

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

*Duplicate - Rec'd 10.10.78*

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RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

OCT 11 1978

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC  
Anacostia Historic District

AND/OR COMMON  
Anacostia Historic District

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER general vicinity of Uniontown and the  
Griswald Subdivision in southeast Washington.

CITY, TOWN

Washington

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

\_\_ VICINITY OF Walter E. Fauntroy, Congressman

STATE

District of Columbia

CODE

11

COUNTY

District of Columbia

CODE

001

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Multiple public and private ownership. See attached list.

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

\_\_ VICINITY OF

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Recorder of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

6th & D Streets, N.W.

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE  
D.C.

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE  
District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Sites

DATE

February 3, 1978

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

DC/NPC Historic Preservation Office

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE  
District of Columbia

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Anacostia Historic District is an area of approximately twenty squares in southeast Washington, generally encompassing Uniontown, the Griswold Subdivision, and immediately adjacent areas. The architectural character of the Anacostia area is unique in Washington. Nowhere else in the District of Columbia does there exist such a collection of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century small-scale frame and brick working-class housing. The Anacostia Historic District is dominated by three major architectural styles--the Cottage Style, the Italianate, and the Washington Row style. A number of Queen Anne houses are scattered throughout the historic district. Although a primarily residential district, a neighborhood commercial area did develop along Good Hope Road and Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue. The commercial buildings along these two streets are either early houses converted for commercial use, commercial/residential buildings with stores on the first floor and apartments above, or twentieth-century commercial structures. The later buildings follow their own stylistic patterns but, for the most part, continue the low-scale residential quality found in the rest of the historic district. A small number of intrusions exist in the historic district, many of which are land-use intrusions rather than actual structures; vacant lots and used-car dealers are more a problem than large-scale buildings.

Uniontown, the core of the historic district, was incorporated in 1854. The seventeen block area, bounded by Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, Good Hope Road, 16th Street, and W Street, was laid out in a grid pattern. The focal point of the subdivision was the market place created by widening Fourteenth Street between U and V Streets and dividing the north-south lanes of the street. This forty foot wide tree-lined promenade has served as a community gathering place since the early days of the development.

Uniontown was such a financial success that other developers began subdividing adjacent land. The Griswold Subdivision, immediately to the south of Uniontown, was developed in the 1880's in much the same manner as the earlier development. The houses in the Griswold area are similar in design and concept to those in Uniontown. Indeed, the area represents an extension of the Uniontown subdivision. The areas around what is now the Anacostia Historic District developed as distinct entities. Some development, such as the Barry Farm tract, occurred around the same time as the Uniontown and Griswold Subdivision. Other areas, such as the tract north of Good Hope Road, were developed at a later date. These areas have their own architectural features and character and remain apart from the Anacostia Historic District.

Before the development of the Uniontown subdivision the land was used primarily for agricultural purposes and there were only scattered houses in the area. The house at 1342 U Street (photograph 1,A) may be one of the oldest houses in the area and typical of the type of farmhouse that would have stood in what is now the historic district. This simple side-gable clapboard house has a standing-seam tin roof and a wrap-around porch with turned columns. In 1854, 240 acres of land were sold to the partners of the Union Land Association, who recognized that the area was a prime location for a viable suburban community because of its proximity, by way of the bridge across the Anacostia River, to the Navy Yard and other emerging government facilities.

(Continued on Form 10-300a)

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Local History
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

**SPECIFIC DATES** \_\_\_\_\_ **BUILDER/ARCHITECT** \_\_\_\_\_

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Joint Committee on Landmarks has designated the Anacostia Historic District a Category II Historic District of importance which contributes significantly to the cultural heritage and visual beauty of the District of Columbia.

The Anacostia Historic District is significant for both its historical and architectural contributions to the District of Columbia. The Anacostia Historic District includes within its boundaries Uniontown, one of Washington's earliest suburbs, which was incorporated in 1854. Uniontown was the first suburb of Washington which was designed to be financially accessible to Washington's working class, most of whom were employed at the Washington Navy Yard. It also contains within its boundaries Cedar Hill, the home of Frederick Douglass, one of the most distinguished men of his time, who was often referred to as the "Sage of Anacostia." The Anacostia Historic District retains much of its mid-to-late nineteenth century low scale working class character as is shown in its architecture. It contains more detached, small frame houses than any other 19th century subdivision in the city. The rhythmic character of projecting front porches and bays lends a unique charm to the streets of this community. The Historic District contains a large number of working class houses which are characterized by their low-scale two-story height, and are primarily detached or in rows of two or three houses, and constructed of wood with very simple decorative elements. The brick houses found in the Historic District are somewhat larger with simple design elements typical of a modest clientele.

