

DC Builders & Developers Directory

<h1 style="margin: 0;">Harry R. Entzminger</h1>				
Biographical Data				
Birth: 2/25/1902	Place: Richland, South Carolina			
Death: 10/15/1981	Place: Washington, D.C.			
Family: wife, Annie Foster;				
Education				
High School: unknown				
College: n/a		<i>Source:</i>		
Graduate School: n/a				
Career				
Permit Database (through 1958)				
As Builder	Earliest Permit: 1948	Latest Permit: 1948	Total Permits: 1	Total Buildings: 1
As Owner	Earliest Permit: 1948	Latest Permit: 1955	Total Permits: 8	Total Buildings: 8
<small>*Note: In many instances, the subject is both the builder and owner. The permit counts also include permits issued to the individual and any company with which he was affiliated. *As a part of nineteenth century building regulations, building permits were required for the first time in 1872 and were often not archived until 1877.</small>				
Practice	Position	Date		
Professional Associations				
Societies or Memberships: Bricklayers Union No. 6, D.C.				
Awards or Commissions:				
Buildings				
Building Types: Single-family houses, apartment buildings				
Styles and Forms: Colonial Revival, Craftsman				
DC Work Locations: Northeast Quadrant				
Notable Buildings	Location	Date	Status	
Dwelling	1038 42 nd Street, NE		<input type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site	
Dwelling	4416 Nash Street, NE	1948	<input type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site	
Dwelling	4101 Meade Street, NE	1954	<input type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site	
Dwelling	4207 Anacostia Avenue, NE	1957	<input type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site	
			<input type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site	

Significance and Contributions

Harry R. Entzminger was a successful African-American builder in Washington, D.C. in the mid-20th century. He worked primarily in Northeast Washington, D.C. where he helped develop the African American neighborhood of Eastland Gardens.

Entzminger was born in 1902 in Richland, South Carolina to Thomas J. and Hattie Entzminger. His father, Thomas Entzminger, was a noted carpenter in South Carolina. He constructed buildings such as Dukes Gymnasium at South Carolina State College, a historically Black school.

Not much is known about Harry Entzminger's early life. He remained in South Carolina, living in Columbia from 1920 to 1934, where he worked as a carpenter and bricklayer. South Carolina city directories note his wife as Josephine Entzminger from 1928 to 1934, but no other information was found about her. Between 1934 and 1936, Entzminger moved to Washington, D.C. where he appears in the city directory as a single bricklayer living at 763 Morton Street, NW.

By 1940, Entzminger was living at 507 Rhode Island Avenue, NW with the family of his future wife, Annie Foster. He is listed on the 1940 U.S. Census as a bricklayer working for a private company. Only one building permit lists Entzminger as builder (#312487, 4416 Nash Street, NE, 1948) but he constructed many buildings, primarily dwellings, for which the permit likely did not document him as the builder.

Entzminger's most influential work was in the neighborhood of Eastland Gardens, located in Northeast Washington, D.C. Eastland Gardens is a suburban development of about 300 single-family houses designed and constructed primarily by African American architects and builders. Development of the neighborhood began in 1927 and, by 1955, 166 dwellings were constructed. Not only was Eastland Gardens designed and constructed by African Americans, it was an African American community. Entzminger constructed houses to the design of various noted architects, including premier African American designer Lewis W. Giles, who designed a total of forty five residences for Eastland Gardens.

Between 1948 and 1954, Entzminger worked with G.W. Jones (possibly of G.W. Jones Lumber). Together, they constructed the dwellings at 4241 and 4245 Nash Street, NE.

Entzminger died at the age of 79 in 1981.



4416 Nash Street, NE in Eastland Gardens. Photo by EHT Traceries, August 2012.

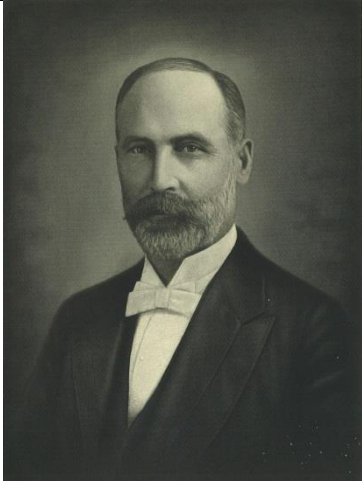


1038 42nd Street, NE in Eastland Gardens. Designed by Lewis Giles and constructed by Entzminger. Photo by EHT Traceries, August 2012.

