

# Charles Hook Tompkins



Source: Cassady, Jr. "This Man Feels at Home in Hosts of D.C. Buildings."

## Biographical Data

Birth: 11/30/1883 Place: Baltimore, Maryland  
 Death: 12/12/1956 Place: Washington, D.C.  
 Family: wife, Lida Roberts; sons, Francis M., Charles H., Jr.; daughters, Louise and Emma H.

## Education

High School: McKinley Technical High School, Washington, D.C.  
 College: Lehigh University and George Washington University  
 Graduate School: N/A

## Career

### Permit Database (through 1958)

<b>As Builder</b>	Earliest Permit: 1914	Latest Permit: 1949	Total Permits: 249	Total Buildings: 282
<b>As Owner</b>	Earliest Permit: 1914	Latest Permit: 1946	Total Permits: 40	Total Buildings: 55

\*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
Washington Filtration Plant	Surveyor	1904
E. Saxon Engineers	Fieldman, Railroad Contractor	1905
D.C. Engineering Corps	Engineer	1905-1906
Ohio Electric Railyard Co.	Railroad Contractor	1907-1908
Capital Traction Co.	Railroad Contractor	1909
Smithsonian Institution	Engineer	1910
Charles H. Tompkins Co.	Co-Founder and President	1911-1956

## Professional Associations

**Societies or Memberships:** American Society of Civil Engineers, Society of American Military Engineers, American Concrete Institute, American Civic Association, American Institute of Banking, Washington Society of Engineers, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Washington Chamber of Commerce, Washington Board of Trade, Cosmos Club, University Club, Racquet Club, Columbia Country Club, Congressional Country Club, Columbia Historical Society, Warrenton Country Club, Casanova Hunt Club, Masonic Order, Mt. Pleasant Citizens' Association, Theta Delta Chi, member of the Board of Trustees of Gunton Temple Presbyterian Church, Trustee of George Washington University, member of the Advisory Council of Riggs National Bank, D.C. Chapter of the American Red Cross

## Buildings

**Building Types:** Apartment buildings, office buildings, institutional buildings, infrastructure

**Styles and Forms:** Colonial Revival, Classical Revival, Modern Movement

**DC Work Locations:** Downtown, Northwest Washington

## DC Builders & Developers Directory

Notable Buildings	Location	Date	Status
Tompkins Hall of Engineering, George Washington University	725 23rd Street, NW	1955	<input type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site
Dalecarlia Water Treatment Plant	5900 MacArthur Blvd, NW	1924-1927	<input type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site
Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool	National Mall	1922	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site
Former Garfinckel's Flagship	1401 F Street, NW	1929	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site
E. Barrett Prettyman Federal Courthouse (formerly U.S. District Courthouse)	333 Constitution Avenue, NW	1959-1960	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site
White House, East Wing	Alexander Hamilton Place, NW	1942	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site

### Significance and Contributions

Charles H. Tompkins was a prolific builder in Washington, D.C. whose legacy endures today with the continued success of Tompkins Builders, Inc. Charles Hook Tompkins was born in 1883 in Baltimore, Maryland. He moved with his family to Washington, D.C. when he was nine months old and lived there for the rest of his life.

Tompkins attended Central and McKinley Technical High Schools in Washington, D.C., graduating in 1902. There, he met his future wife, Lida Roberts, and they married on November 30, 1906. Lida Tompkins attended Wilson Teachers College in Washington, D.C. and studied architecture at George Washington University. She was integral to the success of Charles H. Tompkins Co. and participated in many facets of the construction business. She even accompanied her husband on one of his first engineering jobs in a railway camp in the Midwest, helping to complete administrative tasks. Lida Tompkins served as Vice President and Treasurer of the Tompkins Company until her death in 1953.

Charles Tompkins was highly educated in his fields of engineering and construction both at his technical high school and college. Following his graduation from McKinley High School, Tompkins received a scholarship from Lehigh University where he studied engineering. Financial circumstances and poor health, however, forced him to return to Washington before completing his degree. He attended night school at George Washington University and obtained his degree in 1907. During and after college, Tompkins worked in the engineering departments of various Washington institutions such as the D.C. government, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Capitol Traction Company. He also worked as an engineer for several other railroad companies, including the Ohio Electric Railway Co.

In 1911, Charles and Lida founded an independent construction company under the name Charles H. Tompkins. Their first project was a \$6 contract for repairs to coping at Peoples Drug Store at 7<sup>th</sup> and E Streets, NW. They went on to construct a plethora of private and public buildings in the Washington, D.C. area. A small sampling include: buildings at Fort Belvoir, Bainbridge Naval Training Station, and the White Oak Naval Ordnance Laboratory (650 total); West Central Heating Plant; White House Executive Offices (East and West); D.C. National Guard Armory; American Red Cross War Memorial; Scottish Rite Temple; buildings at Catholic, Georgetown, George Washington, and Howard Universities; buildings at Garfield and Sibley Hospitals; and Children's and Providence Hospitals.



*Lisner Auditorium, George Washington University, 1944.  
GW Special Collections.*

## DC Builders & Developers Directory



*Reflecting Pool, HABS DC, WASH, 2-3*

Tompkins invented the Concrete Distributing System, which aided in the construction of the Dalecarlia Water Treatment Plant in the 1920s.

Tompkins was very loyal to his alma mater, George Washington University, and was very active in the GW community. In addition to being a trustee of the university, the Tompkins Company did a lot of construction work on campus. Some examples of their work at GW include: Bell Hall (1936); Gilbert Stuart Hall (1936); Hall of Government (1938); Lisner Hall (1939); Lisner Auditorium (1941); addition to 2125 G Street, N.W. (1949); and Jacob Burns Library (1967). In 1954, Tompkins announced that he would donate an engineering building to the campus. The

Tompkins Company constructed the building, which was subsequently named for him.

In the 1940s, the Tompkins Company began working with J.A. Jones Construction Co., Inc., of North Carolina on various dams (including the Palisades Dam in Idaho, the Bull Shoals Dam in Arkansas, and the John H. Kerr Dam at South Hill, Va.), the Plattsburg (N.Y.) Air Force Base, and the National Agency Building at Ft. Meade, Md. In 1961, the J.A. Jones Construction Co., Inc. bought the Tompkins Co. In 2003, Tompkins became a wholly-owned subsidiary of Turner Construction Company, the largest general



*Tompkins Hall, George Washington University, 1956. GW Special Collections.*

contracting firm in the country. The firm then became known as Tompkins Builders, Inc.

Charles Tompkins died in 1956 after a battle with cancer. He and his wife are buried in Rock Creek Cemetery. His sons, however, Francis M. Tompkins (1909-1961) and Charles H., Jr. (1919-1997), held executive posts in the company and continued the firm.

Tompkins Construction has been a leader in the building industry in Washington, D.C. for over a century. In that time, the firm has built more than 50 million square feet of offices for government agencies and institutions. They have built some of our nation's most famous landmarks, including the Reflecting Pool at the Lincoln Memorial, the National Gallery of Art's East Wing and Sculpture Garden, the National World War II Memorial, and, most recently, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial. Tompkins Construction continues to influence the built environment Washington, D.C.

<b>Sources</b>			
<b>Vertical Files</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> HSWDC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MLK Library	
<b>Other Repositories:</b>	DC Building Permits Database, Ancestry.com		
<b>Obituary:</b>	Publication: <i>Evening Star</i> <i>Washington Post</i>	Date: 12/13/1956 12/13/1956	Page: A24

## DC Builders & Developers Directory

Biographical Directories	Year/Volume	Page
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Who's Who in the Nation's Capital	1926-27, 29-30, 34-35, 38-39	569, 698, 897, 838
<input type="checkbox"/> History of the City of Washington: It's Men and Institutions	1903	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Washington Past and Present	1932	72-73
<input type="checkbox"/> Prominent Personages of the Nation's Capital	c. 1924	

**Other Sources:**

John H. Cassady, Jr. "This Man Feels at Home in Hosts of D.C. Buildings," *Evening Star*, 1940. From Martin Luther King Library, Washingtoniana Division, Vertical Files.