The area that is now recognized as the Anacostia Historic District generally includes Uniontown, one of Washington's earliest suburbs, as well as most of Griswold's Subdivision and areas immediately adjacent to the original Uniontown boundaries. These two adjacent areas contain houses similar in design features and character to Uniontown and represent an extension of the type of client and architect/builder which typified Uniontown during the second half of the century.

The name Anacostia derives from the area's early history as a settlement of the Nacochtank Indians. Captain John Smith recorded in his journals that he sailed up the Eastern Branch in 1608 in his search for the main branch of the Potomac River. Smith landed on the south bank approximately where the present day Anacostia is located, and relates in his journals that he was well received by the Nacochtank Indians. In the 1632 journal of another explorer, Henry Fleet, the present site of Anacostia was referred to as Nacostine. The name was Latinized by Jesuit missionaries to Anacostines, and the areas was later referred to by the Indians themselves as

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See attached list.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approximately 83 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,8	3,2,8	2,4,0	4,3,0,3	8,3,0	B	1,8	3,2,8	2,3,0	4,3,0,3	0,0,0
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING			ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING	
C	1,8	3,2,7	2,3,0	4,3,0,3	0,0,0	D	1,8	3,2,7	2,4,0	4,3,0,3	8,5,0
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING			ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING	

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Anacostia Historic District encompasses an area of about twenty squares in southeast Washington, generally bounded by Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, Good Hope Road, Kendall Street, 16th Street, Cedar Hill, High Street, and Maple View Place. See enclosed National Capital Planning Commission map File No. 80.00 (08.10) - 28400 for precise boundaries.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N.A.			
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Anne H. Helwig and Suzanne Ganschinietz, Architectural Historians

ORGANIZATION

Joint DC/NCPC Historic Preservation Staff

DATE

March 20, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

1325 G Street, N.W.

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

District of Columbia

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

Director, Department of Housing and Community Development

TITLE

DATE

6-14-78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DATE

10/11/78

10/11/78

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The subdivision of Uniontown was one of the earliest in Washington. It was the first established specifically for the working class. Approximately 700 24' x 130' lots were laid out on a grid pattern. These lots were larger than standard city lots and, because of their modest price, many people could afford to purchase two lots. The lot size and the large number of double lots in the area influenced the building pattern in Anacostia, which emerged as being very different from that in the rest of Washington. Detached and duplex houses, rather than continuous rows of houses, were the predominant house form in Anacostia. The regulation of building size provided by the standard lot size gives the area an ordered appearance; two-story, two- or three-bay houses with consistent set-backs line the streets of the historic district. Large front and side yards surround most of the houses in the area, giving Uniontown, the Griswold Subdivision, and the surrounding areas a spacious open feeling not generally found in Washington.

While the neighborhood is fairly homogeneous and a strong sense of order prevails, a great deal of variety and visual richness exists in Anacostia. Projecting porches and varied rooflines create a strong sense of rhythm up and down the streets (photograph 2). Relatively simple, standard house forms feature some of the most varied and original detailing in Washington. Individuals chose their own porch trim, iron fences, window and gable treatments, and other decorative details. This richness of detail is but one aspect of the historic district that makes it a pleasant and distinctive place. Urban amenities such as brick sidewalks and iron fences are common in the historic district. Trees and gardens are also part of the urban landscape that contributes to the ambience of the area.

There are approximately 550 buildings in the Anacostia Historic District, plus assorted garages and out-buildings. Because of the size of the district it is impossible to discuss each structure individually or identify the style of each structure. Therefore, exceptional examples of prevalent styles will be identified and discussed. One of the focal points in the Anacostia Historic District is Cedar Hill (H), home of Frederick Douglass. The house, built around 1855 by John W. Van Hook, one of the developers of Uniontown, was one of the first houses constructed after the subdivision of Uniontown. The site, high on a hill overlooking Anacostia, is the finest in the area; the commanding view of the river and Washington beyond is magnificent. The house currently stands on about eight wooded, hilly acres which provide a park-like open space for the neighborhood.