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Sources		
Vertical Files <input type="checkbox"/> HSWDC <input type="checkbox"/> MLK Library Other Repositories: DC Building Permits Database, Ancestry.com		
Obituary: Publication: <i>Washington Post</i> Date: 10/18/1981		
Biographical Directories	Year/Volume	Page
<input type="checkbox"/> Who's Who in the Nation's Capital		
<input type="checkbox"/> History of the City of Washington: It's Men and Institutions	1903	
<input type="checkbox"/> Washington Past and Present	1932	
<input type="checkbox"/> Prominent Personages of the Nation's Capital	c. 1924	
Other Sources: Eastland Gardens Flower Club, "The African American Architects & Builders of Eastland Gardens 1928-1955," Presented to WHSC, 2011. Eastland Gardens Flower Club, <i>Images of America: Eastland Gardens</i> (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2011). "Harry Entzminger," Social Security Death Index. Ancestry.com. South Carolina Historic Resource Nomination, Dukes Gymnasium, City of Orangeburg Multiple Resource Area. http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/orangeburg/S10817738014/S10817738014.pdf		
		
<i>4101 Meade Street, NE. EHT Traceries, August 2012.</i>		
Notes: The following resources were consulted but no information was found about Harry Entzminger. Betty Bird for United Planning Organization, <i>Thematic Study of African American Architects and Builders in Washington, D.C.</i> 1994. Harrison M. Ethridge, <i>Black Architects of Washington, D.C., 1900-Present</i> , PhD. Dissertation, Catholic University, 1979. Derek Spurlock Wilson, ed., <i>African American Architects: A Biographical Directory, 1865-1945</i> , (New York: Routledge, 2004).		
Prepared by: EHT Traceries		Last Updated: June 2012

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Col. Robert Isaac Fleming		 <p>Source: <i>Washington Past & Present</i>, vol. 3, 62.</p>		
Biographical Data				
Birth: 1/15/1842	Place: Goochland County, VA			
Death: 9/11/1907	Place: Washington, D.C.			
Family: wife, Bell Vedder; daughter, India Bell; son, Robert Vedder				
Education				
High School: Privately tutored				
College: n/a				
Graduate School: n/a				
Career				
Permit Database (through 1958)				
As Builder	Earliest Permit: 1873	Latest Permit: 1888	Total Permits: 103	Total Buildings: 139
As Owner	Earliest Permit: 1874	Latest Permit: 1899	Total Permits: 14	Total Buildings: 24
*Note: In many instances, the subject is both the builder and owner. The permit counts also include permits issued to the individual and any company with which he was affiliated.				
*As a part of nineteenth century building regulations, building permits were required for the first time in 1872 and were often not archived until 1877.				
Practice	Position		Date	
City of Richmond, VA	Assistant City Engineer		ca. 1865–1867	
Private Practice	Carpenter/Builder		1868–1884	
Fleming & Libermann	Founder		1882	
Private Practice	Architect/Builder/Real Estate Investor		1885–1904	
Professional Associations				
Societies or Memberships: Member of the District Legislature; Colonel in the District National Guard; Director of the Columbia Railway Company; President of the Master Builders Association; Member of the Scottish Rite Masons, Member of the Almas Order Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, Member of the Benjamin B. French Lodge of Masons, Twice President of the Confederate Veterans Association				
Awards or Commissions: District Commissioner of the Central Labor Union				
Buildings				
Building Types: Institutional Buildings, Commercial Buildings, Row houses, Single-family Residences, Public Buildings, Churches				
Styles and Forms: Second Empire, Gothic, Colonial Revival, Italianate, and Queen Ann; Fleming frequently incorporated details from various styles into the same motif—combining trending fashionable styles with the traditional.				
DC Work Locations: NW; Dupont Circle, Cleveland Park				
Notable Buildings	Location	Date	Status	
William Radford House	1722 N Street, NW	1882	Dupont Circle Historic District	

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Kellogg Office Building	1418–1420 F Street, NW	1884	Demolished in 1917
The Newport	1618 21 st Street, NW	1884	Dupont Circle Historic District Massachusetts Avenue Historic District
Anastasia Patten Residence	2122 Massachusetts Ave, NW	1885	Demolished in 1947
Washington Hospital for Foundlings	1715 15th Street N.W.	1886	Demolished in 1929
The National Safe Deposit and Trust Company Building	New York and 15 th Ave., NW	1888	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site

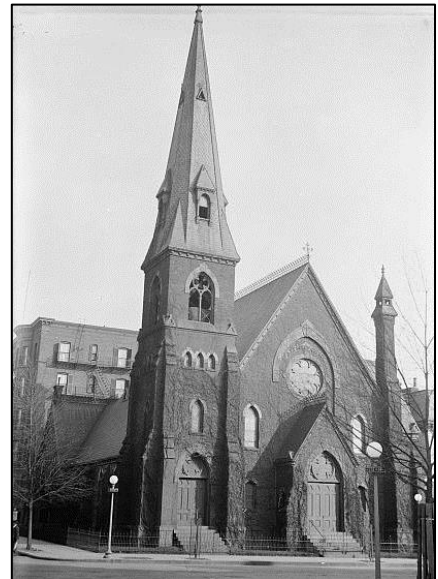
Significance and Contributions

Robert Isaac Fleming was a carpenter who became a prominent D.C. builder, primarily working in the Northwest quadrant of the City. By the mid-1880's, he considered himself an architect and builder because he began to design a number of his projects, but was not academically trained.