"Charles H. Tompkins, obituary," *Washington Post*, December 13, 1956. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

"Charlie Tompkins," *Washington Star*, Martin Luther King Library, Washingtoniana Division, Vertical Files.

"Charles Tompkins Dies; Builder and Civic Leader," *Evening Star*, December 12, 1956. From Martin Luther King Library, Washingtoniana Division, Vertical Files.

Maryann Haggerty, "At Tomorrow's Garfinckel's, Unearthing Yesterday's News," *Washington Post*, October 14, 1997. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

"History," Tompkins Builders, Inc. <http://www.tompkinsbuilders.com/>

"Mrs. Charles H. Tompkins, Building Firm Official, Dies," *Washington Post*, January 29, 1953. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

Paul H. Oehser, "The Cosmos Club of Washington: A Brief History," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society* (Vol. 60/62, 1960/1962), 250-265.

"Tompkins Builders to Keep Its Identity," *Washington Post*, November 10, 2003. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

"Tompkins Building Firm Bought by Bigger Outfit," *Washington Post*, April 6, 1961. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.



*E. Barrett Prettyman Courthouse (formerly U.S. District Courthouse), 1952.  
National Archives, RG 121-BS, Box 99, Folder E*

<b>Harry Wardman</b>		 <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source: Washington Post, February 16, 1969</i></p>		
<b>Biographical Data</b>				
Birth: 4/11/1872	Place: Bradford, England			
Death: 3/18/1938	Place: Washington, D.C.			
Family: Eli and Alice Wardman, parents; Mary Hudson, first wife; Alice Rheem, daughter, Lillian Glascock, second wife; Helen Naselli, daughter				
<b>Education</b>				
High School: unknown				
College: n/a				
Graduate School: n/a				
<b>Career</b>				
<b>Permit Database</b> (through 1958)				
<b>As Builder</b>	Earliest Permit: 1898	Latest Permit: 1927	Total Permits: 467	Total Buildings: 2844
<b>As Owner</b>	Earliest Permit: 1899	Latest Permit: 1929	Total Permits: 509	Total Buildings: 2925
*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.				
<b>Practice</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Date</b>		
Wardman Realty and Construction Company	President	1890-1935		
<b>Professional Associations</b>				
<b>Societies or Memberships:</b> Washington Rotary Club, Racquet Club, Washington Board of Trade, Columbia Historical Society, and Washington Real Estate Board				
<b>Awards or Commissions:</b>				
<b>Buildings</b>				
<b>Building Types:</b> Row houses, row house flats, detached houses, apartment houses, hotels, showrooms, banks, clubs, embassies, garages				
<b>Styles and Forms:</b> Queen Anne, Georgian, Italian Renaissance, Beaux Arts				
<b>DC Work Locations:</b> Barney Circle, Bloomingdale, Brightwood, Brookland, Dupont Circle, Eckington, Lanier Heights, Petworth, Washington Heights, Woodley Park				
<b>Notable Buildings</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Status</b>	
Dresden Apartments	2126 Connecticut Ave., N.W.	1909	Sheridan-Kalorama Historic District	
Northumberland	2039 New Hampshire Ave., NW	1909	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site	
Wardman Row	1416-1440 R Street, NW	1911-1912	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site	
Wardman Park Annex and Arcade	2600 Woodley Rd., NW	1928	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site	

### Significance and Contributions

With over four thousand structures attributed to his name, Harry Wardman is considered to be one of Washington D.C.'s most prolific developers of the early twentieth century. Wardman grew from an apprenticed carpenter in Philadelphia in the 1890s to a millionaire builder and developer in Washington by the 1920s. According to an article published in the *Washington Post* in 1969, by the time of Wardman's death in 1938, every tenth resident in the District resided in a structure he had constructed. Wardman's illustrious career in Washington began in the 1890s when he moved to the city with his first wife, Mary Hudson. Working alongside several prominent local architects, including Nicholas R. Grimm (1863-1931), Albert H. Beers (1859-1911), Frank R. White (1899-1961), and Mihran Mesrobian (1889-1975), Wardman constructed a range of building types throughout the city including row houses and luxury apartments.

A native of Bradford, England, Wardman held several occupations before coming to Washington and finding his niche in the building industry. The son of Eli and Alice Wardman, Harry Wardman grew up watching his parents operate a dry goods store in Bradford. At a young age, Wardman held his first job in Bradford as a textile factory worker where he was first exposed to mass production methods. Without a definite plan or much money to his name, Wardman left his job at the factory and his home at the age of seventeen with the intention of moving to Australia. According to Wardman, when he arrived in Liverpool he was informed that the next boat leaving for Australia would not arrive until the following month and as a result he decided to take the next boat leaving for America instead. After landing in New York in 1889 with only \$2.75, Wardman found a job at a department store as a salesman.

Soon after landing in New York, Wardman ventured to Philadelphia where he was offered a job at Wanamaker's Department Store selling clothing and he also sold industrial insurance policies part-time. Wardman worked as a salesman until he ran into a former classmate from Bradford who introduced him to his father who was a carpenter in the city. Soon after the introduction, Wardman became a carpenter's apprentice and was provided room and board with the position. Wardman quickly took to the trade and noting the ease with which Wardman managed and executed tasks on site, his employer made him a foreman for a residential development project in the city. The apprenticeship in Philadelphia boosted Wardman's early career as a builder and he sought to practice his newly mastered trade in Washington, D.C. where building prospects were on the rise. Prior to moving to D.C., Wardman met Mary Hudson, a native of Bradford who also resided in Philadelphia. According to Philadelphia marriage index records, Wardman and Hudson married in 1895.

Contemporary sources on Wardman differ on the exact year he arrived in Washington D.C.; however, according to city directories, Wardman is listed as carpenter in Washington as early as 1892-93 living at 505 L Street, N.W. That same year, Wardman is also listed at 1237 G Street, NW in the business listings under "Carpenters and Builders." An article in the *Washington Times* from 1921 states that Wardman worked as a carpenter for several years in Washington and was known amongst builders as a good "trimmer out." The article goes on to state that around 1898 Wardman began building independently, "buying with his savings one lot and making a building loan to put up a house" then he would sell the property. Wardman's speculative development practices began in the late 1890s and continued throughout the 1920s.

The earliest known building permit with Wardman listed as the builder was recorded in 1898. Under this permit, Wardman teamed with local architect Nicholas R. Grimm (see Architects Directory entry) to construct a two-story private stable at 1310 N Street, NW (no longer extant) for the Japanese Legation. After this project, Grimm became Wardman's chief architect in 1899. The pair worked together on hundreds of residential structures, including apartment buildings, and row houses, for roughly six years until 1905. Throughout much of his career, Wardman worked closely with several prominent architects in Washington. Wardman's consistent employment of local architects was rare for a speculative builder during the late 1890s to early 1900s, attesting to both his dedication to quality design and the rise of corporate architects.

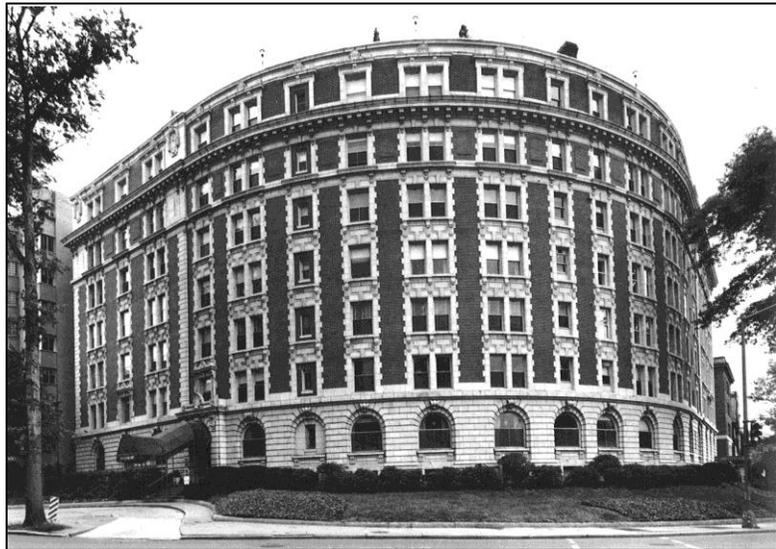
According to city directory listings, by 1900, Wardman lived at 201 Morgan Street, NW and was still listed as a carpenter. Wardman formed a favorable reputation for himself in Washington as he continued to work for himself as a carpenter and for others on high-profile projects in the city, such as the Willard Hotel (1401 Pennsylvania Avenue,

NW). Wardman and his wife inevitably settled in the Brookland neighborhood and during this time his daughter Alice was born. With his professional career on the rise, Wardman's personal life took a tragic turn when his wife Mary died in 1900. Now raising and supporting his daughter alone, Wardman took on new work at a rapid pace. Several accounts say that Wardman rode to and from various construction sites on his bicycle with his tool box attached to his handle bars.

