

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE



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

New Designation X for: Historic Landmark X Historic District

Amendment of a previous designation

Please summarize any amendment(s)

Property name Capital Traction Company Union Station

If any part of the interior is being nominated, it must be specifically identified and described in the narrative statements.

Address 3601 M Street, NW

Square and lot number(s) Square 1203, Lot 47; Square 1202, Lot 840; ~~East Reservation 392~~ and part of 36th Street right of way

Affected Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2E

Date of construction 1894 - 1897 Date of major alteration(s) 1910-1911; 1998

Architect(s) Waddy B. Wood; Manning & Parsons Architectural style(s) Romanesque Revival

Original use Streetcar Union Depot/Terminal/Car Barn Present use University

Property owner Douglas Development (Sq. 1203, Lot 47); 3601 M Street LLC (Sq. 1202, Lot 840); DC Gov't (Stairs)
702 H Street, NW #400 1566 Palm Springs Dr. East Capitol St. NE and 1st Street
Legal address of property owner Washington, DC 20001 Vienna, VA 22182 Washington, DC 20004

NAME OF APPLICANT(S) Prospect Street Citizens Association

If the applicant is an organization, it must submit evidence that among its purposes is the promotion of historic preservation in the District of Columbia. A copy of its charter, articles of incorporation, or by-laws, setting forth such purpose, will satisfy this requirement.

Address/Telephone of applicant(s) 4907 Rockwood Parkway, NW
Washington, DC 20016

Name and title of authorized representative CATHERINE EMERSON, Board Member

Signature of representative [Signature] Date 9/25/2013

Name and telephone of author of application EHT Traceries; 202.393.1199

#19-01 Date received 11/13/2018
H.P.O. staff gg

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Capital Traction Company Union Station

Other names/site number: Georgetown Car Barn

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: Square 1203, Lot 47; Square 1202, Lot 840; East of Reservation 392

City or town: Washington State: DC County: _____

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___A ___B ___C ___D

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

Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

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

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

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

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

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

Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u>2</u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION/Streetcar Terminal

LANDSCAPE/Object

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/University

LANDSCAPE/Object

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Richardson Romanesque

Capital Traction Company Union Station

Name of Property

Washington, DC

County and State

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, Concrete, Stone (Blue Gneiss)

Narrative Description

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

Summary Paragraph

This landmark application jointly comprises the Capital Traction Company Union Station (known today as the Georgetown Car Barn), the adjacent stone and concrete Retaining Wall, the inset stone Stairway (known colloquially as the Exorcist Steps), and a potential archaeological site, all located in the Georgetown Historic District in the northwest quadrant of Washington, D.C. The site was developed between 1894 and 1897 to serve as a consolidated streetcar station, storage garage, and turn around, uniting services for four independently owned and operated streetcar lines. Located on Lot 74 of Square 1203, the Car Barn is a monumental example of Romanesque Revival architecture. The building's principal façade, facing south toward M Street, features an engaged central tower, a first story clad with alternating bays of honed and rusticated granite, two intermediate stories clad in intricately detailed pressed brick, and a recessed attic story with prominently projecting dormers above. Because of the extreme topographical change along the depth of the property, the building's secondary façade facing Prospect Street is expressed only as a single-story pavilion with engaged corner turrets. The immense excavation necessary to allow the original construction on this site required the construction of a substantial stone Retaining Wall on the adjacent Square 1202. The attached stairway was constructed concurrently with the wall to provide pedestrian access between M Street to the higher Prospect Street to the north. Beyond their original practical role in connecting lower M Street with Georgetown proper above, the dramatic stone Retaining Wall and Stairway have gained singular fame and notoriety as the star of a stunning moment in the internationally renowned movie *The Exorcist*. Despite alterations and additions to the Car Barn's fourth story that recreated the building's original roof profile, all resources included in the Property retain historic integrity.

Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Narrative Description

Georgetown Retaining Wall and Inset Stone Stairway

The Georgetown Retaining Wall and inset stone stairway ("Exorcist Steps") were constructed between 1894 and 1895 as part of the excavation and regrading of Squares 1202 and 1203 necessitated to support the construction of the Capital Traction Company Union Station ("Capital Transit Station", "Union Station", "Georgetown Car Barn"). The Retaining Wall is comprised two walls: a canted stone-faced wall to the east and an adjacent wall of exposed concrete block set to the west. A stone stairway is set into the canted stone-faced wall. Although the two exposed sections of the Retaining Wall may appear to have been constructed separately, they both date from circa 1895.

The two exposed sections of the Retaining Wall are of different depths. The primary south-facing section of the historic wall, located on what is now Lot 840, is brick and concrete faced in stone and, according to section drawings of the wall from 1895 published in the *Street Railway Review* in 1898, spans 60 feet east to west and at least 20 feet north to south. It is at least 74 feet and 4 inches in height.¹ The exposed concrete portion of the Retaining Wall is located on the east side of Thirty-Sixth Street. A stable (no longer extant) was constructed by the Capital Traction Company in front of the concrete retaining on historic Lot 25, which now includes the western portion of Lot 840 and the extension of Lot 64 to the south of Lot 840. Unlike the stone-faced Thirty-Sixth Street, N.W. segment of the Retaining Wall, the concrete portion of the wall was not intended to be in the public view. The drawing for the permit application depicts the concrete Retaining Wall as 30 feet wide from east to west and about 13 feet deep from north to south. The height of the wall at that time is unknown.²

The southernmost point of the larger stone-faced portion of the Retaining Wall lies 142 feet from the property line closest to Prospect Street, N.W. The lots on the northern half of Squares 1202 and 1203 on either side of Thirty-Sixth Street are 124 feet deep. This suggests that approximately 18 feet of the stone-faced wall is located on Lot 840, with at least 2 feet of the wall are located on the property to the north of Lot 840.

¹ A flight of stone steps, measuring one foot wide with 7-½ inch risers, has two intermediate landings, and connects Prospect and M Streets, N.W.³ This stairway (colloquially known as the Exorcist Steps) is an integral part of the Retaining Wall and runs parallel to the west elevation of Capital Traction Company Union Station building.

The Retaining Wall and inset stone Stairway maintain a high level of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, feeling, and association. Located perpendicular to M Street, N.W., the features are located in Square 1202 at the north boundary of Assessment and Taxation Lot 840.

¹ *Street Railway Review* 8, no. 7, July 15, 1898.

² DC Build Permit #1094, February 11, 1896, Record Group 351, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

³ *Report on Cost of Reproduction of the Capital Traction Co. As of July 1st. 1914* (Washington, DC: Public Utilities Commission, 1914).

Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Capital Traction Company Union Station Building

The four-story building, constructed in 1895-1897, is located at the western end of Georgetown's commercial district and faces south onto M Street, N.W. and onto the Potomac River. The building, which was constructed to serve as a single station for four independently owned and operated streetcar lines, is rectangular in plan and measures 180 feet along M Street and 242 feet deep. The description below will outline the building's original appearance, the appearance following the 1911 renovation, and the current appearance.

Original Appearance (1895-1910)

The most significant difference between the building's historic and current appearance is exhibited on the building's primary south facing elevation. When originally constructed, the building was three stories in height. The upper two stories at the central section of the building were recessed and aligned with the wall plane of the tower, emphasizing the rectangular corners and granite clad first story.

The first story appears much as it does today. A centered projecting block, four bays wide, was faced in smooth stone, and the slightly recessed sections on either side, each five bays wide, were faced in granite. The window opening configurations of these sections appear as they do today. The elaborate broken pediment carved with "Capital Traction," now resting atop the projecting central block above the third story, rested above the center block in front of the tower. The corners of the center block were defined by square stone turrets. These turrets connected with square stone turrets on the southeast and southwest corner of the elevator tower.

As with today, an elevator tower, measuring 17 feet across and 140 feet in height, was centrally located on the south elevation. A thin arched opening ran from the flat roof of the first story to a height that was in line with the hipped roof of the third story. There sets of small, arched openings flanking the larger opening were evenly spaced on the tower. Groupings of four small square vent openings are located at the upper corners on each side of the tower. Square stone turrets rose above the cornice line of the building, giving ways to small round brick turrets that rose to the height of the tower. The round turrets adorned all four sides of the tower. The east and west sides contain three window openings with individual stone sills and a single heavy stone lintel filled with one-over-one double-hung windows. The tower was capped by a hipped roof clad in red terra-cotta tiles.

The second story of the recessed central sections of the building featured six one-over-one double hung windows below a square fixed window. A wide stone lintel course ran the entire width of the section.