R. I. Fleming was the son of John Malcom Fleming and Eliza, born in Goochland, Virginia in 1842. At the age of 14 he began an apprenticeship with a local carpenter. As was expected of many southern men at the outbreak of war, Fleming enlisted with the Confederate Army at age 19. Private Fleming served the Richmond Fayette Artillery participating in thirty battles and rose to the rank of Lieutenant. Following the War he remained in Richmond, Virginia, to find work as a carpenter-builder and eventually received the City's honor with the appointment of Assistant City Engineer. However, the promise of greater opportunity in Washington, D.C. brought him to the Nation's Capital in 1867. Fleming's contribution to the District of Columbia appears to be immeasurable, as he was a true philanthropist involved in the growth and promotion of the young, but powerfully emerging City.

Fleming began work in D.C. under architect and builder Henry R. Searle, on the construction of the first buildings of Howard University in 1867. In 1869, Fleming worked for Starkweather and Plowman on the Freedman's Savings Bank. Just like his military career, Fleming rose quickly to the top, befriending some of the City's most influential residents. Teaming up with Adolph Cluss, a leading architect and member of the Board of Public Works, Fleming was selected to build the Sumner and Seaton public schools in 1871. Fleming was also in close relations with Henry A. Willard, Vice-President of the Board of Public Works. As a man of great wealth, Willard held interest in real estate and served as Fleming's financier. In 1877 Willard contracted Fleming to work on All Soul's Unitarian Church at Fourteenth and L Streets.

Fleming's work involved the construction of institutional and commercial buildings, as well as single-family residences for prominent wealthy Washingtonians. Two of these were the mansions of Judge Curtis J. Hillyer and Senator William Morris Stewart, individuals who invested heavily in the development of Dupont and Logan circles. Fleming built their mansions within the Dupont neighborhood in 1873 (Senator Stewart's most famously known as "Stewart's Castle," architect Adolph Cluss). Afterwards, Hillyer continued to employ Fleming as designer and builder of speculative row houses. The house at 1514 P Street NW is one example of twelve speculative houses Fleming built for Hillyer between 1884 and 1885. Another impressive client included gold-rush millionaire Anastasia Pattern, whose 2122 Massachusetts Avenue residence Fleming completed in 1885. As a result of his experience, Fleming began to refer to himself as an



All Souls' Church, constructed in 1877. Reported by the Washington Post in 1878 to be a "most beautiful specimen of Gothic architecture." Architect, Henry A. Willard. Builder, R. I. Fleming. Picture from the Library of Congress Prints and Photograph Division.

architect as well as a builder by mid-1880s.

Fleming's clients were not all elite as he built many row-houses for the middle-class. Whomever the patron, Fleming's success is attributed to his earnest efforts to satisfy the needs of his clients. He adapted every design to meet specific requests of the client in order to produce a distinctive house. Fleming's buildings notably combined trendy styles with the traditional to create sophisticated facades. Signature details of Fleming's work include the use of High-Victorian motifs, such as mansard roofs, dormers, tall-narrow windows and iron roofline crestings.

Additional public and commercial buildings of Fleming's include: The Scottish Rite Hall (3rd and D Streets, N.W.); the Kellogg Office Building (1418-1420 F Street, N.W.); Washington's Foundling Hospital (1715 15th Street N.W.) and the National Safe Deposit and Trust Company's Building (now the National Savings and Trust Company at 15th and New York Avenue, designed by J.H. Windrim).

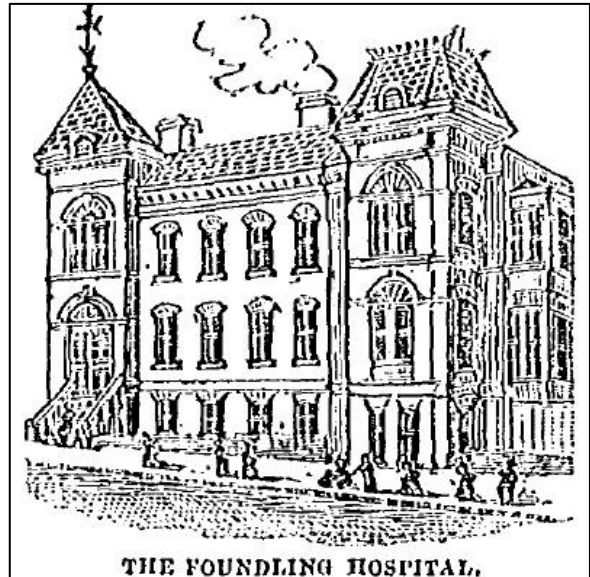
Through the course of his career, Fleming designed and built residences for senators, representatives, judges, and high military officials. Fleming also privately developed speculative housing in Dupont Circle, which he maintained as rental property. Most of the residences Fleming built were urban, but he did construct two large suburban frame houses in Cleveland Park (3141 and 3155 Highland Place). Fleming and his wife, Bell, whom he married in 1886, resided at 1406 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W. and spent their summers at "Oak View," the previous estate of ex-President Grover Cleveland.