In 1902 Wardman was contracted to construct a three-story house for local tailor and businessman Henry G. Bergling located at 1219 6<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W. (no longer extant). Impressed by Wardman's work, Bergling recommended the builder for other construction jobs and helped Wardman obtain financing through the Home Savings Bank. Bergling's recommendations and financial backing helped to launch Wardman into some of the most successful years of his practice. By the early 1900s, Wardman capitalized on the influx of government workers flocking to Washington and the new streetcar lines in the city and rapidly constructed buildings in areas north of Florida Avenue, N.W. including the Brightwood neighborhood. In 1901 the Washington Sanitary Improvement Company, a housing organization, hired Wardman to construct thirty-six two-story low-income properties in the Eckington neighborhood. Following this contract, Wardman's business flourished.

Throughout the first decade of the twentieth century, Wardman continued to develop an astounding number of row houses across the city in neighborhoods including Bloomingdale, Petworth, and Columbia Heights. In order to meet demands, keep prices low for buyers, and turn a profit, Wardman implemented, what some later referred to as, the "Wardman formula" when selling these properties. This formula determined the sale price of the house and was based on the construction cost plus ten percent of the total cost. With this method, Wardman was able to satisfy the market demands and as a result his profits soared and his success captured the attention of new potential investors. Wardman's row houses were typically two- to three-story brick buildings and many were considered to be "front-porch row houses." Wardman's front-porch row houses remain extant throughout the city today including a row located in the Adams Morgan neighborhood at 2429-2437 Ontario Road, N.W. (1913). In a continued effort to meet housing demands and maintain low costs, Wardman also pioneered a style of row houses that divided the structure into two identical apartment units within one row house. Referred to as "row house flats," this style of row house construction did not catch on in D.C., however examples of Wardman's row house flats remain in the Bloomingdale area.

In addition to row house construction, Wardman also focused on apartment building and hotel construction. Wardman's early apartments were modest in size, however, by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, Wardman's apartments shifted to a grander style intended for more affluent residents. Wardman's most notable examples of apartment buildings include the Northumberland (1909, 2039 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W.) and the Dresden (1909, 2126 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.) in Dupont Circle, and the Brighton (1909, 2123 California Street, N.W.) in Kalorama Heights. Each of these examples was designed by Albert H. Beers, a prominent local architect who worked for Wardman between 1905 and 1911.



*The Dresden, 2126 Connecticut, Ave.*

Towards the end of the 1910s, Wardman was a man of great wealth as a result of his steady work and increasingly large ventures. In 1909 Wardman married his second wife Lillian Glascock from Asheville, North Carolina. One year later, the couple had their first and only child together, Helen. Despite wanting to return to England, Wardman had a mansion constructed for him and his family at the intersection of Connecticut Avenue and Woodley Road, N.W. (no longer extant). In 1916 Wardman's first daughter, Alice, married Edmund Rheem, a director of the mortgage

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banking firm Swartzell, Reheem and Hensey. This union connected Wardman to one of the D.C.'s most respected mortgage banking firms at the time, which resulted in the firm financing several of his projects. In 1923, with substantial financial backing, Wardman set out to complete one of his largest projects, Wardman Park Hotel (only the Annex and Arcade remain, now the Washington Marriot Wardman Park Hotel).

Following the construction of Wardman Park Hotel, Wardman continued to invest and develop property rapidly. Other hotels Wardman constructed in the 1920s include the Carlton, 1926 (923 16<sup>th</sup> Street, NW); the Hay-Adams, 1927 (800 16<sup>th</sup> Street, NW); and the Wardman Tower, 1928 (2600 Woodley Road, NW). The Carlton, now the St. Regis Hotel, and the Hay-Adams are variations on the Villa Farnesina, a Roman Renaissance palazzo. These were all designed by architect Mehran Mesrobian.

By the late-1920s, however, Wardman ran into financial trouble as a result of the Great Depression. Forced to relinquish control over many of his hotels and apartments, Wardman was able to recoup some of his losses by the 1930s when he constructed 900 properties in a subdivision near Fort Stevens. The subdivision was completed just weeks before his death in 1938.

Responsible for the construction of over four hundred apartment buildings and over five thousand dwellings, Wardman's legacy is strong in Washington's residential and commercial communities. Additionally, Wardman greatly impacted the building industry in D.C. by tailoring his practice to provide affordable housing, making apartments available to all classes, and by setting a high standard for craftsmanship and design for buildings throughout the city.



*Lillian and Harry Wardman at Hot Springs, VA (no date). Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-68499.*

<b>Sources</b>		
<b>Vertical Files</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> AIA Archives <input type="checkbox"/> DC HPO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HSWDC <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MLK Library	
<b>Other Repositories:</b>	DC Building Permits Database, Ancestry.com, Library of Congress	
<b>Obituary:</b>	Publication: <i>Washington Post</i>	Date: 3/19/1938    Page: XI
Biographical Directories	Year/Volume	Page
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Who's Who in the Nation's Capital	1921-2; 1926-7; 1929-30	412;595;727
<input type="checkbox"/> History of the City of Washington: It's Men and Institutions		
<input type="checkbox"/> Washington Past and Present		
<input type="checkbox"/> Prominent Personages of the Nation's Capital		
<b>Other Sources:</b>		
Carl Bernstein, "The Washington Wardman Built," <i>Washington Post</i> , Washington D.C., February 16, 1969, 23.		
Sally Linchtenstein Berk, "The Richest Crop: The Rowhouses of Harry Wardman (1872-1938), Washington, D.C. Developer" (Master of Arts Thesis, The George Washington University, 1989), 11.		
William Hogan, "The First Tycoon," <i>Regardie's</i> , May/June 1981, 60-65.		
George H. Gall, "Vast is Building Done by Wardman," <i>Washington Times</i> , Washington, D.C., July 1, 1911, 4.		
Harry Wardman and Mary Hudson, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Marriage Index 1885-1951, Ancestry.com, accessed August 21, 2012.		
"Architects and Builders, Montgomery County, <i>Places from the Past</i> , 333		
<b>Prepared by: EHT Traceries</b>		<b>Last Updated: August 2012</b>

<b>Robert Bates Warren</b>		 <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source: "Best Addresses," 179.</i></p>	
<b>Biographical Data</b>			
Birth: 2/17/1897	Place: Clayton, Alabama		
Death: 1/16/1976	Place: Washington, DC		
Family: wife, Dorothy; Son, R. Bates Jr.; brothers, Monroe, Hugh, and Benjamin			
<b>Education</b>			
High School: unknown			
College: University of Virginia			
Graduate School: JD, Georgetown University Law School (1920)			
<b>Career</b>			
<b>Permit Database</b> (through 1958)			
<b>As Builder</b>	Earliest Permit: 1921	Latest Permit: 1936	Total Permits: 62    Total Buildings: 189
<b>As Owner</b>	Earliest Permit: 1921	Latest Permit: 1939	Total Permits: 57    Total Buildings: 155
<p>*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.</p> <p>*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.</p>			
<b>Practice</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Date</b>	
M. and R. B. Warren, Inc.	Partner	1920-1930	
Warren-teed Homes, Inc.	President	1936	
<b>Professional Associations</b>			
<b>Societies or Memberships:</b> Jefferson Society of the University of Virginia, Delta Theta Phi legal fraternity			
<b>Awards or Commissions:</b>			
<b>Buildings</b>			
<b>Building Types:</b> Apartment Houses, single family dwellings, row houses			
<b>Styles and Forms:</b> Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, Classical Revival			
<b>DC Work Locations:</b> Cleveland Park, Woodley Park, Adams Morgan, Chevy Chase,			
<b>Notable Buildings</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Status</b>
Tilden Gardens	3000 Tilden Street, NW	1927-1931	In Cleveland Park Historic District/ Apartment Buildings Multiple Property
Apartment House	2540 Massachusetts Avenue, NW	1925	<input type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site
Apartment House	1661 Crescent Place, NW	1925	<input type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site
Apartment Houses	3018-3028 Porter Street, NW	1923-1924	In Cleveland Park Historic District/ Apartment Buildings Multiple Property