As with today, the east and west projecting blocks were faced entirely in brick. Arched openings to allow for street car entry into the building on the first story were thinner than the openings now featured on the building. As with today, the openings were framed in smooth stone, circumscribed with unelaborate archivolt, which curve into corner turrets. Stone medallions carved with "1895" adorn the southwest and southeast corner of the building below the brick

Capital Traction Company Union Station

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

portion of the turrets, which extend halfway up the third story, providing reference to the original cornice line of the building. Each turret features a copper downspout. On the east block, a single rectangular opening with stone sill and lintel was located directly west of the arched opening; on the west block, a corresponding rectangular opening with stone sill and lintel was located directly east of the arched opening. The second story of both blocks featured three rounded contemporary one-over-one windows. Openings on the second story had four-course header rowlock round arches. A fifth course visually connects the group of four openings. The cornice level was made of three rows of inset brick squares. Two rows of this pattern wrapped around the block to the east elevation, and three rows wrapped around on the west elevation.

While the majority of the roof was flat and clad in slag, the roof over the front portion of the building was hipped and clad in Spanish-style terra cotta tile. The east and west blocks each had a single centered dormer, fit with a one-over-one window. Two dormers, each with a round arch opening, were featured on either side of the tower.

1910-1911 Alteration

In 1910-1911, the recessed upper two stories at the central section of the building were filled, thereby creating a continuous brick wall at the upper stories to accommodate the handling and storage of larger cars. The arched openings, used by streetcars to enter and exit the Car Barn, were widened. The adjacent rectangular openings were infilled. The hipped roof was removed and replaced with a flat roof, likely clad in slag.

Today, the Car Barn reads as it did following the 1911 renovation. The only other major alteration to the building occurred in 1998, when a recessed fourth story capped in a hipped roof was added. For a full description of the building, refer to the following section "Current Appearance."

Current Appearance

A 140-foot-tall clock tower rises above the central projecting block of the M Street (front) façade. The central clock tower is approximately 17 feet wide across the south face and features cylindrical turrets at each of the four corners. The east and west sides contain three window openings with individual stone sills and a single heavy stone lintel filled with one-over-one double-hung windows. Groupings of four small square vent openings are located at the upper corners on each side of the tower. The tower, which once housed a passenger elevator, is capped by a hipped roof clad in red terra-cotta tiles.

South Elevation: The south elevation is the primary façade facing on to M Street. The façade is symmetrical. The first story remains almost entirely intact, except for smooth stone that adorns the central projecting block. This block features four one-over-one double-hung rectangular windows below a square fixed window. Individual letters reading "The Car Barn" have been affixed to the stone below the sill course. Original brick with common-bond and headers every six courses is visible on the east and west projecting blocks. These blocks feature round-arch openings, which date from the 1911 alterations, that are framed in smooth stone, circumscribed with unelaborate archivolt, which curve into corner turrets. A contemporary garage door fits the eastern opening, while contemporary custom floor-to-ceiling glass windows are fitted in the

Capital Traction Company Union Station

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

western opening. Stone medallions carved with "1895" adorn the southwest and southeast corner of the building below the brick portion of the turrets, which extend halfway up the third story, providing reference to the original cornice line of the building. Each turret features a copper downspout. Pairs of contemporary one-over-one window capped with half-circle transoms are fitted into the historic window openings on the first story. Contemporary double multi-light doors are featured in historic door openings, centered on each of the recessed blocks.

The building's foundation and first story of the central section is faced in granite; iron-spot brick in reddish-purple hues is found elsewhere. The brick is laid in common bond that varies from headers every sixth course to headers every ninth course. Courses of stacked headers are also present. The window openings on these stories date to the 1911 alteration. Windows (replaced circa 1998 to match 1911 configuration) in the projecting east and west blocks are arranged in triplets, while the others are paired. All windows have stone sills; second-floor windows are surmounted by heavy stone lintels. Projecting brick panels decorate the space between the windows of the second and third story. A stone belt course above the upper windows helps, with the stone cornice, a decorative brick frieze that dates to the 1911 alteration. This detail wraps around to the east and west elevation. An elaborate broken pediment atop the projecting central block, carved with "Capital Traction," has been raised two floors above its original position. A cartouche is located centrally in the parapet on the projecting east and west blocks.

A fourth story built in 1998, recessed from the parapet, was designed to reflect the historic roof line. Six dormers with hipped roofs extend south from the wings added east and west of the clock tower. The east and west projecting block feature turrets on all corners. The roof is clad with terra cotta tile. All windows are contemporary.

West Elevation: As with the south elevation, there are several brick bonds and patterns featured on the west elevation. These discrepancies generally coordinate with alterations made to the building.

On the projecting block (described above as the western block), the first story features two round-arch openings that are framed in smooth stone. Contemporary windows and doors have been fitted into the round arched openings; a contemporary garage is accessed through the eastern opening, while contemporary custom floor-to-ceiling glass windows are fitted in the western opening. Stone medallion carved with "1895" adorn the southwest corner of the building, and a stone medallion carved with "CT CO" adorns the northeast corner of this block, both placed below the brick portion of the turrets, which extend halfway up the third story, providing reference to the original cornice line of the building. Each turret features a copper downspout. There are four rounded contemporary one-over-one windows on the second story, and four corresponding rectangular contemporary one-over-one windows are featured on the third story. Openings on the second story have four-course header rowlock round arches. A fifth course visually connects the group of four openings. Third floor windows have flat lintels. Smooth granite sills, like those in the central block of the south elevation, bevel inward.

In the second section of the wall, which is two bays wide, window openings on the first story have been infilled with common bond brick. A contemporary metal door is located south of a

Capital Traction Company Union Station

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

larger opening that features a contemporary garage door. A semi-circle opening, used for ventilation, has three-course row-lock round arches. On the second and third story windows have three-course row-lock round arches.

The third section of the west wall is eight bays wide. The first and second story feature nine-over-nine double-hung windows and segmental arches with four courses of row-locks, while the third story features nine-over-nine double hung windows with three-course row-lock round arches. All windows have stone sills.

A stairway that connects M Street, NW with Prospect Street, NW begins at the fourth bay of the third section. There is an eleven-stone arch over the stairway that joins the stone Retaining Wall with the building between the fourth and fifth bay on the third story.

East Elevation: The majority of the east elevation is hidden by an adjacent two-story brick building. On the south side of the east elevation the projecting block is four bays wide. There appears to be some level of brick infill on the first story. As with the first section of the west elevation, openings on the second story have four-course header rowlock round architects. A fifth course visually connects the group of four openings. Third floor windows have flat lintels. Smooth granite sills, like those in the central block of the south elevation, bevel inward. The decorate frieze and cornice extend from the south elevation and extends the length of this section.

The second section of the east elevation is topped by a flat roof. The parapet is lower than that of the first section. Clad in brick, there are no window openings on this section.

North Elevation: The majority of the north elevation is underground due to the significant change in grade between M Street and Prospect Street, NW. The parapet, capped with stone coping, wraps around the entire building, and appears as a half wall on the Prospect Street elevation. In response to the visible change in grade on the western side of the building, the parapet steps up on the west elevation. The wall connects directly to the turret on the northwest corner of the entrance pavilion. On the eastern side, the parapet connects to a higher brick wall, which in turn connects to the northeast turret of the entrance pavilion. The brick wall features a plaque with the Georgetown University crest, and freestanding gold letters reading "Georgetown University | The Graduate School of Arts and Science." A portion of the eastern side of the parapet has been removed to allow for the installation of a contemporary metal gate.

The entrance pavilion is at street level four floors above M Street. The central entrance has been fitted with contemporary double doors and a contemporary transom. The opening appears to be original. Flanking either side of the opening are two round-arched window openings with rock-faced granite sills and corbeled lintel headers. Each window opening contains a contemporary single-light window. End turrets project through and above the roof. Near the tops of the turret shafts are three course decorative elements of regularly projecting headers. The hipped roof of the pavilion is clad in terra cotta tiles.

Capital Traction Company Union Station

Name of Property

Capital Traction Company Union Station Interior

Washington, DC

County and State

The four-story Car Barn, now used by Georgetown University for office and classroom purposes, boasts 81,765 square feet. The interior has undergone several extensive interior renovations throughout the twentieth century to convert the building from use as a trolley garage and switching station into office use, leaving little to no historic fabric. Most recently, a two-year renovation of the first floor, which had been used previously as an automobile parking garage, was completed in January 2017 to allow for graduate student lounges, offices for the university's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences departments, and space for the Georgetown University Press. The eastern portion of the first floor remains a garage. Historic streetcar tracks remain visible throughout the garage.

The new lounge, located in the southwest corner of the building, features custom fabricated floor-to-ceiling glass windows that increase window space by replacing former garage doors. A new HVAC system was also installed to "ensure higher-than-average air quality."⁴

Integrity

All three features are still on their original site at the western edge of the commercial district of Georgetown. The stairs remain an important link between M Street and Prospect Street. Despite the fact that the streetcar system is obsolete, the Georgetown Car Barn, Retaining Wall, and Stairs retain a high level of integrity of location, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. In spite of the alterations to the front façade and the addition of a fourth story, the building retains design features that convey its historic function as a streetcar terminal, and more specifically, its association with the Capital Traction Company. The potential archaeological site, the site of a two-story brick stable that was considered part of the Car Barn complex, has been paved over to serve as an adjacent gasoline station (demolished).