In 1877, after the Union Land Association went bankrupt, the property was sold to Frederick Douglass, who substantially altered the house. The original house was an L-shaped, brick, gable-roofed, two-story house with three main rooms on the first floor. A front porch ran across the facade. During Douglass' ownership the house was greatly enlarged and out-buildings were constructed. The exterior appearance of Cedar Hill was doubtless influenced by the picturesque cottages of Andrew Jackson

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Downing. The house's steep gable forms of the Gothic Revival and projecting eaves and bracketed cornice of the Italianate are similar to Downing's designs. It is very probable that the general form of Cedar Hill, although considerably larger than any other domestic structure in the area, influenced building in Anacostia, where steep gables and Italianate brackets are a basic element of the local building vocabulary.

The first dominant architectural style in Anacostia was the Cottage Style, which was prevalent from the earliest years of development in the area on into the third decade of the twentieth century. Variations on this simple form of worker housing occurred by manipulating the size and proportions of the building as well as the roof and porch forms. Two common types of Cottage Style house exist in Anacostia--a three-bay house with one recessed bay and an L-shaped porch and a two- or three-bay flat-front cottage with a porch. The Cottage Style house with the recessed bay usually has a gable roof with the gable end to the street. The house at 1358 Valley Place (photograph 3,B) is an exceptional example of this style. The turned posts and the fish-scale shingles in the gable enhance the simple form of this house.

The flat-front Cottage Style house generally has a Mansard-type roof, often with a small projecting gable in the center of the roof. The detailing on these houses is frequently limited to porch trim. The house at 1224 W Street (I) is a good example of a detached flat-front cottage. At 1310-1312 W Street (J) this type of Cottage Style house also appears as a duplex. Here the center gables in the mansard roof are echoed by triangular ventilators; the detail emphasizes the geometricity of the facade. A more elaborate duplex of the same type stands at 1220-1222 Pleasant Street (K). Although altered by the application of asbestos shingles, the house retains much of its original charm and elaborate detail. Turned posts, unusual trim along the underside of the porch roof between the posts, shingling in the gables, and a side gable add to the quality of design and visual impact of this house.

A number of features of the Cottage Style house, such as detailing in the gable end or on the porches, are commonly varied. Lunette windows, decorative shingles, and ornate ventilators are common features of the gable area. Porch details range from elaborate Eastlake bargeboards and brackets, to Stick Style details, to nothing at all. Decorative brackets flanking the porch columns under the roof cornice often appear. Columns range in style from simple classical columns, to slightly articulated square posts, to turned Eastlake columns. Porches on the flat-front cottages occasionally have a small pediment in front of the entrance beyond the line of the porch roof.

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The second architectural style to become popular in the Anacostia Historic District was the Italianate, which was popular in the area from the 1870's on into the early years of this century. Among the existing housing stock the Italianate is the predominant style. One of the finest, and certainly the most academic, Italianate house in the area stands at 1312 U Street (photograph 4,C). The shallow, hipped roof, cupola, and elaborate brackets at the cornice, windows, and porch posts are typical of this style, although more elaborate than most Italianate houses in the historic district.

The typical Anacostia Italianate house is a two- or three-bay, two-story, clapboard flat-front house with a front porch. The facade is symmetrical, with the entrance in one of the side bays. Porches generally run flat across the facade. The Eastlake, classical, or Stick Style porch details are similar to details found on Cottage Style houses. Most of the Italianate houses in the historic district retain their cornices, the most distinguishing feature of the Italianate facade (photograph 5). Elaborate window and door trim appears on a small number of Italianate houses, including 1424 V Street (L). The facade of this house, with its cornice at the roof and above the windows, is more elaborate than most in the area. An elegant, unique structure in the historic district is the six-unit Italianate row at 1240-1250 U Street (photograph 6,D). This row is one of the outstanding structures in the historic district. The cornice on the corner unit, which runs along the side facade of the house, and the side bay window, which is unusual on this type of house, give the row a finished look. The cornice on an Italianate house seldom wraps around to the sides of the house as it does on the U Street row--it usually only runs across the front facade. The treatment of cornices throughout the historic district varies. Some cornices are simple backboards with brackets on each end; some are more elaborate with brackets and modillions; others have paneled backboards and carved brackets.