Tilden Gardens

3000 Tilden Street, NW

1927-1931

In Cleveland Park Historic District/  
Apartment Buildings Multiple Property

## Significance and Contributions

Robert Bates Warren, known as R. Bates Warren, was a partner in the prolific construction company of M. and R. B. Warren, Inc., which his older brother, Monroe Warren (1895-1983, see directory entry), founded in 1920. R. Bates Warren was one of four sons of Benjamin S. Warren, a former assistant surgeon general of the United States Public Health Service.

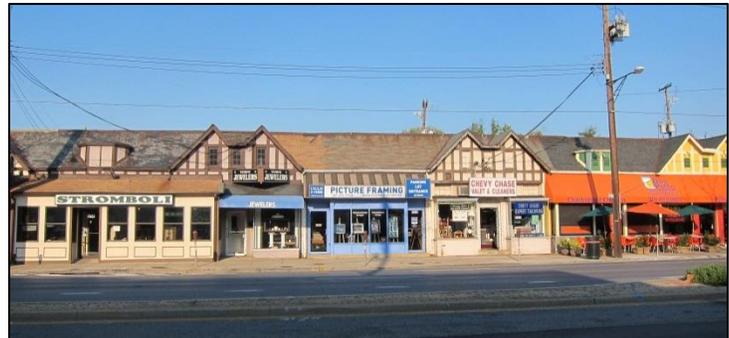
According to his grave stone in Rock Creek Cemetery in Washington, D.C., Robert Bates Warren was born on February 17, 1897. He was born in Alabama and moved to Washington, D.C. in 1911 with his family for his father's job. Warren attended the University of Virginia, where he was a member of the Jefferson Society. He joined the military during World War I and served as a naval aviator. Following the war, he returned to Washington, D.C. to pursue a law degree at the George Washington University School of Law. He earned his J.D. in 1920 and went into business with his older brother, Monroe.

In the early years of the business, the Warrens built mostly small, single-family dwellings, like the bungalows at 3718-3726 Brandywine Street, NW, constructed from 1920 to 1922. These dwellings were designed by Monroe and R. Bates's brother, Hugh Warren. Because of their family connections, Bates and R. Monroe were also able to work with prominent Washington architects in the early years of their business, including George N. Bell (see Architect's Directory entry) and his firm, Rich & Bell. Rich & Bell designed single family dwellings for the Warrens as well as row houses like those at 229-247 17<sup>th</sup> Street, SE (1922). During the early 1920s, the Warren brothers were also working in Chevy Chase, Maryland. They developed Leland, a subdivision of modest single-family houses, on a 57-acre tract east of Wisconsin



3718 Brandywine Street, NW. EHT Traceries, August 2012.

Avenue and west of Chevy Chase Section 4. This subdivision initially had small bungalows and was advertised as an automobile community with paved streets, landscaping, water, and sewerage. A commercial zone on Wisconsin Avenue was also built in the early 1920s, becoming Bethesda's first shopping center.



Leland Shopping Center, Wisconsin Avenue (Bethesda, MD)  
between Leland and Walsh Streets. EHT Traceries, August 2012.

The firm is best remembered, however, for their apartment building construction. The Warrens' first apartment building, constructed in 1922, is located at 2525 Ontario Road, NW in Adams Morgan. Designed by Rich & Bell, it is a simple three-story, U-shaped, Colonial Revival-style brick building that cost only \$50,000 to construct. They recreated this design later that year at 1725 Lanier Place, NW. Another design that Neal Bell developed for the company was a two-story, five-bay Colonial Revival-style apartment building with a rectangular plan. This form was repeated at various locations, including 3407, 3409, and 3411 29<sup>th</sup> Street, NW; 1445, 1447, and 1449 Oak Street, NW; and 3527 Center Street, NW.

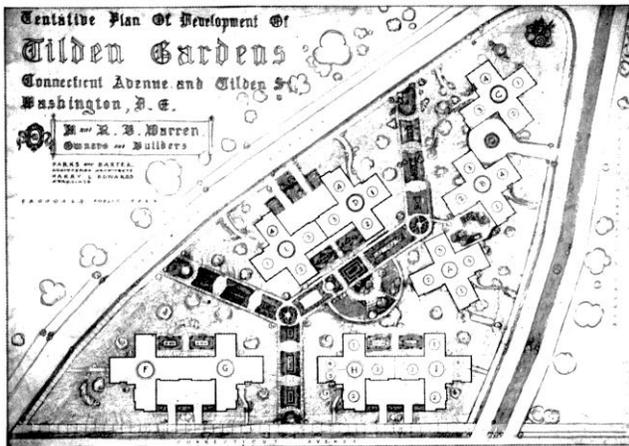
The Warrens began to develop more elaborate apartment buildings in 1923 with the construction of 1705 Lanier Place, NW. This is a four-story brick building designed by prominent Washington architect James E. Cooper (1877-1930) in the Tudor Revival style. This apartment building is notable because, while converted co-ops had become popular in the early 1920s, this was the first building in the city to be initially marketed as a cooperative. During

construction, Edmund J. Flynn, who had recently left the Allen E. Walker Company (see Directory entry for Allen E. Walker) and established his own firm specializing in cooperative ownership and cooperative plans, approached the Warrens about attempting to sell the apartments as co-ops. Cooperatives featured a novel real estate ownership model—instead of individuals owning physical property, as with a condominium, individuals purchased shares in a corporation that owned the building, giving them the right to live in a specific unit. Co-op ownership also entitled residents a say in matters concerning the building as a whole. The Warren brothers commissioned Flynn to sell shares in the building while it was still under construction; when he sold them all before construction was complete, the Warrens decided to partner with him on their next project, the Cleveland Park Apartments.



*Advertisement, "Cleveland Park Apartments," Washington Post, September 7, 1924.*

Flynn was instrumental in establishing cooperative apartments as a viable and accepted alternative to rental apartments in Washington. He was one of the first real estate men to take out advertisements for his projects, like the one above. Also designed by Cooper and constructed in 1923, the Cleveland Park Apartments (3018-3028 Porter Street, NW) were purpose-built co-ops. Identical in size, each of the six buildings is treated in a slightly different interpretation of the Colonial Revival style. Narrow walkways separate each of the buildings, which face directly onto Porter Street. The expansive gardens and garages were situated to the rear of each building and remain intact today.



*From "The Warren Latch Key," August 1930, Tildengardens.org.*

By 1930, M. and R. B. Warren had become one of the "leading operators in the co-operative apartment field," as an *Evening Star* article from August of that year proclaimed. After the initial success of the co-ops at 1705 Lanier Place and the Cleveland Park Apartments, the Warrens decided to construct three luxury co-ops—the Army and Navy (now 2540 Massachusetts Avenue, NW) and 1661 Crescent Place, NW in 1925 and, one of their most notable complexes, Tilden Gardens in 1927.

As James Goode writes, "Tilden Gardens was the city's most innovative large apartments house constructed in the 1920s...It was noted not only for its unique landscaping plan but also as the city's largest luxury apartment house built as a co-op—until the Watergate was constructed in

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During the 1920s, R. Bates Warren was influential in the co-op apartment house movement. He helped to found the Cooperative Apartment House Bureau of the National Real Estate Board, headquartered in Chicago, in 1925. In this role, he organized numerous national conventions and touted the benefits of co-op apartment housing.