⁴ Andrew Wallender, "University Completes Two-Year Renovation of Car Barn on First Floor," *The Hoya*, January 31, 2017, accessed November 7, 2018, <http://www.thehoya.com/university-completes-two-year-renovation-of-car-barn-first-floor/>.

Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

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

Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION

ARCHITECTURE

ENGINEERING

Period of Significance

1894-1973

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Waddy B. Wood

Manning & Parsons

Capital Traction Company Union Station

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

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

The Capital Traction Company Union Station (known variously as the “Capital Traction Union Station”, “Capital Transit Station”, “Union Station”, “Georgetown Car Barn”), designed by prolific Washington architect Waddy Butler Wood, opened in 1897 as the “only edifice of its kind in the country.”⁵ The associated Retaining Wall and Exorcist Steps, built following the excavation of Square 1202 and 1203 in anticipation of the construction of the Capital Traction Company Union Station, form the oldest and best-known pedestrian link in the District. Located between Prospects and M Streets, NW in alignment with Thirty-Sixth Street, NW in Georgetown, the Retaining Wall and stone Stairway remain virtually unchanged since their construction in 1894-1895. While the Car Barn has undergone several alterations throughout its history to correspond with changes to the streetcar industry, the building’s character defining features, including but not limited to its overall massing, the elevator tower, large round arch openings on the south elevation, and pediment reading “Capital Traction,” are retained. The dominating building, representative of the streetcar terminal subtype identified in the *Streetcar and Bus Resources of Washington, DC, 1862-1962* multiple property documentation, served as Washington’s first union streetcar station with Washington’s only cable loop. Representing a significant dramatic shift from independent streetcar operations to a new paradigm of cooperation among private owners of public transportation concerns, it merits designation under National Register Criterion A and corresponding DC Landmark Criterion B as it retains a high level of integrity. The Car Barn is significant under National Register Criterion C and corresponding DC Criterion F for its association with prolific and celebrated Washington Architect Waddy Butler Wood. The Car Barn is further significant under National Register Criterion C and corresponding DC Criterion D as “an architectural triumph” that is an excellent example of Romanesque Revival architecture, and the retaining wall is significant under these criteria because it exhibits a “feat of engineering construction.”⁶ And finally, the Car Barn, Retaining Wall, and Stairway are significant under National Register Criterion Consideration G for their association with the 1973 award-winning motion picture *The Exorcist*.

The period of significance begins in 1894, when excavation of Square 1202 commenced, and extends to 1973, when the site was made infamous by the release of *The Exorcist*.

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

The Capital Traction Company Union Station (“Capital Transit Station”, “Union Station”, “Georgetown Car Barn”) was constructed between 1895-1897 as one of the first terminals of its kind not only in Washington, DC, but in the country. Anticipating the construction of what

⁵ “Fine New Union Station,” *Washington Times*, May 28, 1897, p. 2.

⁶ “Where Car Lines Meet: New Union Station Will be in Operation To-Day,” *The Washington Post*, May 27, 1897, p. 10; “Great Hole Was Made,” *The Evening Times*, March 27, 1896, p. 6.

Capital Traction Company Union Station

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

would be the Francis Scott Key Bridge, the Commissioners of the District of Columbia believed this site, Lot 47 of Square 1203, would provide an ideal location for a 'union' of four separate DC, Maryland, and Virginia streetcar lines all entering Georgetown. When chosen, the site was generally unimproved due to the precipitously steep slope between M Street and Prospect Street and relative instability of the bank soil. A significant excavation to lower the grade of the southern part of the square 1202 to that of M Street, NW was necessary in anticipation of the construction of the Georgetown Car Barn located on adjacent Square 1203. The associated Retaining Wall, which bisects the entirety of Square 1202, extends through Thirty-Sixth Street and encompasses three sides of the Car Barn. The stone Stairway, located between Prospect and M Streets, NW in alignment with Thirty-Sixth Street, NW, is one of the best known and best-preserved pedestrian links in Washington.

The Car Barn, which is representative of the streetcar terminal subtype identified in the *Streetcar and Bus Resources of Washington, DC, 1862-1962* multiple property documentation, was "only edifice of its kind in the country" upon its completion.⁷ As the Washington and Georgetown Railroad Company found success with the cable car industry, the company undertook a massive building campaign that included the erection of new car barns, powerhouse complexes and the installation of miles of cable with the goal of establishing a transportation model for the country.⁸ The Car Barn, included in this campaign, was the only station constructed for the purpose of unifying several cable streetcar lines that ran through Washington, Maryland, and Virginia. Following its completion, the Car Barn also provided Washington with its only cable loop, which was subsequently converted to electric following the end of cable traction. As the building retains a high level of integrity, it merits designation under National Register Criterion A and corresponding DC Landmark Criterion B.

As the Car Barn was designed by prolific Washington architect Waddy Butler Wood, the building is significant under National Register Criterion C and Corresponding DC Criterion F as the work of a Master. The Car Barn was the first large-scale commission Wood, who practiced architecture in Washington from 1892 through 1940. A self-taught practitioner, Wood began his career designing modest residences in Washington, DC, and went on to receive major commissions, including designing the new building for the United States Department of the Interior. After receiving the commission to design the Car Barn in 1884, Wood received a commission to design several other Car Barns for the Capital Traction Company, including the East Capitol Street Car Barn.

Upon completion, the Car Barn was widely heralded as "the finest structure in historic Georgetown."⁹ Integral to the design of the building was the construction of the Retaining Wall, which bisects the entirety of Square 1202, extends through Thirty-Sixth Street and encompasses three sides of the station. Beyond representing the work of a master, the Car Barn retains its character defining features – including its projecting tower, arched openings for streetcar entry, and monogrammed pediment – and thus embodies the distinctive characteristics of a late-

⁷ "Fine New Union Station," *Washington Times*, May 28, 1897, p. 2.

⁸ National Register of Historic Places, *Streetcar and Bus Resources of Washington, DC, 1862-1962*, Washington, DC, National Register #645-948, E-52.

⁹ "Fine New Union Station," *Washington Times*, May 28, 1897, p.2.

Capital Traction Company Union Station

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

nineteenth century streetcar terminal. Consequently, the Car Barn and Retaining Wall are significant under National Register Criterion C and corresponding DC Criterion D as the building is considered “the most significant extant example of a nineteenth-century terminal in Washington, DC.”¹⁰ The Retaining Wall is also significant under DC Criterion D because it exhibits a “feat of engineering construction.”¹¹ Faced with a site of steep grade change – a descent of 60 feet from Prospect Street to M Street, with a 20-degree surface slope – the site required an excavation of more than 80,000 cubic yards in anticipation of the construction of the Capital Traction Union Station on Square 1203. The discovery of “rotten rock” within the excavated soil required the design and construction of a wall of unusual strength.¹²

As the site underwent a tremendous excavation out of which rotten rock was discovered, Square 1202 may contain unique artifacts pre-dating and dating to the excavation. Consequently, the site also meets National Register Criterion D and corresponding DC Criterion G because it is likely to yield information important to our understanding of the historic development of the site and its transformation into a transportation hub. As a two-story brick stable associated with the Union Station, since razed, was located on the site directly in front of the concrete Retaining Wall there may be unique artifacts related to the construction of each resource.

The Car Barn, the stone Stairway, and the stone-faced section of the Retaining Wall are also significant under National Register Criterion Consideration G for their association with the 1973 motion picture *The Exorcists*. The climax of the internationally famous, award-winning film was filmed on site in Georgetown, and featured the stone Stairway and Retaining Wall. Following the release of the film, the location gained notoriety for its association with the film and soon became a popular tourist destination, colloquially known as the “Exorcist Steps.” In 2015, the District of Columbia commemorated the steps for their significance in the film industry and their contribution to the District’s tourism industry. DC Mayor Muriel Bowser placed a plaque on the Retaining Wall to memorialize their significance to the District.

Site Selection and Construction of the Capital Traction Company Union Station

In the late-nineteenth century, Squares 1202 and 1203 (formerly Georgetown Squares 32 and 33, respectively) remained largely unimproved. The principal structure on Square 1203 was the Prospect House, occupied by Mary Steele Morris, widow of Commodore George Upham Morris. Mrs. Morris was the daughter of the Georgetown merchant Franklin Steele who had purchased the eastern portion of Square 1203 in 1868. The northeast portion of square 1202 was owned by Emma D.E.N. Southworth, a popular novelist who occupied a wood frame dwelling on the property, known both as Prospect Cottage and as Southworth Cottage, from 1853 until her death in 1899. Wood frame structures fronting on M Street stood on Lots 25 and 26 in the southeast section of Square 1202.

¹⁰ National Register of Historic Places, Streetcar and Bus Resources of Washington, DC, 1862-1962, Washington, DC, National Register #645-948, F-76.

¹¹ “Great Hole Was Made, *The Evening Times*, March 27, 1896, p. 6.

¹² “Must Build a Better Wall,” *The Washington Post*, November 30, 1894, p. 10.

Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Although Thirty-Sixth Street ran from the waterfront to a point north of P Street, N.W., it remained unimproved between M and Prospect Streets.¹³ The land designated as Thirty-Sixth Street was 60' wide from building line to building line along this stretch. Thirty-Seventh Street and Prospect Street west of Thirty-Sixth Street also remained unimproved due to the steep grade of the site. Steps of wood and stone, described as "long and heavy", provided pedestrian access from Prospect to M Street.¹⁴ This unimproved condition and the steps that existed for pedestrians prior to construction of the extant Retaining Wall and steps are shown in a circa 1893 photograph of Southworth Cottage.



*Residence of Mrs. E.D.E.N. Southworth, circa 1893.
Library of Congress LOT 7077-RE.*

In 1894, the Commissioners of the District of Columbia requested Congressional legislation to grant an extension of the Washington and Georgetown Railroad Company's (W & GCO) tracks (which initially terminated at M and 32nd Streets, NW), and authorize the construction of a 'union' station and terminal to serve the District and Virginia.¹⁵ It is no surprise that the W & GCO was eager to expand their service. Following the successful introduction of cable car operations in Washington in 1890, the W & GCO undertook a massive building campaign that included the erection of new car barns, powerhouse complexes, and the installation of miles of cable with the goal of establishing a transportation model for the country. The cable car, which was faster than the horse-drawn railway cars, allowed for more than 3,500 passengers per hour to be served.¹⁶

The site identified as most available and appropriate for the union station terminal was Square 1203 (Georgetown Square 33). Anticipating the construction of what would be the Francis Scott Key Bridge, the Commissioners believed Square 1203 would provide an optimum location for street cars entering Georgetown from Virginia---one sufficiently convenient to enable a 'union' of four separate DC, Maryland, and Virginia streetcar lines. On August 23, 1894, Congress approved an amendment to "An Act to incorporate the Washington and Great Falls Electric

¹³ U.S. Commission of Fine Arts., *Georgetown Architecture – Northwest*. Historic American Buildings Survey Selections, Number 6. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970), iii.

¹⁴ *Washington Star*, February 26, 1895, 7.

¹⁵ "Licenses are Denied," *The Washington Post*, May 2, 1894, p 8.

¹⁶ National Register of Historic Places, Streetcar and Bus Resources of Washington, DC, 1862-1962, Washington, DC, National Register #645-948, E-54.

Capital Traction Company Union Station

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

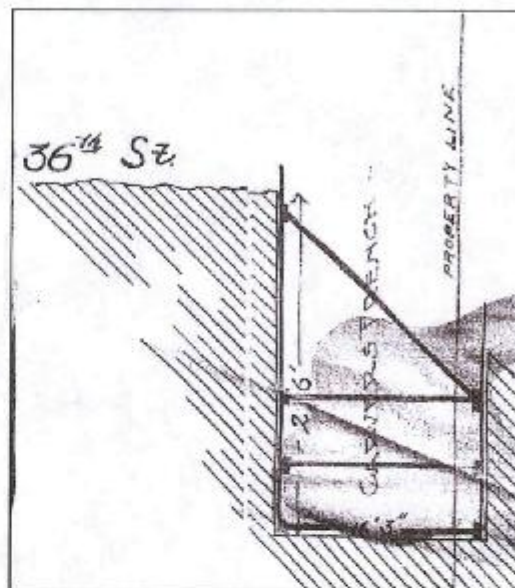
Railway," initially approved in July 1892, to specify Square 1203 as the location for the proposed union station, and to provide details of construction and operations.¹⁷

By October 1894, with the legislation in place, the Washington and Georgetown Railroads awarded contracts for the initial phase of construction of the new station. Andrew Gleason was selected to excavate the site, and contractors Manning & Parsons, were selected to construct the Retaining Wall.¹⁸

A permit was issued to the W & GCO for the construction of the Retaining Wall with a width of four feet on November 1894; however, on November 30, *The Washington Post* reported that building inspector John B. Brady had issued an order revoking the permit because he found "that the vertical sides of the excavation or embankment are rotten rock, interspersed with sand and clay... [and] therefore, exert a pressure against a Retaining Wall equal to that of ordinary clay."¹⁹

This conclusion caused several months of delay for Manning & Parsons as the building inspector determined the appropriate thickness of the Retaining Wall. In April 1895, the District Commissioners finally granted permission to the W & GCO to construct the wall with the caveat that it was to be built according to the specifications of experts Captains Edward Burr and Lansing H. Beach of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.²⁰

Additional delays in construction resulted from a suit filed on November 19, 1894 by Mrs. Morris to halt blasting at the construction site.²¹ She claimed that the blasting was damaging her residence, the Prospect House, and submitted affidavits from noted architects Adolf Cluss and Robert I. Fleming, as well as from the closest affected neighbor Mrs. Southworth, to support her claim. Equity Court Case #16006 resulted in various restraining orders and decrees issued



Detail of Thirty-Sixth Street trench. The property line shown is that of the Capital Traction Co. on Square 1203. Equity Case File #16006, June 15, 1895, RG 21, National Archives.

¹⁷ *An Act to amend an Act entitled "An Act to incorporate the Washington and Great Falls Electric Railway,"* 53rd Cong., 2d sess., (August 23, 1894), 492-494.

¹⁸ "Awards for the Union Station," *The Washington Post*, October 24, 1894, p. 5.

¹⁹ "Must Build a Better Wall," *The Washington Post*, November 30, 1894, p. 10. Previous research efforts have indicated no reference to a permit for the construction of the wall was found in the microfilmed building permit indexes. Much of the surviving documentation on the requirements relating to the construction of the wall is preserved in Equity Case File #16006.

²⁰ "Doing of the District: Ordering Concerning Retaining Walls at Union Street R.R. Station," *Washington Times*, April 4, 1895, p. 6.

²¹ Sections of this documentation have been excerpted from *Square 1202: Development Chronology for Modern Lots 64, 840 and Adjoining Properties*, completed for EastBanc, Inc. by EHT Tracerics, Inc. in December 2010.

Capital Traction Company Union Station

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

between November and the following May and court-ordered supervision of the blasting.²²

Excavation and wall construction continued through the spring of 1895.

The Retaining Wall on the northern boundary of what is now Lot 840 and the adjoining steps were built as an integral part of the car barn construction, which took place on Square 1203. A section of the excavation site, dated May 8, 1895 and filed with the Equity Court Case, shows that the Thirty-Sixth Street trench for the wall was 16' 3" wide and 26' deep and that only a small fraction of it was within the car barn property line.²³

Upon its completion, the features of the Retaining Walls were described in an article in *Street Railway Review* published July 15, 1898.

After some discussion between the company's architect and the city Building Department as to dimensions it was decided to build the Retaining Walls of concrete, 13 ft. thick at the base, with brick pilasters 4 ft. x 4 ft. at intervals of from 13 to 20 ft. As an additional precaution box girders were used on the second and third floors abutting the east and west walls, thus bracing them against each other. Girders and I-beams were built into the pilasters parallel to the walls upon which the curtain walls were built to form the exterior of the buildings. In this way "areas" were left between the curtain and Retaining Walls which serve the double function of ventilating shafts and light wells. The inclined wall forming the foot of 36th street, and that portion along the stairway were built of squared rubble (Blue Gneiss) for appearance sake. With the exception of this street wall the walls were all built in trenches; that is, the proper location of the walls being staked out three trenches, intersecting at right angles, were started and carried down to about 3 ft. below the level of the finished first floor. The rock in the trenches was solid and almost without seams and had to be loosened by blasting...²⁴

The illustrations accompanying the article show additional details of the construction and provide information on the wall dimensions. Section drawings show that the base of the wall constructed on the Thirty-Sixth Street right of way extends southward 142 feet from the building line on Prospect Street. The Southworth property (original Lots 35 and 36 in Square 1202) fronted 124 feet along Thirty-Sixth Street. While the canted wall extended across Thirty-Sixth Street, the top of the wall was roughly in line with the southern line of the Southworth property while the base of the extends 20 feet south of the top of the wall. Consequently, the base of the section of the south-facing wall west of the steps is located on modern Lot 840.