Fleming died at the age of 65 from kidney failure after being diagnosed with Bright's disease. He left an estate valued around \$200,000 and is buried in Rock Creek Cemetery. Noted for his generosity, Fleming was remembered in *Washington—Past and Present* as a man with the "impersonation of honor, trustworthiness and sterling integrity." His son, Robert V. Fleming would later contribute greatly to Washington, D.C. as the President of Riggs National Bank.

In addition to Fleming's success in erecting some of D.C.'s finest buildings—his involvement in numerous organizations is most remarkable. Aware of his role among influential members of society, Fleming sought civic leadership. He entered the District National Guard—rising to the rank of colonel. Gaining political allies from both Democratic and Republican parties, Fleming was elected to the District Legislature in 1872. These positions, as well as others, allowed for Fleming to support the cause for better labor conditions. As president of the Master Builders Association, Fleming was a proponent of higher wages and shorter hours for workers. He supported organized labor and only employed union workers. Reported by the *Washington Post* in 1902 as "one of the best friends union labor has had," believing that a workman was more efficient in eight hours of time than in ten. Fleming's contribution to the welfare of the City is as significant as his legacy of hundreds of charming buildings which shaped the urban identity of the Nation's Capital.



1514-1518 P Street, NW. EHT Traceries, August 2012.



THE FOUNDLING HOSPITAL.
Washington Hospital for Foundlings, located on 15th Street, N.W. between R and S streets, was built by Col. R. I. Fleming in 1885. The building was demolished in 1929 and now is the site of the Bishops Gate condominium complex. Sketch from Washington Post, February 27, 1887.

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Sources			
Vertical Files	<input type="checkbox"/> HSWDC	<input type="checkbox"/> MLK Library	
Other Repositories:	DC Building Permits Database, Ancestry.com		
Obituary:	Publication: <i>Washington Post</i>	Date: 9/12/1907	Page: 2
Biographical Directories	Year/Volume	Page	
<input type="checkbox"/> Who's Who in the Nation's Capital			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> History of the City of Washington: It's Men and Institutions	1903	219–222	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Washington Past and Present	1932	62	
<input type="checkbox"/> Prominent Personages of the Nation's Capital	c. 1924		
Other Sources: <p>“A Chance to Endow a Cradle,” <i>Washington Post</i>, December 5, 1886, Proquest Historical Newspapers.</p> <p>“Against Paving an Alley,” <i>Washington Post</i>, May 21, 1903, Proquest Historical Newspapers.</p> <p>“All Souls’ Church: The Ceremonial of its Dedication Last night,” <i>Washington Post</i>, January 30, 1878, Proquest Historical Newspapers.</p> <p>“Col. R. I. Fleming Buried: Funeral Is Held from His Late Summer Home at Cleveland Park,” <i>Washington Post</i>, September 14, 1907, Proquest Historical Newspapers.</p> <p>“Col. R. I. Fleming Is Dead: Succumbs to Bright’s Disease After Illness of Three Years,” <i>Washington Post</i>, September 12, 1907, Proquest Historical Newspapers.</p> <p>“Fleming Estate \$200,000: Widow’s Petition for Probate of Will Shows Value of Property,” <i>Washington Post</i>, September 19, 1907, Proquest Historical Newspapers.</p> <p>“The Foundling Hospital: A Housewarming in the New Building Tomorrow,” <i>Washington Post</i>, February 27, 1887, Proquest Historical Newspapers.</p> <p>Goode, James. <i>Capital Losses</i>. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2003.</p> <p><i>Housing Washington: Two Centuries of Residential Development and Planning in the National Capital Area</i>, ed. Richard Longstreth (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 35–38.</p> <p>“Identified with Capital’s Growth,” <i>Washington Post</i>, July 27, 1905, Proquest Historical Newspapers.</p> <p>“Indorses Col. R. I. Fleming: Central Labor Union Acts in Commissionership Contest,” <i>Washington Post</i>, April 12, 1902, Proquest Historical Newspapers.</p> <p>Jennings, J. L. Sibley, Jr., Sue A. Kohler, and Jeffrey R. Carson, <i>Massachusetts Avenue Architecture, Volume 2</i>. Washington, D.C.: The Commission of Fine Arts, 1975.</p> <p>Lessoff, Alan and Christof Mauch, eds. <i>Adolf Cluss, Architect: From Germany to America</i>. Washington, D.C.: The Historical Society of Washington, D.C., 2005.</p> <p>Mcloud, Melissa. <i>Craftsmen and Entrepreneurs: Builders in late 19th Century Washington D.C.</i> Dissertation to the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of The George Washington University, 1988.</p> <p>“The New Foundling Hospital: A Description of a Handsome Structure Which is to be Erected,” <i>Washington Post</i>, March 23, 1885, Proquest Historical Newspapers.</p> <p>Proctor, John Claggett, ed. <i>Washington Past and Present, A History</i>. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1930.</p> <p>“Scenes from the Past,” <i>InTowner</i>, July 2012, 12 & 13.</p> <p>Slauson, Allan B., ed. <i>A History of the City of Washington, Its Men and Institutions</i>. Washington, D.C.: The Washington Post, 1903.</p> <p>Tracerics, 1618 21st Street. Prepared for the Phillips Collection, 1999.</p> <p>Tracerics, “Historic Context of Downtown Survey Area,” 920-930 F Street, NW Program of Mitigation, June 1990.</p> <p><i>Washington at Home: An Illustrated History of Neighborhoods in the Nation’s Capital</i>, ed. Kathryn Schneider Smith (Northridge, California: Windsor Publication, Inc., 1988), 206.</p>			
Notes:			
Prepared by: EHT Tracerics		Last Updated: August 2012	