In 1930, the Warren brothers went their separate ways and began working independently. Both parties, however,

## DC Builders & Developers Directory

returned to residential neighborhood development. Warren announced a new development called Huntington Terrace in Bethesda, Maryland in 1932. This 40-acre tract is located north of the Battery Park and Edgemoor neighborhoods in Bethesda and was platted for approximately 200 buildings. Warren sold the lots to builders or private owners to construct their own dwellings instead of building speculatively. Warren sought to capitalize on the expansion of the street car to the Maryland suburbs by developing in Bethesda and Chevy Chase. He developed Bradley Hills Grove, Congressional Forest Estates, Potomac Hunt Acres, Norwood Heights, Chevy Chase Grove, Chevy Chase Section 3, Wakefield, Woodridge, and Brookland.

In 1936, Warren began Warren-teed Homes, Inc., a company that specialized in pre-fabricated housing. A *Washington Post* article from that year states that Warren was constructing ten new steel and copper homes. These innovative dwellings were located on Montgomery Avenue, just south of East-West Highway between Connecticut and Wisconsin Avenues in Bethesda, Md. The average construction time for one of these houses was estimated at ten hours. At an average of \$7,350 per house, these were marketed as affordable bungalow-type dwellings for the growing Washington, D.C.-area population.

For the last ten years of his life, Warren worked as a real estate broker out of his home at 5525 Warwick Place, Chevy Chase. Warren died in Washington, D.C. in 1976 at the age of 78; the cause of death is unknown. His greatest contribution to the building community of Washington was his passion for and dedication to the cooperative apartment housing movement in the 1920s and 30s.

<b>Sources</b>		
<b>Vertical Files</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> HSWDC	<input type="checkbox"/> MLK Library
<b>Other Repositories:</b> DC Building Permits Database, Ancestry.com		
<b>Obituary:</b>	Publication:	Date:
<b>Biographical Directories</b>	<b>Year/Volume</b>	<b>Page</b>
<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	
<b>Other Sources:</b>		
James M. Goode, <i>Best Addresses</i> (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988).		
Elizabeth Jo Lampl and Kimberly Prothro Williams, <i>Chevy Chase: A Home Suburb for the Nation's Capital</i> (Crownsville, Md.: Maryland Historical Trust Press, 1998).		
National Register of Historic Places, Apartment Buildings in Washington, D.C. 1880-1945, Multiple Property Listing, Washington, District of Columbia, National Register #433852.		
"Robert Bates Warren," findagrave.com.		
University of Virginia, <i>Alumni Bulletin of the University of Virginia</i> , (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 1917), 234.		
"Warren Announces New Development," <i>Washington Post</i> , September 18, 1932. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.		
"Warren-teed' Homes Built In Ten Hours," <i>Washington Post</i> , October 25, 1936. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.		
<b>Notes:</b>		
<b>Prepared by: EHT Traceries</b>		<b>Last Updated: June 2012</b>

# DC Builders & Developers Directory

<b>Monroe Warren</b>		 <p style="text-align: center; font-size: small;"><i>Source: "Best Addresses," 179.</i></p>	
<b>Biographical Data</b>			
Birth: 6/11/1895	Place: Clayton, Alabama		
Death: 1/16/1983	Place: Bordeaux, France		
Family: wife, Dorothy B.; son, Monroe Jr.; brothers, R. Bates Hugh, and Benjamin			
<b>Education</b>			
High School: Western High School, Washington, D.C.			
College: University of Virginia			
Graduate School: N/A			
<b>Career</b>			
<b>Permit Database</b> (through 1958)			
<b>As Builder</b>	Earliest Permit: 1920	Latest Permit: 1943	Total Permits: 157    Total Buildings: 817
<b>As Owner</b>	Earliest Permit: 1921	Latest Permit: 1955	Total Permits: 177    Total Buildings: 824
<p><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.</small></p> <p><small>*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></p>			
<b>Practice</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Date</b>	
M & R. B. Warren, Inc.	Founder, Senior Partner	1920-1930	
Meadowbrook, Inc.	President	1932-1966	
<b>Professional Associations</b>			
<b>Societies or Memberships:</b> Home Builders Association of Washington, Inc. (organizer, president)			
<b>Awards or Commissions:</b>			
<b>Buildings</b>			
<b>Building Types:</b> Apartment houses, single family dwellings, row houses			
<b>Styles and Forms:</b> Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, Classical Revival, Art Deco			
<b>D.C. Work Locations:</b> Cleveland Park, Woodley Park, Adams Morgan, Southeast, Montgomery County, MD			
<b>Notable Buildings</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Status</b>
Kennedy-Warren Apartments	3133 Connecticut Ave., N.W.	1931	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site
Tilden Gardens	3000 Tilden Street, NW	1927-1931	In Cleveland Park Historic District/ Apartment Buildings Multiple Property
Apartment House	2540 Massachusetts Ave., NW	1925	<input type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site
Apartment House	1661 Crescent Place, N.W.	1925	<input type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site
Apartment Houses	3018-3028 Porter St., NW	1923-1924	In Cleveland Park Historic District/ Apartment Buildings Multiple Property

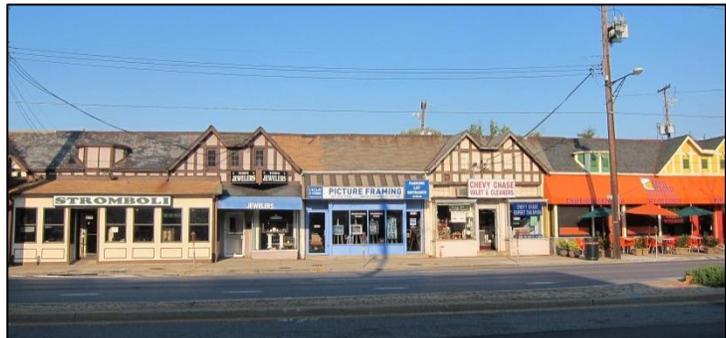
## Significance and Contributions

Monroe Warren was the founder and senior partner of the prolific construction company of M. and R. B. Warren, Inc., which he founded with his brother, Robert Bates (R. Bates) Warren (1897-1976, see directory entry), in 1920. One of four sons of Benjamin S. Warren, a former assistant surgeon general of the United States Public Health Service, Monroe Warren planned to enter the medical profession until a college summer job working for his uncle, local builder and real estate lawyer Bates Warren (1869-1940), piqued his interest in construction.

Warren was born in Alabama and moved to Washington, D.C. in 1911 with his family. He attended Western High School, graduating in 1913, and received a Bachelor's of Science from the University of Virginia in 1917. He went on to serve as a first lieutenant in World War I and returned to Washington after the war. Another of his uncles, also a prominent developer, John L. Warren (1872-1921), lent him the funds to start his own company, M. & R. B. Warren. In the early years of the business, the Warrens built mostly small, single-family dwellings, like the bungalows at 3718-3726 Brandywine Street, NW, constructed from 1920 to 1922. These dwellings were designed by Monroe and R. Bates's brother, Hugh Warren. Because of their family connections, Bates and R. Monroe were also able to work with prominent Washington architects in the early years of their business, including George N. Bell (see Architect's Directory entry) and his firm, Rich & Bell. Rich & Bell designed single family dwellings for the Warrens as well as row houses like those at 229-247 17<sup>th</sup> Street, SE (1922). During the early 1920s, the Warren brothers were also working in Chevy Chase, Maryland. They developed Leland, a subdivision of modest single-family houses, on a 57-acre tract east of Wisconsin Avenue and west of Chevy Chase Section 4. This subdivision initially had small bungalows and was advertised as an automobile community with paved streets, landscaping, water, and sewerage. A commercial zone on Wisconsin Avenue was also built in the early 1920s, becoming Bethesda's first shopping center.



3718 Brandywine Street, NW. EHT Traceries, August 2012.



Leland Shopping Center, Wisconsin Avenue (Bethesda, MD) between Leland and Walsh Streets. EHT Traceries, August 2012.