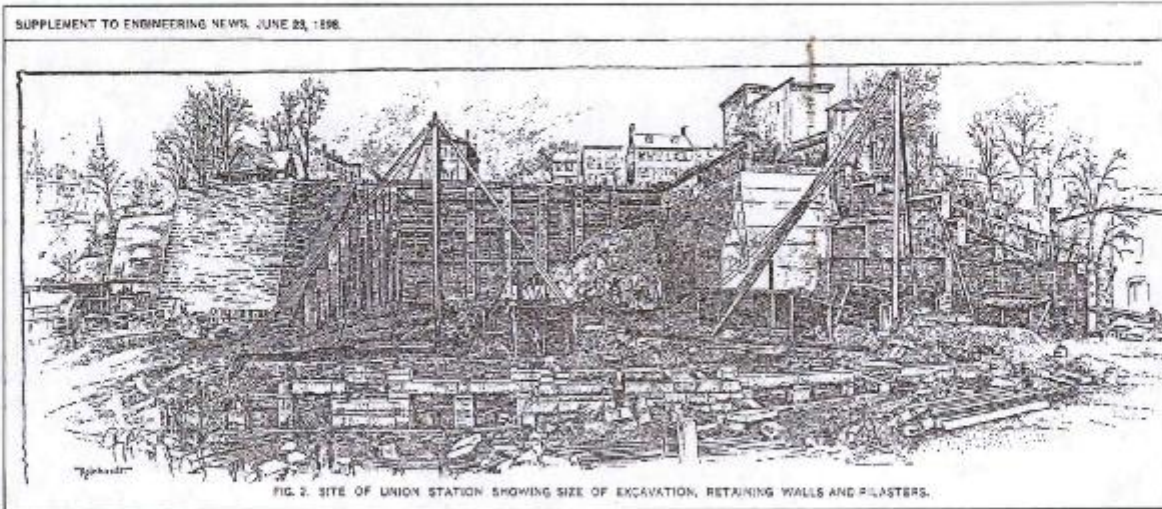
²² Equity No. 16006, Mary S. Morris vs. Washington and Georgetown R. R. Co. et al., June 15, 1895, Records of the District Courts of the United States, 1685-2009, Record Group 21, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

²³ The section references a Plan that was not located in the Equity Court case file so the exact location of this east-west section is not known.

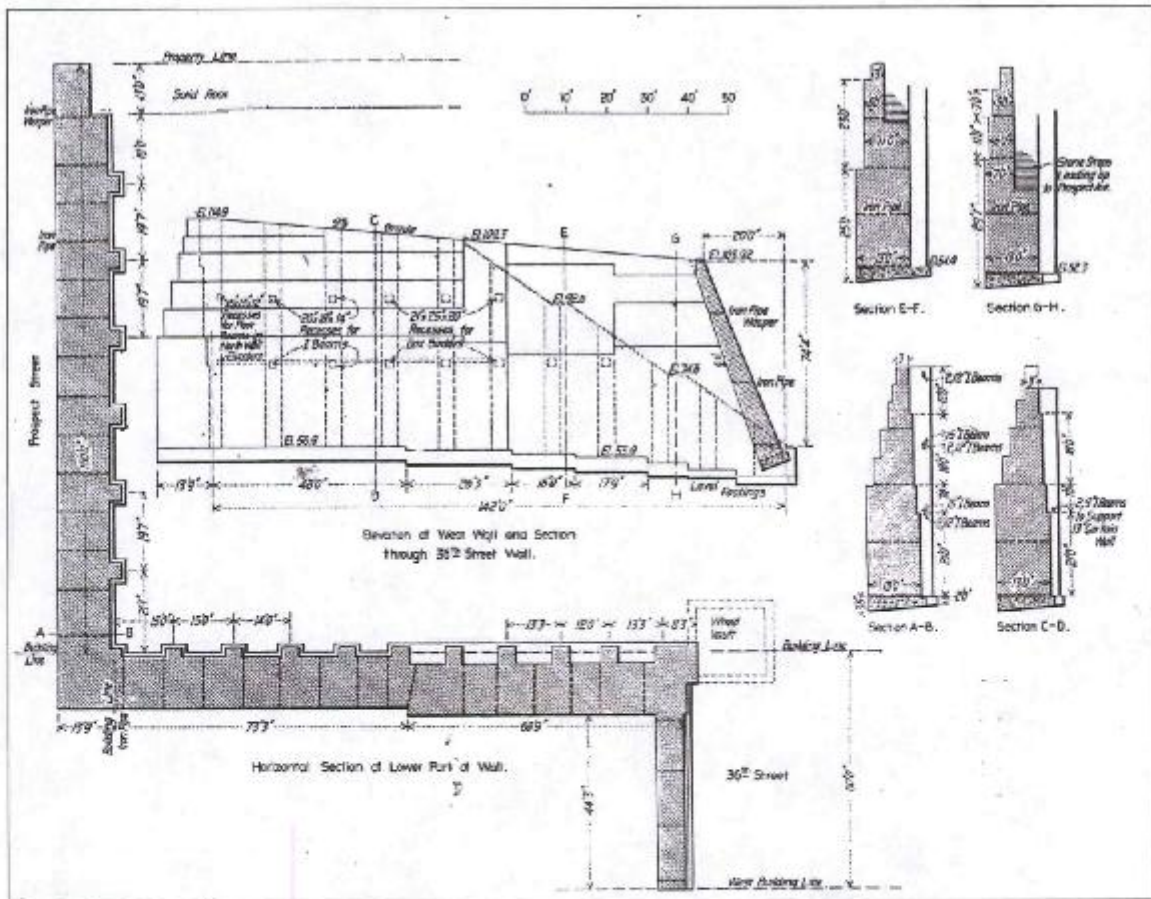
²⁴ "Union Street Railway Station in Washington," *Street Railway Review* 8, No. 7 (July 15, 1898): 440.

Capital Traction Company Union Station
 Name of Property

Washington, DC
 County and State



Car barn excavation, mid-1895. "Union Street Railway Station in Washington," Street Railway Review 8, no. 7. (July 15, 1898)



Horizontal section of the Retaining Wall, including the portion of the wall on the north side of Lot 840 and provide both an elevation and a section of the Thirty-Sixth Street wall.
 "Union Street Railway Station in Washington," Street Railway Review 8, no. 7, (July 1898): 441.

Capital Traction Company Union Station

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

The horizontal section shows the wall extending across Thirty-Sixth Street to the building line on the west side of Thirty-Sixth street. This was the extent of the wall faced in blue gneiss.

However, an 1898 illustration of the terminal construction shows that an additional Retaining Wall had been built along the south side of the Southworth property, likely at the same time of the stone-faced canted Retaining Wall. This wall of concrete blocks, set back slightly from the finished Thirty-Sixth Street wall, occupied the northernmost part of original Lot 25 of Square 1202 (now the western half of Lot 804).

Formal construction on the actual building began in 1895. The official building permit describes the "union passenger station" as three stories in height and measuring 180 feet wide by 242 feet deep. The building proposed was to be clad in brick and granite on a brick, stone and concrete foundation, with a mansard roof clad in tile and asphalt. This massive edifice was estimated to cost \$150,000, approximately \$4 million today.²⁵ The architect was Waddy Butler Wood, and the contractor awarded the project was F. N. Carver. The choice of Wood is significant, as it marked the first Washington and Georgetown Railroad Company terminal designed by a Washington architect.²⁶

Although the Car Barn was Wood's first Washington-area project, he would go on to have a long and colorful career. Wood practiced architecture in Washington from 1892 through 1940, during a period of great expansion and development of the city.²⁷ Self-taught, Wood began his career by designing modest residences, mostly located in northwest Washington. As previously mentioned, his first major commission was for the Capital Traction Company, who hired Wood to design the Car Barn in Georgetown. Following this, he received several other commissions from the Capital Traction Company to design other Car Barns throughout Washington, including the East Capitol Car Barn. Wood is also credited for designing several free-standing houses, including the Alice Pike Barney House located at 2306 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, and rural residences during this time period.

In 1902, Wood formed a partnership with Edmund Donn, Jr. and William I. Deming. Donn, a skilled architect educated at the Boston Institute of Technology (now M.I.T.) and Deming, a construction engineer and graduate of Columbian College (later The George Washington University) complemented the creative Wood, who served as the firm's chief designer. The firm was known for its outstanding and imaginative design while maintaining reasonable and affordable costs through the honest use of materials. Wood, Donn and Deming are credited with several prominent homes in Kalorama including the General Charles Fitzhugh Residence located at 2253 R Street, NW (1904) and the residence located at 2320 S Street, NW (1908), owned most recently by founder and CEO of Amazon Jeff Bezos. The firm also received notable commissions for civic buildings, including Providence Hospital (1904), the Fourteenth Street Car

²⁵ Building Permit #0213, August 7, 1895, District of Columbia Building Permits, 1877-1949, Record Group 351, National Archives and Records Administration.

²⁶ National Register of Historic Places, Streetcar and Bus Resources of Washington, DC, 1862-1962, Washington, DC, National Register #645-948, E-53.

²⁷ Sections of this documentation have been excerpted from "Waddy B. Wood," *District of Columbia Architects Directory, V. 3*, completed for the DC Historic Preservation Office by EHT Tracerics, Inc. in October 2010.

Capital Traction Company Union Station

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

Barn (1906), the Masonic Temple at Thirteenth and H Streets, NW (1906-1908), and the Union Trust Bank (1910).