Although the majority of the housing stock in Anacostia is frame construction, one prevalent style, the Washington Row house, was built primarily of brick. This brick house with a bay running all or part of the way up the facade was a common building type in Washington from the 1880's through the first decade of the twentieth century. Throughout most of the District of Columbia these houses were characteristically built as rowhouses. In Anacostia, however, they primarily appear as duplexes or detached houses. The proportions of the Washington Row house in Anacostia are smaller than commonly found elsewhere in the city. Anacostia Washington Rows are generally two stories rather than three and only two bays wide, instead of the more common three found in the rest of Washington.

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The general form and character of the Washington Row house was derived from Victorian townhouses. The characteristic feature of this style is the elaborate brickwork, particularly the corbelled cornices imitating Italianate bracketed cornices. Beading and molded brick often enhance the entrances, stringcourses, and window openings of these houses. The patterns and types of brickwork are many and varied. In some instances the projecting bay on the facade is eliminated, creating a flat-front Washington Row. The characteristic detailing appears on the flat-front versions of this style just as it does on the houses with bays. Wooden porches with turned Eastlake posts and abstracted Eastlake brackets often grace the facades of these houses. Some porches completely span the flat facades, others cover the entrance and run flush with the projecting bay. A particularly pleasing arrangement occurs in duplex Washington Rows where the floor plans are the mirror image of each other and the porches meet between the protruding bays (photograph 7).

The Washington Row houses in the 1900 block of 13th Street have exceptionally fine porches and details. One of the detached Washington Row houses in the historic district stands at 1919 13th Street (photograph 8,M). The Washington Row houses at 2616 and 2618 15th Street(N), with cornices turned into pediments reminiscent of those on Cottage Style houses in the area, are examples of the many variations of this style within the historic district.

Scattered examples of Queen Anne houses appear in the Anacostia Historic District, most frequently in the Griswold Subdivision. These houses, less prevalent than the Cottage Style, the Italianate, or the Washington Row, add variety and richness to the area. The Queen Anne style was introduced to this country in 1876 at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. Most of the Queen Anne houses in the historic district date from the decades on either side of the turn of the century. Irregular massing, multiple rooflines, turrets, bays, and prominent porches typify these houses. Two of the most prominent Queen Anne houses in the area stand at 2126 15th Street (O) and 1303 Mapleview Place (photograph 9,P) both from about 1890. Although modified, the massing, the bold peaked-roofed turrets--focal points along the streets--and the porches of these houses still express the essence of the Queen Anne style.

In the early years of the twentieth century the Mansard row was the predominant building form throughout Washington. In Anacostia the form appears more frequently as a duplex than as a row. Italianate cornices and front porches are typical detailing for these houses (photograph 10). Porch and cornice details and the treatment of the dormers vary from house to house. Most are reminiscent of other architectural styles. The carved ends of the paired brackets on the row at 1233-1255 U Street (Q) are reminiscent of the California mode.

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Two of the churches in the Anacostia Historic District, standing diagonally across from each other at 13th and V Streets, represent two different aspects of the Victorian Gothic. St. Theresa's Catholic Church (photograph 11,E), designed by E. Francis Baldwin of the Baltimore firm of Baldwin and Pennington, was built in 1879 by Isaac Beers. A large rose window with simple circular tracery embellishes the facade of the stucco building. Stone trim and elaborate iron steps at the front and side entrances add distinction to the otherwise simple building. Emmanuel Episcopal Church (photograph 12,F) provides a sharp contrast to St. Theresa's. The irregular form and massing add to the appeal of this picturesque masonry church, which was built in 1891. The massive belfry with its spire and splayed eaves makes the church a prominent landmark in the neighborhood.

Although the Anacostia Historic District is primarily residential, a neighborhood commercial area consisting of Good Hope Road and Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue developed as part of the community. With few exceptions the commercial structures along the northern and western boundaries of the historic district retain the low-scale residential character of the rest of the historic district. Examples of early Italianate and Washington Row houses that have been converted for commercial use may be found along the commercial streets. The buildings at 1227 (photograph 13,R) and 1239-1245 Good Hope Road (S) are flat-front Washington Row houses with unfortunately modified ground floors. Some present-day commercial buildings were probably built as stores with apartments above for the owners. The structure on the northeast corner of Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue and V Street was probably originally both commercial and residential (photograph 14,G).