The firm is best remembered, however, for their apartment building construction. The Warrens' first apartment building, constructed in 1922, is located at 2525 Ontario Road, NW in Adams Morgan. Designed by Rich & Bell, it is a simple three-story, U-shaped, Colonial Revival-style brick building that cost only \$50,000 to construct. They recreated this design later that year at 1725 Lanier Place, NW. Another design that Neal Bell developed for the company was a two-story, five-bay Colonial Revival-style apartment building with a rectangular plan. This form was repeated at various locations, including 3407, 3409, and 3411 29<sup>th</sup> Street, NW; 1445, 1447, and 1449 Oak Street, NW; and 3527 Center Street, NW.

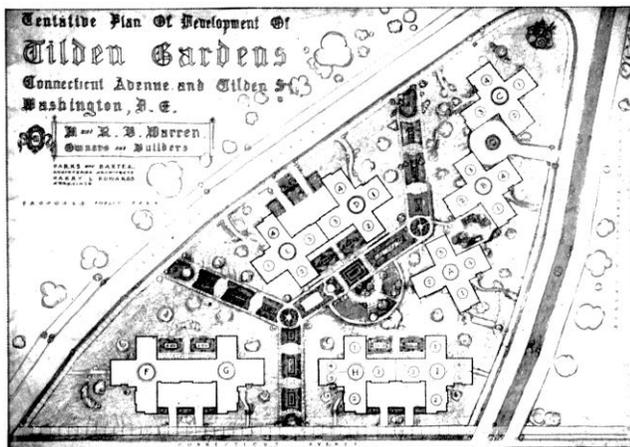
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Advertisement, "Cleveland Park Apartments," *Washington Post*, September 7, 1924.

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From "The Warren Latch Key," August 1930, [Tildengardens.org](http://Tildengardens.org).

By 1930, M. and R. B. Warren had become one of the "leading operators in the co-operative apartment field," as an *Evening Star* article from August of that year proclaimed. After the initial success of the co-ops at 1705 Lanier Place and the Cleveland Park Apartments, the Warrens decided to construct three luxury co-ops—the Army and Navy (now 2540 Massachusetts Avenue, NW) and 1661 Crescent Place, NW in 1925 and, one of their most notable complexes, Tilden Gardens in 1927.

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In 1930, R. Bates left the company and Monroe set out on his own. His first project without his brother would be his best-known, the Kennedy-Warren Apartment Building at 3133 Connecticut Avenue, NW. Monroe Warren teamed with successful developer Edgar S. Kennedy (1861-1953, see directory entry) on this massive undertaking. The Kennedy-Warren, completed in 1931 (addition in 1935), stands among the most significant luxury apartment buildings constructed in the Art Deco style in Washington, D.C. At the time of its construction, it was considered to be the largest and architecturally most important apartment building in the city. Its exterior, which is intact to its original design, embodies the geometric and jazzy characteristics of the grand architecture of that age. Its majestic siting—set back from Connecticut Avenue, NW, just north of the National Zoo entrance and abutting Rock Creek Park—sets

the building apart from others and adds to the building's distinctive presence on Connecticut Avenue, one of the important apartment building corridors in the city. It is the best-known and most significant work of local architect Joseph Younger, who also designed the apartment building at 1661 Crescent Place for M. & R. B. Warren. Beset by financial difficulties incurred by the Depression, Younger committed suicide in his Tilden Gardens apartment in May 1932, only a few months after the Kennedy-Warren was completed.

Many Washington developers encountered financial difficulties with the onset of the Depression, and Kennedy and Warren were no exception. As the Depression hit during construction of the Kennedy-Warren, they were only able to construct and fully furnish half of the building; a large H-shape section proposed for the southern end of the building was not constructed. The financing for the completion of the building collapsed and, following a series of unfortunate incidents, Kennedy and Warren lost their ownership interests in the building and their brokers, the B. F. Saul Company, assumed ownership. The B.F. Saul Company has remained the Kennedy-Warren's owner and manager to this day. Despite the fact that only half of the original plan was completed and that the original owners/builders/namesakes filed bankruptcy as a result of the Depression, the Kennedy-Warren became a financial success.



*Kennedy-Warren, ca. 1988. James Stafford Phillips, photographer. From Goode's "Best Addresses," p. 307.*

After constructing the Kennedy-Warren, Warren returned to residential neighborhood development. He began his first development in the nearby suburb of Chevy Chase, Maryland in 1930. Called Meadowbrook, it is located in Section 4 of Chevy Chase and part of Bethesda, Maryland on a 70-acre tract of land bounded by Columbia Country Club to the north and east, Aspen Street to the south, and Leland Street and Cypress Avenue to the west. Warren named his new company, Meadowbrook, Inc., after this inaugural project. Meadowbrook contained primarily two-story, brick single-family dwellings designed by Harvey P. Baxter who had also designed Tilden Gardens. Baxter went on to design many of Meadowbrook's buildings. With this company, Warren constructed single family dwellings and row houses throughout Washington, D.C. as well, building low-cost housing on a grand scale. His major developments, however, were in Maryland.

Monroe Warren, Jr. (1918-2009) joined his father's firm after returning from military duty in World War II. After the war, Meadowbrook constructed dwellings of modest scale and standardized design, capitalizing on the mid-century demand for affordable housing in the suburbs of Washington, D.C. Meadowbrook developed Ordway Village, a Colonial Revival-style garden apartments east of Wisconsin Avenue in Cleveland Park (architects Kifkuff and Bagley), Chevy Chase Lake, Arlington Forest, Rockcrest, Landover (Prince George's County), and Woodley Gardens.

Monroe Warren, Sr. retired from the building industry in 1966. He continued to live in Chevy Chase, Maryland until his death in 1983. He was in Bordeaux, France at the time of his death; the reason for his trip is unknown. He is remembered as a pioneer in cooperative apartment building construction, contributing some of the most important apartment buildings to Washington, D.C., including Tilden Gardens and the Kennedy-Warren. Warren's neighborhood developments in Maryland also contribute significantly to his reputation as a prominent builder in the D.C. metropolitan area.

## DC Builders & Developers Directory

<b>Sources</b>		
<b>Vertical Files</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> HSWD.C.	<input type="checkbox"/> MLK Library
<b>Other Repositories:</b> D.C. Building Permits Database, Ancestry.com		
<b>Obituary:</b>	Publication:	Date:
<b>Biographical Directories</b>	<b>Year/Volume</b>	<b>Page</b>
<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Washington Past and Present	1932	34
<input type="checkbox"/> Prominent Personages of the Nation's Capital	c. 1924	
<b>Other Sources:</b>		
<p>James M. Goode, <i>Best Addresses</i> (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988).</p> <p>Elizabeth Jo Lampl and Kimberly Prothro Williams, <i>Chevy Chase: A Home Suburb for the Nation's Capital</i> (Crownsville, Md.: Maryland Historical Trust Press, 1998).</p> <p>Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Application, 1203 Crawford Drive, Rockville, Montgomery County, Maryland. From <a href="http://www.rockvillemd.gov">www.rockvillemd.gov</a>.</p> <p>Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties, Monroe Warren House, Chevy Chase, Montgomery County, Maryland, MIHP #M-35-107.</p> <p>National Register of Historic Places, Apartment Buildings in Washington, D.C. 1880-1945, Multiple Property Listing, Washington, District of Columbia, National Register #433852.</p> <p>National Register of Historic Places, Kennedy-Warren Apartment Building, Washington, District of Columbia, National Register #421894.</p> <p>"Town Houses Planned for Woodley Gardens," <i>Washington Post</i>, January 20, 1962. ProQuest Historical Newspapers. University of Virginia, <i>Alumni Bulletin of the University of Virginia</i>, (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 1917), 234.</p> <p>John B. Willmann, "A New Housing Frontier for Rockville," <i>Washington Post</i>, December 3, 1960. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.</p>		
		
<p><i>Tilden Gardens, 1930. From Goode's <u>Best Addresses</u>.</i></p>		
<b>Notes:</b>		
<b>Prepared by: EHT Traceries</b>		<b>Last Updated: June 2012</b>