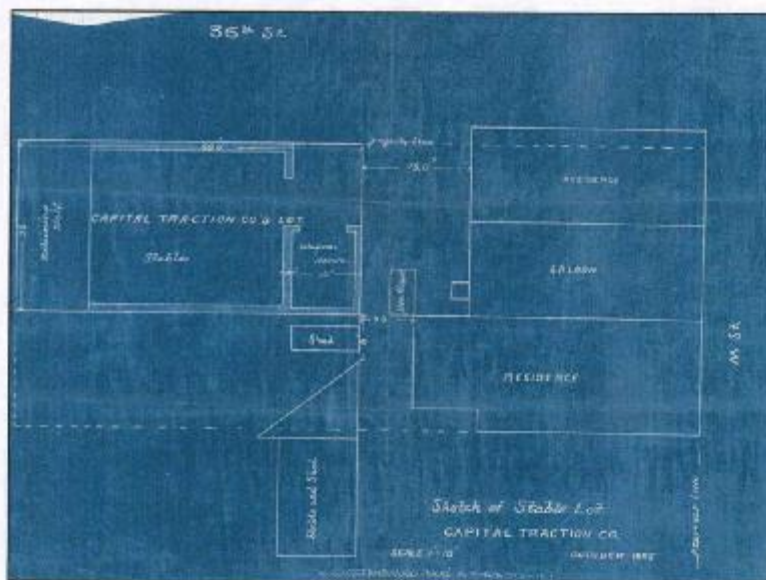
In 1912, the partnership was amicably dissolved. As an independent architect, Wood continued to capture prestigious commissions. He focused his attention on commercial and government work, accepting commissions for residential work only for mansions of Washington's elite. During this period, he designed buildings for large corporations such as the Potomac Electric Company, designing 999 E Street, N.W., the Union Trust Company Building at 738-740 15th Street, NW, the Southern Railway Building at 1500 K Street, NW, the Commercial National Bank at 1405 G Street, NW, and the Department of the Interior Building. His commissions for private interests and large residential structures included the remodeling of the old Holton Arms School, the remodeling of the Chevy Chase Club, and the design for homes of Frederick Delano, George Cabot Lodge, Dr. Cary Grayson, and Henry Fairbanks, whose house at 2340 S Street he later remodeled for Woodrow Wilson. Wood designed All Saints Episcopal Church on Chevy Chase Circle in collaboration with Arthur Heaton.

Wood was also active in and did extensive work with the Washington Architectural Club and the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects, serving as president in 1917 and 1918. Wood retired in 1940 to his country home in Warrenton, Virginia.

Throughout his career, Wood was known for using an eclectic range of styles, ranging from classical to Spanish Colonial, that reflected the fashions of the day.

The Georgetown Car Barn was no exception, designed in the Romanesque style prevalent in the late 19th century. The façade of the car barn closely resembles buildings designed by other devotees of H. H. Richardson, such as the Minneapolis City Hall (Long and Kees), Washington's Old Post Office (Edbrooke), and Richmond, Virginia's Old City Hall (Myers); this particular expression of the style, with its blocky central massing and tall clock tower was

once mocked as "a cross between a cathedral and a cotton mill."²⁸



DC Permit #1094, February 2, 1896, RG 328, NARA II.

In 1895, the W & GCO merged with the Rock Creek Railway Company to create the Capital Traction Company. That same year, the Capital Traction Company acquired Lot 25 of Square

²⁸ "Congress and the Questions of Expansion and Increased Armaments Confronting It", *New York Times*, November 8, 1898.

Capital Traction Company Union Station

Washington, DC
County and State

Name of Property

1202 from Charles C. Glover, head of Riggs & Company (later Riggs Bank). Shortly after receiving a permit for the main Union Station, the Capital Traction Company applied for a permit to build a two-story brick stable associated with the Union Station in February 1896. As with the Station, the stable was designed by Waddy Wood.²⁹ A drawing that accompanied the stable building permit shows that the stable abutted the concrete Retaining Wall, which extended about 13 feet into Lot 25. With plans to construct a stable behind extant buildings, it is likely that the Capital Traction Company never intended to have the concrete Retaining Wall visible. The stable was razed in 1955. Since this time, the concrete-faced Retaining Wall, the stone-faced Retaining Wall, and the steps have all remained visible from Virginia, and acts as a gateway from Virginia to Georgetown.

The Capital Traction Company Union Station opened on May 27, 1897 as the “first edifice of its kind in the country.”³⁰ It also provided Washington with its only cable loop. The building was well-received, described as “undoubtedly the finest structure in historic Georgetown” and as “an architectural triumph [that] combines the qualities of strength and grace.”³¹ The lower section of the exterior wall was clad in pink granite brought from Massachusetts quarries, while the upper stories were built of “Ohio mottle brown brick,” with white cast stone details around the doors and windows.³² The roof sported half-round barrel tiles. The massive central elevator tower rose 140 feet from ground level at M Street, and was immediately visible from most of Georgetown and across the river in Rosslyn.³³ A decorative stone pediment was centrally located above the first story in front of the elevator tower, featuring the words “Capital Traction.”



Photo 11. Historic American Buildings Survey Copy of c. 1900 Photograph (from Private Collection of Leroy O. King).
Historic American Building Survey (HABS No. DC-125), “Capital Traction Union Station,” Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

The original interior spaces, including the waiting rooms, offices, and conductors’ lounges, were elegantly fitted with oak trim, ornate plasterwork with gilded

²⁹ DC Build Permit #1094, February 11, 1896, District of Columbia Building Permits, 1877-1949, Record Group 351, National Archives and Records Administration.

³⁰ “Fine New Union Station,” *Washington Times*, May 28, 1897.

³¹ “Fine New Union Station”; “Where Car Lines Meet: New Union Station Will Be in Operation To-Day,” *The Washington Post*, May 27, 1897.

³² “Fine New Union Station.”

³³ Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS No. DC-125), “Capital Traction Company Union Station,” (Arlington: National Park Service, 1966).

Capital Traction Company Union Station

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

detailing, fashionable "Nile green" painted walls, and "granata" tile floors.³⁴ Wrought ironwork stairs with oak balusters connected the floors and an elegant brass-fitted elevator was installed in the tower. At the rear of the building were the 'car storage rooms', floored in "Virginia cement" with 10-13 rows of tracks 140 feet long and storage for 225 cars on three floors. Because of the cars' metal wheels which occasionally created sparks when in contact with the metal rail lines, the entire building was designed to be fireproof; no wooden beams were used, only steel girders, and the walls were entirely built of brick and stone.³⁵

Later Alterations to the Capital Traction Company Union Station

The evolution of streetcar traction, in addition to the consolidation of the railroad companies, prompted several changes in use and a series of interior and exterior alterations to the Georgetown Car Barn. In 1906 and again in 1908, portions of the second floor were converted into office space because the terminal was not being used to the extent originally envisioned.

In 1910, the Capital Traction Company applied for a permit to "move out and change front [of building] from first story up. Install new transfer table and install passenger and freight elevators, strengthen floors and roof, change tracks, change arches in 1st story front, change offices, install new plumbing."³⁶ This work was necessary to accommodate larger street cars. In addition to the changes described above, the roof was redesigned from a series of hipped roofs to a flat roof. The decorative stone pediment was moved to the third story of the central projecting bay.

Over the next decade, the Capital Traction Company applied for several permits for interior alterations on the second and third floor.

In 1921 and 1922, part of the car storage area on the second and third floors along the west side of the building was converted to office space.

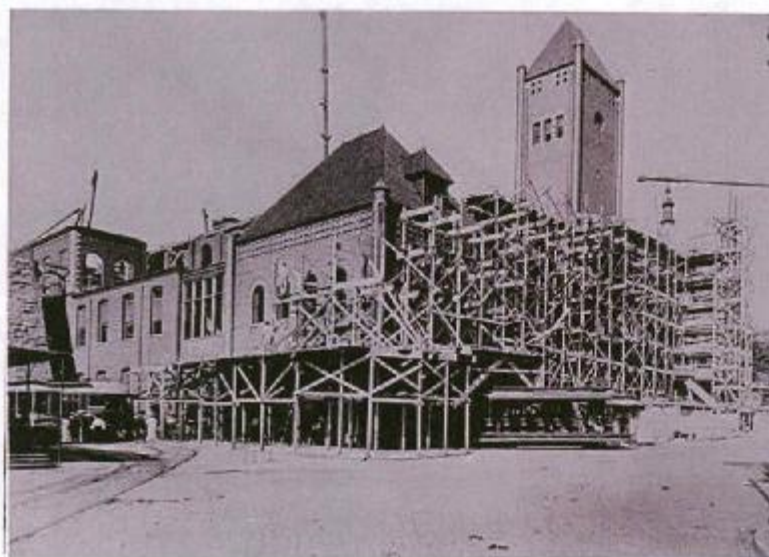


Photo 12. Historic American Buildings Survey Copy of 1911 Photograph Showing Building Undergoing Alterations (from Leroy O. King's Private Collection).

Historic American Building Survey (HABS No. DC-125), "Capital Traction Union Station," Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

³⁴ "First Edifice of Its Kind in the Country Opened for Business". *Washington Times*, May 28, 1897.

³⁵ "Georgetown Union Depot is rapidly Nearing Completion", *The Morning Times*, September 6, 1896.