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Charles Gessford		No Image Available.			
Biographical Data					
Birth: about 1830	Place: Maryland				
Death: 1/31/1894	Place: Washington, D.C.				
Family: wife, Elisabeth; sons, George, William, Oliver; daughters, Ida, Carrie, Laura; brother, James					
Education					
High School: unknown					
College: n/a					
Graduate School: n/a		Source:			
Career					
Permit Database (through 1958)					
As Builder	Earliest Permit: 1877	Latest Permit: 1893	Total Permits: 87	Total Buildings: 311	
As Owner	Earliest Permit: 1877	Latest Permit: 1893	Total Permits: 79	Total Buildings: 321	
*Note: In many instances, the subject is both the builder and owner. The permit counts also include permits issued to the individual and any company with which he was affiliated.					
*As a part of nineteenth century building regulations, building permits were required for the first time in 1872 and were often not archived until 1877.					
Practice		Position		Date	
Gessford & Lawson		Founder		1875	
Gessford & Son		Founder		1876–1894	
Professional Associations					
Societies or Memberships: Knight Templar, Masonic Fraternity, Knights of Pythias, Order of Red Men, Knights of the Golden Eagle, Capital Trust Company					
Awards or Commissions:					
Buildings					
Building Types: Alley Houses, Row-houses					
Styles and Forms: Queen Anne, two-story and basement brick dwellings					
DC Work Locations: NW, NE, SE, SW; Capitol Hill					
Notable Buildings	Location	Date	Status		
Row Houses	655–665 South Carolina Ave, S.E.	1888	Capitol Hill Historic District		
Row Houses	638, 640, 642 East Capitol St, N.E.	1890	Capitol Hill Historic District		
Alley Houses	Gessford Court, S.E.	1892	Capitol Hill Historic District		

Significance and Contributions

Charles Gessford was a carpenter from Baltimore, Maryland, who became an industrious Washington, D.C. builder after the Civil War until the 1893 depression, designing his own projects without a formal architectural education.

Born in Maryland in 1830, Charles was the eldest of William and Eliza Gessford's seven children. After a carpenter apprenticeship in Baltimore, Gessford relocated to Washington, D.C. in 1860 where his younger brother James resided and worked as a carpenter. The 1860 city directory reveals Charles Gessford living at 602 14th Street NW working as a carpenter and running a variety store business out of his home. By 1861, James abandoned the occupation of carpenter and joined the Metropolitan police force, eventually rising to the rank of Lieutenant. Charles remains a carpenter in city directories until the year 1887 when he is recorded as a contractor. By 1891 he is listed as a builder. In 1875, Gessford partnered with carpenter William Lawson for one year and ran a business located at 1000 C Street NW. It is not known why the partnership failed, but by 1882 Charles went into business with his oldest son George, and together they successfully built houses to meet the demands of Washington's booming real estate market.

By the mid-1880's, Gessford was exclusively building alley dwellings and row-houses in predominantly middle-class neighborhoods throughout all quadrants of the city. An 1889 tax assessment estimated Gessford's held property valued at \$57,000. Adhering to the rising trend of fast construction for speedy profitable returns, Gessford's row-houses were being constructed at an accelerated pace. He accomplished this by limiting his design vocabulary to one of two standardized floor plans. The two variations he used were the "two-thirds Georgian plan" and the narrower "one-third Georgian plan," both having straight staircases to make the project less expensive and efficiently easier to build. An example of Gessford's alley houses survive on "Gessford Court" bounded by Independence Avenue, 12th Street, C Street and 11th Street SE.



Gessford Court bounded by Independence Ave and C Street, between 11th and 12th Street SE. Photograph shows alley houses number 1 through 19 built by Gessford in 1892, costing approximately \$6,000. Photo by EHT Traceries, August 2012.