The turn of the century brought the popularity of revival styles in architecture. The most prominent examples of revival style buildings in the Anacostia Historic District stand along Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue. The first home of the Anacostia Bank, at 2021 Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, (photograph 15,T), is a Georgian Revival structure built in the early years of this century. The Flemish bond, glazed headers, quoining at the corners of the slightly projecting center portico, and stone details and trim are typical of this style. Another Georgian Revival style building stands at 1907 Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue (U). The second-story loggia and rustication on this early-twentieth century building add distinction to the facade.

The only monumental building in the historic district is the Neo-Classical bank on the southeast corner of Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue and U Street (V). Built around 1920 as the second home of the Anacostia Bank, the building now houses a branch of the National Bank of Washington. A pair of colossal engaged columns flank the main entrance with its heavy classical cornice. Pilasters delineate the bays along the side of the building and large windows on the second floor and smaller ones on the rusticated first floor articulate the bays. A heavy modillioned cornice caps the building.

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A large portion of the commercial buildings in the historic district are one-story brick structures dating from the 1920's. These simple buildings are enlivened by patterned brickwork and parapet gables. The stores at 1918-1922 Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, with their geometrical parapets, are typical of this style (photograph 16,W). The parapet on the building at 2218 Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue (X) forms a sunburst pattern.

Two two-story Art Deco commercial buildings stand at 2022 and 2110 Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue (Y,Z). Although later than the majority of the commercial construction in the area they retain the scale and character of the street and do not detract from the street facade. These buildings are successful examples of the introduction of a later-style design into an existing streetscape.

Although a number of large-scale, mid-twentieth century structures intrude on the area around the historic district there are relatively few intrusions within the boundaries of the district. Most of the structures in the historic district, including a number of apartment and commercial buildings constructed since World War II, are compatible in scale and rhythm. Although later than the primary development in the area, and of very different architectural styles, these structures conform in scale and material to the earlier development. The one exception is a corrugated metal building at 1342 W Street (AA), which is totally out of keeping with the residential character of the area and is the one major intrusion in the Anacostia Historic District.

In recent years community organizations, the Neighborhood Housing Service and the Department of Housing and Community Development have been encouraging people to rehabilitate their houses, many of which are in good condition, needing only routine maintenance work. A number of single-family houses have recently undergone dramatic changes as a result of rehabilitation work.

The Anacostia Historic District remains a remarkably intact and homogeneous grouping of predominantly late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century structures. The simple one- and two-story frame and brick buildings, enlivened by porches, varied roof forms, and a variety of architectural details and ornamentation, create a cohesive neighborhood unique in Washington as the first working-class suburb. Open spaces, trees, and amenities such as brick sidewalks and iron fences add considerably to the charm and ambience of this historic district.

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Anacostia. Until it was developed for residential purposes in the 1850's, the main land use of the area was agricultural.

The present areas was part of the Chichester tract granted in 1664 to John Meeks by Lord Baltimore. By the mid-nineteenth century, it was designated by the Post Office as Anacostia. Part of the tract was then owned by Enoch Tucker, who sold a large portion of his farm in 1854 to John Fox, John W. Van Hook, and John Dobler for \$19,000. (John Van Hook in 1852 had been involved in suburban development work in the Baltimore area.) The three men formed the Union Land Association, subdivided the tract into building lots, and proceeded to establish Uniontown.

When incorporated in 1854, Uniontown was comprised of seventeen blocks which were laid out in a grid pattern. It was originally bounded on the west by what is today Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, S.E., between W Street, S.E., and Good Hope Road, S.E., on the north by Good Hope Road, S.E., between King Avenue, S.E., and 16th Street, S.E., on the west by 16th Street, S.E. to W Street, S.E., and on the south by W Street, S.E. At the approximate center of the subdivision was a market place which is a block long and forty feet wide created by separating the directional flow of the street (now 14th Street). The market place was intended to be the focal point of the community, and the street on which it is located was named in honor of the incumbent President Pierce. The remainder of the streets were names after former U.S. Presidents. These original street names remained until 1908, when, by order of the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, they were transferred to other parts of the city.

Uniontown itself was very successful--half of the lots were sold in the first 1½ months, and the remainder were sold shortly thereafter. The land was subdivided into approximately 700 lots, the majority of which were 24 feet wide and 130 feet deep. These lots sold for \$60.00 cash or could be financed for \$3.00 monthly over a period of 25 months. Examination of early tax assessments and maps reveals that two or more contiguous lots were frequently sold to one owner. This situation was probably due to the fact that the nominally priced lots afforded persons the opportunity to purchase two or more, and thus the size of the property developed in Uniontown was larger than that originally advertised.

