because the district was considered an exclusively residential neighborhood and inclusion of the lot would have created an exception to that characteristic. The lot is visually and historically an integral part of the neighborhood’s history, however, and should be considered a part of the historic district. Incompatible development there could adversely affect the character of a historic district. The lot abuts Barney Circle, connecting the residential neighborhood to the traffic circle after which it was named. In addition, the lot provides for a visual transition between the circle and the neighborhood streets.