Gessford's trademark building exteriors included red pressed brick, with the stone trim occasionally applied, angled pediments and, for the more elaborate projects, colored slate roofs. As was the case with most speculative builders, Gessford designed his houses himself and rarely employed architects in order to cut costs. Gessford made only minor changes to his formulated aesthetics over a forty year career. He was still building in the Queen Anne style, with hints of Richardsonian Romanesque influences such as rounded arches and stoned doorways and basements, when many of the more fashionable neighborhoods around the District abandoned High Victorian details for more classically inspired designs.

Gessford's success with building quickly and efficiently earned him a reputation as a marketable builder. His most notable work is located on Capitol Hill around Lincoln Park and Stanton Park. According to several sources, Gessford is responsible for more houses on Capitol Hill than any other builder or developer. Some of his work includes: 211–227 8th Street NE, 246–256 9th Street NE, 812–816 Constitution Avenue NE. For a short time at the end of his career, Gessford joined efforts with S. K. Spaulding, a grate, mantel and tile dealer in Washington, D.C. Unfortunately in 1893 the alliance ended in court over a monetary dispute and added to Gessford's accumulating financial troubles.

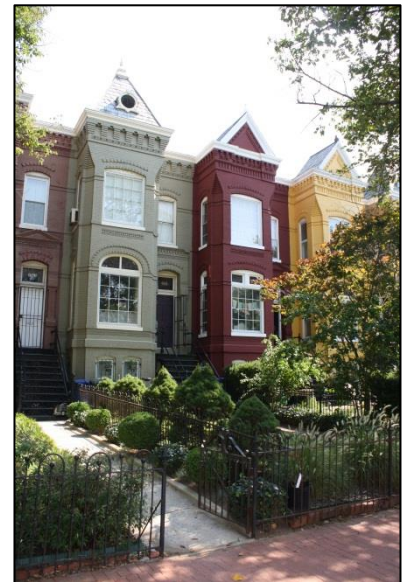


Photo of 663, 661, 659, 657 South Carolina Ave S.E. Built by Gessford in 1888. Photo by EHT Traceries, August 2012.

In many ways Gessford was a successful builder; however, his prolific business was unable to carry him through the economic turmoil of 1893. Ultimately, Gessford had to mortgage everything he owned in order to pay back what he

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had borrowed to build houses which by the Depression remained vacant. Tragically, he passed away in the midst of his debt. His remains are buried at Congressional Cemetery.

Although dying penniless at age 63, Gessford contributed greatly to the City's residential urban architecture. In addition to the impressive number of dwellings he constructed, many of his row-houses including the one in which he lived—661 South Carolina Avenue SE, presently contribute to historic districts throughout the city. Gessford, as a builder and developer, understood that utilizing standardized plans and designs allowed him to compete in Washington's speculative residential housing market by providing well-built row houses more quickly and efficiently than many others in the field. The sheer volume of row houses constructed by Gessford attests to his contributions to the city's built environment at the end of the nineteenth century.

Sources

Vertical Files ☐ HSWDC ☐ MLK Library

Other Repositories: DC Building Permits Database, Ancestry.com

Obituary: Publication: *Washington Post* Date: 1/8/1937 Page: 5

Biographical Directories	Year/Volume	Page
<input type="checkbox"/> Who's Who in the Nation's Capital		
<input type="checkbox"/> History of the City of Washington: It's Men and Institutions	1903	
<input type="checkbox"/> Washington Past and Present	1932	
<input type="checkbox"/> Prominent Personages of the Nation's Capital	c. 1924	

Other Sources:

1850 United States Federal Census record for William Gessford. Obtained from Ancestry.com

1880 United States Federal Census for Charles Gessford. Obtained from Ancestry.com

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"Charles B. Church Dead," *Washington Post*, April 26, 1908, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

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Elizabeth Festa, "D.C.'s Gessford Court is a little alley oasis," *Washington Post*, March 20, 2010.

"Fortunes in Real Estate: Men Who Have Large Investments in the District," *Evening Star*, November 9, 1889.

"Gessford Court," *Washington Post*, March 20, 2010.

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"Large Sales of Real Estate," *Washington Post*, September 24, 1892, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

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"Manufacturers' Record: Building Notes," July 27, 1889, 29.

"Manufacturers' Record: Building Notes," March 5, 1892.

"Manufacturers' Record: Building Notes," March 8, 1890, 39.

"Manufacturers' Record: Building Notes," March 19, 1892.

"Manufacturers' Record: Building Notes," May 24, 1890, 44.

"Manufacturers' Record: Building Notes," March 26, 1892, 37.