³⁶ DC Alteration Permit #6311, May 10, 1910, District of Columbia Building Permits, 1877-1949, Record Group 351, National Archives and Records Administration.

Capital Traction Company Union Station

Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

In December 1933, the Washington Railway and Electric Company and the Capital Traction Company merged to form the Capital Transit Company.³⁷ Headquarters for this new company were located in the Car Barn. To accommodate the influx of workers, the interior of the building was again retrofitted, and resulted in the conversion of the entire third floor from car barn to office. The closed passage way from Prospect Street to M Street across the roof was removed, and the roof in the central portion of the building was removed to form a large light well on the third floor.³⁸



Photo 1. Historic American Survey Marc Blair Photographer, summer 1966 South (front) Façade. *Historic American Building Survey (HABS No. DC-125), "Capital Traction Union Station," Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.*

In the 1950s, the last streetcars were removed from the building and all of the former open car storage was converted entirely to office use. New systems, including central air-conditioning, were installed at that time. Additionally, ceilings that had been built to clear street cars were lowered to normal height and acoustically treated to reduce noise, fluorescent lighting was installed, walls were papered, and carpets were installed on nearly all floor surfaces. These improvements made it possible to consolidate all of the general office functions for the Capital Traction Company into the Car Barn.³⁹

*The Fall of the Capital Transit Company*⁴⁰

In January of 1955, Capitol Transit Company was operating deeply in the red, and sought permission from the District for a fare increase. Permission was denied because of massive public protest against the added financial burden and the widespread knowledge that the company's financial problems were directly related to the enormous dividends the four major stockholders, the Wolfson brothers, paid to themselves. Major proponents of a DC subway

³⁷ LeRoy O. King, Jr., *100 Years of Capital Traction: The Story of Streetcars in the Nation's Capital* (Taylor Publishing Company, 1972), 130.

³⁸ Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS No. DC-125).

³⁹ Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS No. DC-125).

⁴⁰ Sections of this documentation have been excerpted from *Georgetown Car Barn: Development Chronology*, completed for Douglas Development by EHT Tracerics, Inc. in 2016.

Capital Traction Company Union Station

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

system successfully argued on behalf of the fare payers to the US Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit, based on a similar rate-hike case involving the famous San Francisco streetcars.⁴¹

When transit workers launched a strike for higher wages in July 1955, Louis Wolfson claimed the company could not support the higher wages without a fare increase. Knowing Capitol Transit held a monopoly on the District's transportation systems and secure in the assumption that Capital was the only private company with the means to keep the system going, Wolfson verbally dared Congress to revoke Capital Transit's franchise. Congress called his bluff and sold the franchise to O. Roy Chalk, a New York financier with diverse financial interests.⁴²

Chalk purchased a transit system of streetcars and converted them to buses by 1963 in a murky agreement with Congress and the District. Later, District officials, Chalk, and automobile industry lobbyists would all vehemently deny any part in the "bustitution" and all claimed that they tried to maintain the streetcars in the face of opposition from the others.⁴³

As the streetcar was rendered obsolete, Chalk renovated the car barn as headquarters for the Capital Transit Company and quietly turned the building into an income-producing private real-estate venture, though its sale was never approved by the Metropolitan Area Transit Commission. Chalk installed new electrical, plumbing, and climate-control systems, dropped ceilings, installed new fluorescent lighting, and laid carpeting.⁴⁴ The building's interior appeared identical to any other 1960's office space and nearly all the 1895 interior finishes were removed, if any had remained after the renovations of 1911 and 1933.

Chalk was ordered by the WMATC in 1967 to return \$500,000 to the District that he received from the sale of the Trinidad Car Barn, and four other buildings were named in the case as public property that Chalk had sold to private holding companies and leased back to the District.⁴⁵ Rent payments on these properties was cited as a major cause of DC Transit's financial problems; Chalk was repeating the Wolfson brothers' strategy of using public transit for private gain, just less ostentatiously. In FY 1966, the M Street trolley car building operated at a substantial \$90,207 profit- all of it going directly to Chalk.⁴⁶

In 1972, the WMATA Metro Subway authority was authorized by Congress to take over the Washington, DC-area bus lines as part of a cooperative transportation system. Chalk negotiated a sale of DC Transit's assets that greatly benefited the company's stockholders, of which he and his wife owned nearly a third of all stock, and retained significant company real estate. The real estate included horse farms in Middleburg and Annandale, trolley rights-of-way on DC and

⁴¹ Gilbert Hahn, *Notebook of a Native Washingtonian*. Washington, DC: University Press of America, 2004. pp 60-64.

⁴² Zachery M Schrag, *The Great Society Subway: A History of the Washington Metro* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 27-31.

⁴³ Schrag, *The Great Society Subway: A History of the Washington Metro*; Hahn, *Notebook of a Native Washingtonian* and Pearson, Drew. "Roy Chalk Makes Mark as Successful Lobbyist", *Spokane Chronicle*, December 10, 1964.

⁴⁴ Penney, O.E. Valuation Engineer for D.C. Transit Company, Statement December 18, 1961.

⁴⁵ "Chalk Ordered to Put Back \$500,000," *Washington Post*, July 7, 1967.

⁴⁶ "Chalk Ordered to Put Back \$500,000."

Capital Traction Company Union Station

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

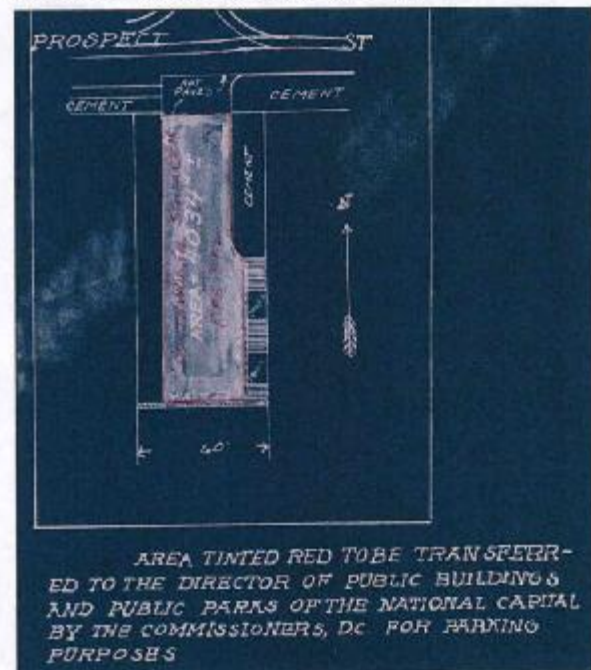
Maryland streets, a defunct power station, and six former streetcar barns.⁴⁷ The small photo that accompanies a 1972 article about the sale shows the “D.C. Transit Headquarters” with the same 1911 fenestration and flat roof, a jagged rear roofline that includes systems equipment and additions, and what appear to be altered façade windows.

The car barn continued as an office building, owned and leased by Chalk, until his holdings were generally dissolved in the early 1990’s. The building was taken over by the fraternal benefit organization The Lutheran Brotherhood (now Thrivent Financial) in 1992 as part of a foreclosure, who later sold the property to DC development company Douglas Development in 1997. Douglas Jemal, president of the company, called it a “phenomenal building” and planned major renovations to the building for use as offices and classroom space.⁴⁸

Douglas Development completed major renovations to the building in 1998 and gave it its current variegated appearance, complete with classical colonnaded terrace on the roof deck, four false dormers, pyramidal-roofed corner towers, oversized orange barrel roof tiles, and modern interior appurtenances. The lowest level is currently used as a parking garage, though traces of earlier formal finishes remain in the neglected office and lobby areas. The building is currently leased to Georgetown University and is used as classroom and office space for a wide range of University graduate departments.⁴⁹

Evolution of Thirty-Sixth Street, NW and Establishment of Lot 840⁵⁰

In 1926, at the request of the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, the Federal Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital assumed jurisdiction over the center section of the Thirty-Sixth Street right-of-way north of the Retaining Wall. It became Reservation 392. It is unclear whether this conveyance includes the top of the canted Retaining Wall. A map in the D.C. Office of the Surveyor file for Reservation 392 appears to indicate that the south side of the property conveyed to the federal government for park purposes, referred to as “Southworth Square”, was bounded to the south by, but did not include, the



36th Street right-of-way showing center portion, tinted white and bounded in red, transferred to federal government as parkland.
D.C. Office of the Surveyor, Reservation No. 392 file.

⁴⁷ “Chalk to Maintain Control of Properties After Switch”, *The Washington Post: Metro*, December 3, 1972.

⁴⁸ Douglas Fruehling, “Jemal to Buy Georgetown’s Car Barn,” *Washington Business Journal*, April 4, 1997.

⁴⁹ “The Car Barn,” Douglas Development Corporation Property Management, accessed November 2018.

<http://douglasdevelopment.com/properties/the-car-barn/>.

⁵⁰ Sections of this documentation have been excerpted from *Square 1202: Development Chronology for Modern Lots 64, 840 and Adjoining Properties*, completed for EastBanc, Inc. by EHT Tracerics, Inc. in December 2010.