<b>Charles E. Wire</b>		 <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source: Washington Star, Sept. 16, 1954</i></p>	
<b>Biographical Data</b>			
Birth: 12/23/1876	Place: Lovettsville, VA		
Death: 9/14/1954	Place: Washington, DC		
Family: wife, Esther; sons, Preston E., Charles Raymond, Marvin M., Charles Phillip; daughter, Mrs. Leo J. Walper; brother, William J.			
<b>Education</b>			
High School: unknown			
College: unknown			
Graduate School: N/A			
<b>Career</b>			
<b>Permit Database</b> (through 1948)			
<b>As Builder</b>	Earliest Permit: 1910	Latest Permit: 1930	Total Permits: 98    Total Buildings: 420
<b>As Owner</b>	Earliest Permit: 1907	Latest Permit: 1936	Total Permits: 90    Total Buildings: 411
<p>*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.</p> <p>*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.</p>			
<b>Practice</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Date</b>	
Charles E. Wire, Inc.	President	1915-1923	
Charles E. Wire & Sons	President	1925-1930	
<b>Professional Associations</b>			
<b>Societies or Memberships:</b> Masons, Washington Board of Trade, Real Estate Brokers' Association, Republican Club of Kensington, MD, Petworth M.E. Church, Wesley M.E. Church			
<b>Awards or Commissions:</b> N/A			
<b>Buildings</b>			
<b>Building Types:</b> Row houses, Single Dwellings, Churches			
<b>Styles and Forms:</b> Colonial Revival, Italianate			
<b>DC Work Locations:</b> Brightwood, Petworth, Mt. Pleasant, Blagden Park, Columbia Heights, Chevy Chase DC			
<b>Notable Buildings</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Status</b>
Petworth M.E. Church	33 Grant Circle, NW	1915	<input type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site
Potomac Heights Community Church	5200 Cathedral Avenue	1938	<input type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site
Blagden Park	Northwest DC	1925	<input type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site
Chevy Chase Grove	Upper Northwest DC	1925	<input type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site
Wire House	3521 Rittenhouse Street, NW	1925	<input type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site

## Significance and Contributions

Charles Edwin Wire was born in Lovettsville, Loudoun County, Virginia, in December of 1876. His father, John, was a farmer. By 1900, Census records reveal that the family was living in Wheaton, Maryland, where John was still working as a farmer and Charles was working as a farm laborer. Charles married Esther May Mossburg in 1900 in Poolesville, Maryland; their first son, Charles Raymond (1902-1963), was born in 1902.



4519-4529 19<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, "Residences Soon to Be Ready for Occupancy," *Washington Post*, June 24, 1917.

According to the *Washington Post*, Wire moved into the city in 1904 and began his real estate and building business that same year. Wire was listed in the *Boyd's Directory of the District of Columbia* in 1908 as a real estate agent with offices at 607 7<sup>th</sup> Street, NW. The Wires' house at 901 Webster Street, NW in Petworth was designed and constructed in January, 1906, by architect William C. Allard (builder Allard & Appleby). By February 1907, Charles was investing in further construction on Webster Street with Allard. Wire worked with Allard as an owner on building projects on Lamont and 11<sup>th</sup> Streets, NW in Mt. Pleasant and Columbia Heights, respectively, in 1909. That same year, he began working with his brother, designer and engineer William J. Wire (1871-1958), building in Columbia Heights and 16<sup>th</sup> Street Heights. William and Charles worked together until 1912.

From 1913 to 1915, Charles began working as a designer and builder with realtor William M. Terrell. Wire established his own speculative development company, Charles E. Wire, Inc., though, in 1915. That year, Wire constructed the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Petworth, located at Grant Circle and New Hampshire Avenue, NW, to the design of architect Maurice F. Moore. Wire was a member of this church, now known as Petworth United Methodist Church. The building was designed in the Gothic Revival style and has a modified octagonal form. A large, metal-clad octagonal dome projects from the center of the brick and limestone building, which has entrances both on New Hampshire Avenue and Grant Circle. After completing the church, Charles E. Wire, Inc., designed and constructed the adjacent row houses at 29, 30, 31, and 32 Grant Circle.



Petworth M.E. Church, Grant Circle and New Hampshire Ave., NW.  
Photo by EHT Tracerics, July 2012.

In 1916, Wire purchased a ten-acre tract of land west of 14<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, opposite the Capital Traction Company car barns at Decatur Street. A 1917 *Washington Post* article describes, "Charles E. Wire, Inc., one of Washington's largest home building concerns, has a development under way, which, when completed, will include 140 fine modern homes on the square bounded by Decatur street on the north, Fourteenth street on the east, Buchanan street on the south and Piney Branch road on the west." These two-story, six- to eight-room row houses located in 14<sup>th</sup> Street Heights are of brick construction with front porches and flared terra cotta tile roofs with dormers, like many of his other row houses. Wire also constructed one-story stores along 14<sup>th</sup> Street such as a grocery and pharmacy to service the new community.

From 1913 to 1922, Wire was also investing in Chevy Chase DC. He served as owner, architect, and builder for thirteen dwellings in that neighborhood. He then joined forces with his son, Charles Raymond—known as C. Raymond Wire—to form Charles E. Wire & Sons. Together, they developed two successful subdivisions, Chevy Chase Grove and Blagden Park. Wire's other sons, Preston and Marvin, were also in the construction and development industry and may have worked for the company. Preston E. Wire (1903-1952, see Directory entry) was president of Wire Properties, Inc. and Marvin M. Wire (1906-1987) was president of Wire Construction, Inc.

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*Wire House at 3521 Rittenhouse Street, NW. "Builder's Home in Chevy Chase Grove," Washington Post, September 13, 1925.*

Chevy Chase Grove, begun in the spring of 1925, proved to be one of the most successful home developments in the National Capital, according to the *Washington Post*. He constructed a house for himself here at 3521 Rittenhouse Street. Blagden Park, also begun in 1925, is located in Northwest Washington occupying three city blocks bounded by Colorado Avenue and Blagden Terrace to the north, 16<sup>th</sup> Street to the east, Blagden Avenue to the south, and 18<sup>th</sup> Street to the west. These two developments contain large, stately detached dwellings in a variety of architectural styles, including Colonial Revival and Tudor Revival.

Despite the appearance that Wire continued his successful construction and realty business, he declared bankruptcy in November 1935. By 1940, he was no longer living in Chevy

Chase Grove but had moved to a row house on Madison Street, NW. Wire continued to work as a real estate agent until his death in 1954, often selling houses that his son, Marvin M. Wire (1906-1987), owned and constructed.

Charles and Esther Wire celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in 1950. In September 1954, he suffered a heart attack and died at Sibley Hospital in Washington, DC at the age of 77. His obituary from the *Washington Star* states that he was a "prominent builder here for 50 years...During his long career, Mr. Wire had developed and built a considerable share of metropolitan Washington's residential districts, including Blagden Park, Petworth and areas on Fourteenth to Sixteenth and from Webster to Decatur streets N.W." Wire was instrumental in the development of Petworth, initiating building projects there as it grew to become a desirable neighborhood after the streetcar line was extended there in 1872 (but not electrified until the 1890s).