Uniontown was developed to appeal to the Washington working class, most of whom were employed in the Washington Navy Yard. Uniontown was also located across the Eastern Branch of the Potomac River (now called the Anacostia River) and had convenient and direct linkage to the Navy Yard via the Navy Yard Bridge. The developers hoped to provide a home with the advantages of country living near the owner's place of business. An examination of the 1880 census records, in which Uniontown is identified by name, substantiates this. A majority of the inhabitants of Uniontown were engaged in occupations common to the Navy Yard such as carpenter, blacksmith, boilermaker,

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printer, plumber, chainmaker, shipmaker, Navy personnel (both enlisted and commissioned) and laborer. Even a cursory examination of other District of Columbia suburbs in the county of Washington illustrates the uniqueness of Uniontown; the occupations found in other subdivisions were largely agrarian.

The 1880 census records also bring to light another interesting aspect of early Uniontown. Restrictive covenants provided that "no lot should be conveyed to any negro, mulatto, or person of African blood....," and it is commonly believed that the area remained white until the early 1960's. The 1880 census, however, quantitatively shows that approximately 15% of Uniontown was black some ninety years ago and that small percentage most likely continued into the early 1960's when the area became a primarily black residential area.

Uniontown was such a financial success that other developers began subdividing adjacent acreage. One of these subdivision, the Griswold Addition, abuts the southwestern edge of Uniontown and is generally bounded by what is today High Street, Morris Road, Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, Pleasant Street, and Valley Place, S.E. It was developed slowly, beginning in the late 1870's. In design features and characters, the houses in this subdivision are similar to those in Uniontown.

Also adjacent to Uniontown is Cedar Hill, probably constructed around 1855 for John Van Hook, one of the developers of Uniontown. The house is located on a hill overlooking the historic district with vistas across the Anacostia River as far as the Capitol dome. In 1877, Frederick Douglass purchased Cedar Hill and lived there until he died eighteen years later. The house and grounds were acquired by the National Park Service, and the house has been sensitively restored and is open to the public. Cedar Hill has also been designated a National Historic Landmark. Douglass has often been referred to as the "Sage of Anacostia" and was one of the most distinguished men of his time. He was an orator, a writer, an abolitionist and a true statesman serving not only his race but his country. A former slave, he addressed himself to the problems of his race as editor of the New National Era, and in speeches and writings throughout his life. He served with the District's Territorial Council; he was United States Marshall for the District of Columbia under President Rutherford B. Hayes; he served as Recorder of Deeds; and he was appointed Minister Resident and General Consul to the Republic of Haiti. He was also involved in business and was connected with several banks; he was the first president of the Industrial Building and Savings Company.

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Anacostia developed much as a village with its own supportive commercial and community institutions. The streets defining the northern (Good Hope Road) and western (Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue) edges of the area developed as commercial corridors. Selected rows from both the above commercial corridors which are representative of the early, low rise commercial development are included within the boundaries of the historic district.

An Anacostia Citizens Organization was formed around the turn-of-the-century in order to secure adequate public services, and in 1919 Charles Burr described the area to the Columbia Historical Society as follows: "We now have all the conveniences the rest of the city affords, but will continue our efforts to make improvements wherever needed throughout Anacostia. We are only thirty minutes from the center of the city by street cars and are the best equipped of any of the outlying parts of Washington City."

During the past several decades, much of the housing in area of the Anacostia Historic District has fallen into a state of disrepair. Within the last five years, however, a number of programs have been implemented for the area, and several more are anticipated. Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc. has been very active in rehabilitation work for several years as has the District of Columbia's Department of Housing and Community Development, which has made rehabilitation loans available through the Community Development Block Grant Program. HUD loans are also available for the area. The Department of Housing and Community Development has recently commissioned a consultant study with the following objectives: preparing guidelines for exterior restoration/rehabilitation of buildings in the historic district; proposing improvements for future development aimed at avoiding or mitigating adverse impacts within or adjacent to the district; providing general cost estimates for typical restorations of prototype buildings; evaluating the social and financial implications of proposed conservation and restoration recommendations on the residents and property owners; and assisting the Department in organizing a process for continuing conservation of the historic district.

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