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National Register of Historic Places, Sixteenth Street Historic District, Washington, District of Columbia, National Register #376553

National Register of Historic Places, Capitol Hill Historic District, Washington, District of Columbia, National Register #372090

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"Over \$60,000 Invested: Money To Be Spent in Building Authorized by Yesterday's Permits," *Washington Post*, July 25, 1890, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

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"Some Capitol Hill Architects and Builders," Capitol Hill Restoration Society, Washington, D.C. 2012.

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Washington at Home: An Illustrated History of Neighborhoods in the Nation's Capital, ed. Kathryn Schneider Smith (Northridge, California: Windsor Publication, Inc., 1988), 39.




132-144 11th Street, S.E. Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) Southeast Area Survey.

Prepared by: EHT Tracerics

Last Updated: August 2012

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Herman Rowland Howenstein				 <i>Source: Washington Post, September 17, 1922</i>	
Biographical Data					
Birth: 10/27/1874		Place: St. Louis, Missouri			
Death: 3/26/1955		Place: Takoma Park, Maryland			
Family: ex-wife, Mary; son, Rowland; daughters, Marylin & Jean; sister, Lillian; brothers, Willis Owen & James T. Jr.					
Education					
High School: DC Public Schools					
College: George Washington University					
Graduate School: George Washington University					
Career					
Permit Database (through 1958)					
As Builder		Earliest Permit: 1902	Latest Permit: 1941	Total Permits: 406	Total Buildings: 1468
As Owner		Earliest Permit: 1901	Latest Permit: 1950	Total Permits: 393	Total Buildings: 1444
*Note: In many instances, the subject is both the builder and owner. The permit counts also include permits issued to the individual and any company with which he was affiliated.					
*As a part of nineteenth century building regulations, building permits were required for the first time in 1872 and were often not archived until 1877.					
Practice		Position		Date	
Bieber & Howenstein		Partner		1897–1898	
Herman R Howenstein		President		1899–1902	
Howenstein & Russell		Partner		1901	
Howenstein H R Company (Inc.)		President		1903–1934	
Howenstein Realty Corp.		President, Secretary		1935–1955	
Professional Associations					
Societies or Memberships: Director of the Federal National Bank, Columbia Country Club, Masonic Order, D.C. Bar, New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, Real Estate Brokers' Association of Washington					
Buildings					
Building Types: Apartments, Duplexes, Detached & Semi-Detached Dwellings, Row-houses					
Styles and Forms: Multi-story brick/frame/concrete/cinderblock: Colonial Revival, Craftsman					
DC Work Locations: Northwest, Northeast & Southeast quadrants: Anacostia, Bloomingdale, Capitol Hill, Chevy Chase, Columbia Heights, Foggy Bottom, LeDroit Park, Manor Park, Mount Pleasant, Navy Yard, Petworth, Woodridge					
Notable Buildings		Location		Date	Status
The Embassy Apartment Building		1613 Harvard Street NW		1924	Mount Pleasant Historic District
Row-houses		321–325 9 th Street NE		1909	Capitol Hill Historic District

Significance and Contributions

H. R. Howenstein was a prominent Washington, D.C. developer. Educated in law, he began a career in real estate before his graduation from Columbian University in 1896. Known for his row-houses, Howenstein's projects were constructed in the Northwest, Northeast and Southeast quadrants of the City. Although not formally trained, Howenstein built the majority of his projects.

Herman Rowland Howenstein was born to parents James T. Howenstein and Mary Wade Sullivan in 1874 in St. Louis Missouri. Howenstein and three siblings moved with their parents to Washington, D.C. where they enrolled in local D.C. public schools. Although numerous yearly publications of Who's Who in the Nation's Capital report Howenstein as a D.C. resident beginning in 1880, the Howenstein name does not appear in city directories until 1885, and it is that of Mrs. James T. Howenstein. Herman's name is not printed in the directory until 1891. Listed as a clerk, Howenstein lived with his family at 1003 S Street NW while attending George Washington University, then called Columbian University. Howenstein, receiving a bachelor degree in Law (LL.B) and a master degree in Law (LL.M) simultaneously worked through school as a clerk and by 1894, before his graduation, had established a real estate firm operating from an office located at 509 7th Street NW.



Row-houses 810–814 Kentucky Ave, SE. Builder, H.R. Howenstein. Architect, L. T. Williams. 1922. Photo by EHT Traceries, September 2012.

Immediately following his graduation, Howenstein partnered with Samuel Bieber, who had been operating in Washington, D.C. real estate since the 1880s. Bieber & Howenstein focused their business on rental properties, running a number of ads in the *Washington Post* to lure would be tenants to their properties. However, by October 31, 1898, the partnership dissolved, granting all the business rights to Samuel Bieber. Not to be discouraged, Howenstein began advertising his services from an office located at 619 E Street NW offering real estate, loans, insurance, attorney and notary services. He called his business, Herman R Howenstein. According to a 1901 *Washington Post* article, "H.R. Howenstein has made a specialty of property in the Northeast, and blocks which only two or three years ago were barren ground are now covered with pretty, attractive, residences, which, though small, have all modern improvements." One example of an early Howenstein development in Northeast is 54–58 Quincy Place built in 1901. That same year Howenstein formed a brief partnership with P.H. Russell, naming the firm Howenstein & Russell. The partnership only lasted through the construction of three buildings: 3607, 3609, and 3611 10th Street NW.