<b>Sources</b>			
<b>Vertical Files</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> HSWDC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MLK Library	
<b>Other Repositories:</b>	DC Building Permits Database, Ancestry.com		
<b>Obituary:</b>	Publication: <i>Washington Star</i> <i>Washington Post</i>	Date: 9/16/1954 9/16/1954	Page:
<b>Biographical Directories</b>		<b>Year/Volume</b>	<b>Page</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Who's Who in the Nation's Capital			
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<input type="checkbox"/> Washington Past and Present		1932	
<input type="checkbox"/> Prominent Personages of the Nation's Capital		c. 1924	
<b>Other Sources:</b>			
"Bankruptcy Notices," <i>Washington Post</i> , November 7, 1935. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.			
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"C.E. Wire Homes Are Sold Rapidly," <i>Washington Post</i> , December 23, 1917. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.			
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"Contractor Buys New Chevy Chase Home," <i>Washington Post</i> , February 28, 1926. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.			
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"Residences Soon to Be Ready for Occupancy," <i>Washington Post</i> , June 24, 1917. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.			
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"Where We Live: Petworth," WeLoveDC.com, November 6, 2009.			
<b>Notes:</b>			
<b>Prepared by: EHT Traceries</b>		<b>Last Updated: June 2012</b>	

# DC Builders & Developers Directory

<b>Wire, Preston E.</b>		 <p style="font-size: small; margin-top: 5px;"><i>Source: "Home Builders Monthly January 1950"</i></p>		
<b>Biographical Data</b>				
Birth: 1903	Place: Kensington, Maryland			
Death: 10/22/1952	Place: Miami Beach, Florida			
Family: wife, Eda; son, Preston E., jr.; daughters, Mrs. William C. Murphy, Mrs. Paul Wood; father, Charles E.; brother, C. Raymond				
<b>Education</b>				
High School: Central High School, Washington, DC				
College:				
Graduate School:				
<b>Career</b>				
<b>Permit Database</b> (through 1958)				
<b>As Builder</b>	Earliest Permit: 1924	Latest Permit: 1953	Total Permits: 102	Total Buildings: 436
<b>As Owner</b>	Earliest Permit: 1924	Latest Permit: 1953	Total Permits: 91	Total Buildings: 406
<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>				
<b>Practice</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Date</b>		
Preston E. Wire Co.	President	1925-1927		
Wire Properties, Inc.	President	1944-1952		
<b>Professional Associations</b>				
<b>Societies or Memberships:</b> Director: Home Builders Association, Security Bank of Washington, Florida Home Insurance Company of Miami Beach, Congressional Country Club, Wesley Methodist Church				
<b>Awards or Commissions:</b>				
<b>Buildings</b>				
<b>Building Types:</b> Apartment Buildings, Rowhouses, Single Dwellings, Duplexes, Semi-detached				
<b>Styles and Forms:</b> Modern Movement, Colonial Revival, Classical Revival, eclectic				
<b>DC Work Locations:</b> Northeast Washington, Northwest Washington, Downtown, Brightwood, Columbia Heights				
<b>Notable Buildings</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Status</b>	
Dwellings	1812-1926 Newton Street, NE	1926	<input type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site	
Dwellings	6000-6019 4 <sup>th</sup> Street, NW	1926	<input type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site	
Dwellings	1912-2034 Gales Street, NW	1939	<input type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site	
Carver Terrace	1905-2106 Maryland Ave., NE	1946	<input type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site	
Wire Building	1000 Vermont Avenue, NW	1950	<input type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site	

## Significance and Contributions

Preston E. Wire was born in Kensington, Maryland in 1903. He attended Central High School in Washington, DC and, upon graduation, began work in local real estate. Much of his immediate family was involved in the real estate and construction industry, including his father, Charles E. Wire (1877-1954), a builder and contractor in Washington from the 1910s to the 1960s (see biographical entry for Charles E. Wire). Preston Wire's brothers, Charles Raymond (1902-1963) and Marvin M. (1906-1987), formed the Wire Construction Co. in the 1930s; there is no evidence to suggest that Preston was involved in this company.

Preston Wire began work as a builder and designer in the 1920s and continued until his death in 1952. He was notably remembered as a "pioneer in housing development" for African Americans, building over 2000 units for African American residents from 1938 to 1946. He also served as the director of the Home Builders Association and the Security Bank of Washington.



200 Quackenbos Street, NW. Photo by EHT Traceries, July 2012.

From 1924-1925, Wire designed and constructed many single family dwellings and duplexes in Northwest Washington. His first permit, however, was for four stores at 243-249 15<sup>th</sup> Street, SE (no longer extant), which he owned, designed, and constructed. These were one-story brick structures. He then went on to build twenty-three small, one-and-a-half-story wood-frame dwellings on Quackenbos and 3<sup>rd</sup> Streets, NW, in the Manor Park neighborhood, east of Brightwood. He also constructed numerous two-story brick duplexes, such as those at 900-916 Irving Street, NE and 901-913 Jackson Street, NW.

By 1926, he had founded Preston E. Wire Co., which included a real estate sales department. He continued to focus much of his construction in the Manor Park neighborhood, building nearly 60 two-story brick duplexes (and some detached dwellings) on 4<sup>th</sup> and Peabody Streets, NW. In the 1930s, he worked with architect George T. Santmyers to construct numerous strings of rowhouses in Northwest Washington, like those at 2534-2544 9<sup>th</sup> Street, NW (1938) and 2000-2034 Ontario Road, NW (1939). Later, in 1946, Santmyers designed Carver Terrace for Wire.

Carver Terrace is a complex of nearly thirty three-story garden-style apartment buildings located in Northeast Washington. The buildings front onto Maryland Avenue, I Street, 21<sup>st</sup> Street, and 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, NE. The buildings are made up of rectangular concrete block forms faced with brick arranged in various configurations. They are Modern in style but convey influences of the Colonial Revival style like much of Santmyers' work. When constructed, they provided 1244 housing units for the African American community.



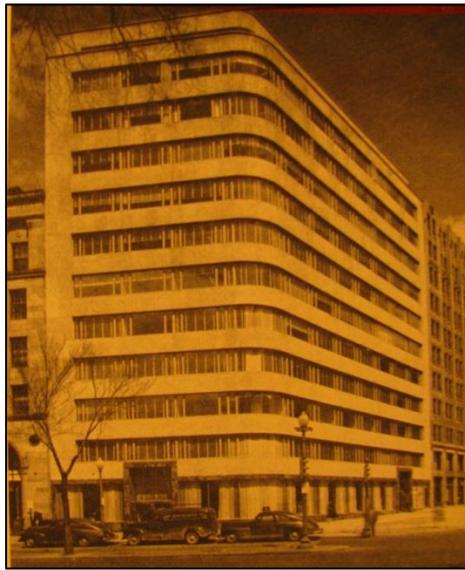
Carver Terrace, 2100-2102 Maryland Avenue, NE.  
Photo by EHT Traceries, July 2012.

In 1944, Preston Wire organized Wire Properties, Inc. which planned the development of the Wire Building at 1000 Vermont Avenue, NW, completed in 1950. Wire retained Alvin L. Aubinoe and Harry Edwards to design and construct the office building, which represents the first of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century office buildings to be developed in the area. Wire and Aubinoe were both prominent in the Home Builders Association of Washington. In addition to housing the Wire Properties offices, the Washington Real Estate Board also leased space in the building. The Wire Building serves as a strong, early example of Modern

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Movement commercial architecture in Washington, DC, and was a product of the transformation of K Street from residential to commercial use. Wire died suddenly in October 1952 at the age of 49 in Miami Beach Florida at his summer home, only two years after the completion of the Wire Building.

Wire is best remembered for his iconic Wire Office Building but most of his work was residential. His greatest influence was in the housing he constructed for the African American community in Washington, such as hundreds of duplexes and Carver Terrace. Through this work, he was able to distinguish himself from his father and brothers, who were all prominent in the building community in Washington.



*"Wire Building," Buildings Magazine,  
November 1950, p. 23.*

<b>Sources</b>		
<b>Vertical Files</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> HSWDC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MLK Library
<b>Other Repositories:</b> DC Building Permits Database, Ancestry.com		
<b>Obituary:</b>	Publication: <i>Washington Post</i> <i>Washington Star</i>	Date: 10/24/1952 10/23/1953
<b>Biographical Directories</b>	<b>Year/Volume</b>	<b>Page</b>
<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	
<b>Other Sources:</b>		
Paul H. Bolton, "A Finger Pointing to the Sky!," <i>Home Builder's Monthly</i> 7, no. 1 (January 1950). DC Landmark Application, Wire Building, 1000 Vermont Avenue, NW. "Manor Park Sales Reported by Morgan," <i>Washington Post</i> , February 15, 1925. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.		
<b>Notes:</b>		
<b>Prepared by: EHT Tracerics</b>		<b>Last Updated: June 2012</b>