Row-houses 1311–1315 Maryland Ave, NE. Builder & Architect, H.R. Howenstein. 1915. Photo by EHT Traceries, September 2012.

By 1903, Howenstein dropped the attorney and notary services and renamed his firm H.R. Howenstein Co. (Inc.). H.R. Howenstein Co. dominated Washington, D.C. real estate development for over thirty years, making Howenstein one of the most prolific row-house builders in the history of the District of Columbia. Over 1000 buildings between 1902 and 1930 can be attributed to Howenstein operating as an individual and as the H.R. Howenstein Co. A 1922 *Washington Post* article

claimed Howenstein's untiring efforts resulted in a multitude of "sufficient small houses" that satisfied "the needs of Washington residents." Howenstein, like many other self-proclaimed builders of the time, built in repetitive styles. Howenstein's row-house projects are similar and considerably indistinguishable from Northwest to Northeast to Southeast neighborhoods. An example of Howenstein's preferred pattern can be seen in the comparison of the two-story brick row-houses with front porches and slate mansard roofs of 810–814 Kentucky Ave SE and 1311–1315 Maryland Ave NE. He also repeatedly employed a handful of architects including: B. Stanley Simmons, W.E. Howser, L.T. Williams, Charles R. Schrider, and George Santmyers. Having been involved with the construction of unprecedented number of row-houses, Howenstein himself designed a large number of his projects.

Howenstein constructed a number of charming apartment buildings [nonextant 1130 10th Street NW (1926) and extant 1613 Harvard Street NW (1924)] and detached dwellings [1835, 1841 & 1847 Monroe Street (1922)] in addition to his row-houses. Working in the early to mid-twentieth century, Howenstein was influenced by the Colonial, Craftsman and Tudor-Revival trends. Howenstein, a true real estate businessman, also involved his company in a number of remodeling projects— purchasing existing structures to quickly resell with a new façade or updated appliances for a profit. His new dwellings were famous for having the most modern appliances such as electric lighting and heaters in kitchens versus cellars.

Howenstein maintained a wealthy lifestyle. His favorite pastime was golf, a hobby he enjoyed as a member of Columbia Country Club. Early twentieth century censuses show his household included two live-in servants, and by all standards his real estate business was a success. Unfortunately, for Howenstein, in 1933 and 1934 lenders foreclosed on two of his apartment buildings: The Highview and The Embassy Apartments. The foreclosure sale proceeds were less than the mortgage balances and H. R. Howenstein Co. guaranteed the mortgage balances, making the company liable. Owing over \$400,000, Howenstein was declared bankrupt by the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia on March 4, 1935.

In an effort to rebuild the reputation he had spent his lifetime creating, Howenstein transformed his operation into Howenstein Realty Corp. in 1935. Howenstein Realty Corp specialized in triplexes and detached dwellings in Northwest, Northeast and Southeast D.C. and operated out of an office on 1418 H Street NW. Howenstein, suffering from a long-term illness died in 1955 at the age of 80. His remains are buried at Glenwood Cemetery.

Howenstein's legacy as a prominent Washington, D.C. builder is that of resilience. Transforming his business multiple times in order to adjust to Washington's changing real estate needs and population fluctuations speaks volumes for his ability to predict the demands of Washington's ever-changing real estate market in all neighborhoods within the District of Columbia. In addition to the humiliation of his bankruptcy, Howenstein went through a very public divorce in 1936. He was also hampered by the establishment of Howenstein Brothers realty company, run by Howenstein's nephews, an operation which he had no involvement in but who directly competed with Howenstein for the sale and construction of row-houses throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Although faced with challenges along the way, Howenstein holds the reputation as one of the most prolific builders and real estate operators in early to mid-twentieth-century development of the District of Columbia and his work, located in a remarkable number of neighborhoods, is influential to the residential identity of the City.

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Advertisement printed in Washington Post, February 27, 1938.

DC Builders & Developers Directory

Sources			
Vertical Files		<input type="checkbox"/> HSWDC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MLK Library
Other Repositories: DC Building Permits Database, Ancestry.com			
Obituary:		Publication: <i>Washington Post</i>	Date: 3/27/1955 Page: B2
Biographical Directories		Year/Volume	Page
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Who's Who in the Nation's Capital		1921-22; 1923-4; 1926-7; 1934-5; 1938-9	192; 195; 297; 460; 421
<input type="checkbox"/> History of the City of Washington: It's Men and Institutions		1903	
<input type="checkbox"/> Washington Past and Present		1932	
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Prepared by: EHT Traceries		Last Updated: August 2012	