Capital Traction Company Union Station

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

top of the Retaining Wall. However, a plat of the property at the time it was conveyed back to the District in 1958 shows the conveyed property as being 125' north to south – a length that would probably include the top of the wall.⁵¹ The District retained ownership of what would have been the sidewalk area on each side of the center section of the roadway. The east area included the stone stairway and concrete sidewalk leading from Prospect Street to the stairway that provided a pedestrian connection between Prospect and M Streets.

In 1950, The District Commissioners conveyed the west 15 feet of the Thirty-Sixth Street right-of-way north of the Retaining Wall to the owner of the abutting property, Lot 832 (3600 Prospect Street, N.W., subsequently Lot 837). In 1949, a dwelling was constructed on the site of Southworth Cottage, which had been demolished between 1937 and 1945.⁵² In addition to the 15 foot-wide strip conveyed outright to the owner of 3600 Prospect Street, N.W. by the District, the owner obtained a permit from the National Park Service to use the federally owned center portion of the roadway as part of the garden of the dwelling at 3600 Prospect Street.⁵³ The permit expired in 1954, and in October 1958, the federal government transferred ownership of Reservation 392 back to the District.⁵⁴ Despite public objections at various times, the District-owned property continues to be fenced and maintained by owners of 3600 Prospect Street as their private garden.

The southern half of Thirty-Sixth Street remained open until 1951. The D.C. Commissioners, in an order effective February 15, 1951, closed a 3,060-square foot portion of the street including the Retaining Wall and part of the street south of it.⁵⁵ On the west, the line of the closed portion ran 60 feet south along the line of the property where the 1896 stable had been constructed by Capital Traction. From there the line ran 51 feet east, then north 60 feet, then west 51 feet. The easternmost part of the Thirty-Sixth Street right-of-way, 9 feet by 60 feet, beginning at the base of the steps, remained open, providing access from the steps to Thirty-Sixth Street and M Street. The southernmost part of Thirty-Sixth Street, 60 feet long from north to south and 60 feet wide from east to west, remained in the public domain. The ownership of the closed portion reverted to the abutting owner, the owner of Lot 800 which had previously been part of Lot 25. The following month, Assessment and Taxation Lot 840 was established from the combined plots.⁵⁶

⁵¹ D.C. Office of the Surveyor, Reservation 392 file.

⁵² DC Build Permit #321179, August 1, 1949, District of Columbia Building Permits, 1877-1949, Record Group 351, National Archives and Records Administration.

⁵³ D.C. Office of the Surveyor, Subdivision Book 131/59.

⁵⁴ D.C. Office of the Surveyor, Subdivision Book 138/165.

⁵⁵ D.C. Office of the Surveyor, Subdivision Book 131/187.

⁵⁶ D.C. Office of the Surveyor, Assessment and Taxation Plat Book 12_3322_J_3332_Z.

Capital Traction Company Union Station

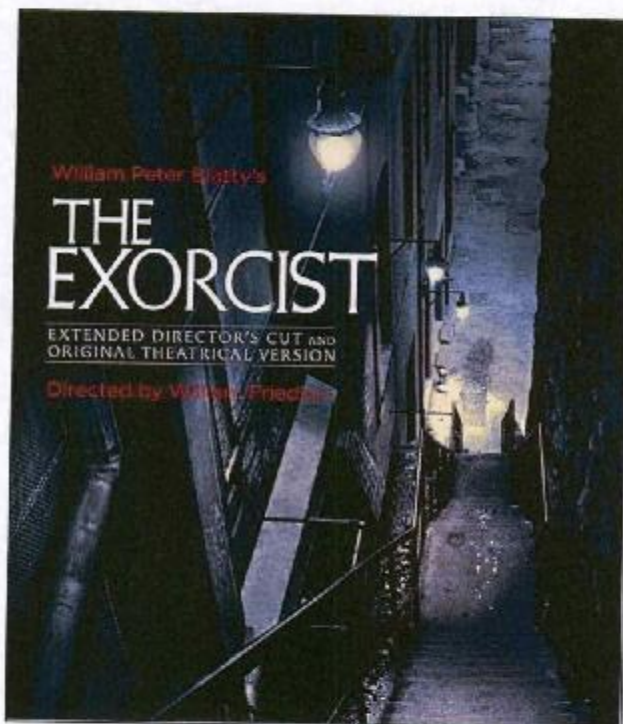
Name of Property

The Exorcist

Washington, DC
County and State

William Peter Blatty (1928-2017) was born in New York. Following high school, he received a scholarship to Georgetown University. It was at Georgetown where he first heard the story of a 14-year-old boy from Mount Rainier, Maryland who was freed by a Catholic priest of possession of the devil. This story served as the inspiration for Blatty's 1971 horror novel, *The Exorcist*.

Following the extraordinary success of the book, which had been on the bestseller lists for over a year and had sold more than 13 million copies in the United States alone, Blatty sold film rights to Warner Brothers. Blatty served as the movie's screenwriter. William Friedkin, who had just completed directed the 1971 Academy Award winning film *The French Connection*, was selected to direct *The Exorcist*. In 1972, *The Exorcist*, starring Linda Blair, was filmed on location in Georgetown. The climax of the film – the exorcism – took place on the stone steps adjacent to the Capital Traction Union Station. The film was released in 1973. It was an immediate success. The film broke box office records and was nominated for ten Academy awards, winning two: best adapted screenplay and best sound. The film was also awarded a Golden Scroll statuette for best horror film of the year from the Academy of Fantasy and Horror Films. Considered an iconic film, in 2000, it was re-released with additional footage. The re-release grossed \$40 million in the US alone.



The Exorcist film jacket. Google Images.



Commemorative Plaque. EHT Traceries, 2018.

The movie's popularity has brought thousands of tourists to the steps over the last forty years. Due to the notoriety of the film, the stairway has been given an informal nickname of the Exorcist Steps. On October 30, 2015, DC Mayor Muriel Bowser, along with Ward 2 Councilmember Jack Evans, Councilmember At-Large Vincent Orange, Ward 4 Councilmember Brandon Todd, Georgetown University President Jack DeGloia, were joined by William Friedkin and William Blatty, the Academy Award-winning director and screenwriter duo behind the 1973 classic horror film *The Exorcist* to officially commemorate the

Capital Traction Company Union Station

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

famed “Exorcist Steps.” In a statement produced by the DC Office of Cable Television, Film, Music and Entertainment, Mayor Bowser said, “The famed Exorcist Steps not only pay tribute to an iconic film but have also become part of the District’s rich film history. This recognition is more than deserving and I am confident this landmark will continue to be a favorite destination for residents, tourists, and students for decades to come.”⁵⁷ A plaque, located at the foot of the stairs, was revealed during this ceremony.

Conclusion

The Capital Traction Company Union Station, Retaining Wall, and Stairway, constructed in 1894-1897, are significant beyond their contribution to the Georgetown Historic District. The Car Barn, the first station of its kind in the country, represents a significant and dramatic shift from independent streetcar operations to a new paradigm of cooperation among private owners of public transportation concerns. The Retaining Wall, virtually unchanged since its construction, was integral for providing as much room as possible to store the rail cars that operated throughout the District, Maryland, and Virginia. The stone Stairway, also unchanged, remains an important pedestrian link in Georgetown. Further, the acclaimed 1973 film *The Exorcist* captured the site as the location of the dramatic climax of the film. The site’s ongoing importance to tourism and the film industry in the District was solidified in 2015 with the presentation of a plaque on the site by Mayor Bowser.

⁵⁷ “Ahead of Halloween, Mayor Bowser to Commemorate ‘Exorcist Steps,’” *Office of Cable Television, Film, Music and Entertainment*, October 26, 2015, accessed January 30, 2018, <https://film.dc.gov/release/ahead-halloween-mayor-bowser-commemorate-%E2%80%9Cexorcist-steps%E2%80%9D>.

Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

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The Washington Post. Proquest Historical Newspapers. www.proquest.com (accessed December 5, 2016).

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

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

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property _____

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

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

The Georgetown Car Barn is located on Lot 47 in Square 1203. Lot 47 encompasses the entire western half of Square 1203. The Georgetown Retaining Wall is located in Square 1202 on a portion of Assessment and Tax Lot 840. Lot 840 is bound to the north by US Reservation 392, to the east and south by Thirty-Sixth Street, and to the west by Tax and Assessment Lot 64. The Exorcist Steps are located to the east of US Reservation 392 and to the west of Square 1203. The Exorcist Steps are considered a sidewalk by the District of Columbia per the DC Atlas Plus map.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The selected boundary encompasses the area within which the Car Barn, Retaining Wall, and stairs are located. The boundaries are consistent with the property's legal description, as delineated in the land records of the District of Columbia.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Alyssa Stein/Historian
organization: EHT Traceries, Inc.
street & number: 440 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
city or town: Washington state: DC zip code: 20001
e-mail alyssa.stein@traceries.com
telephone: 202.393.1199
date: November 9, 2018

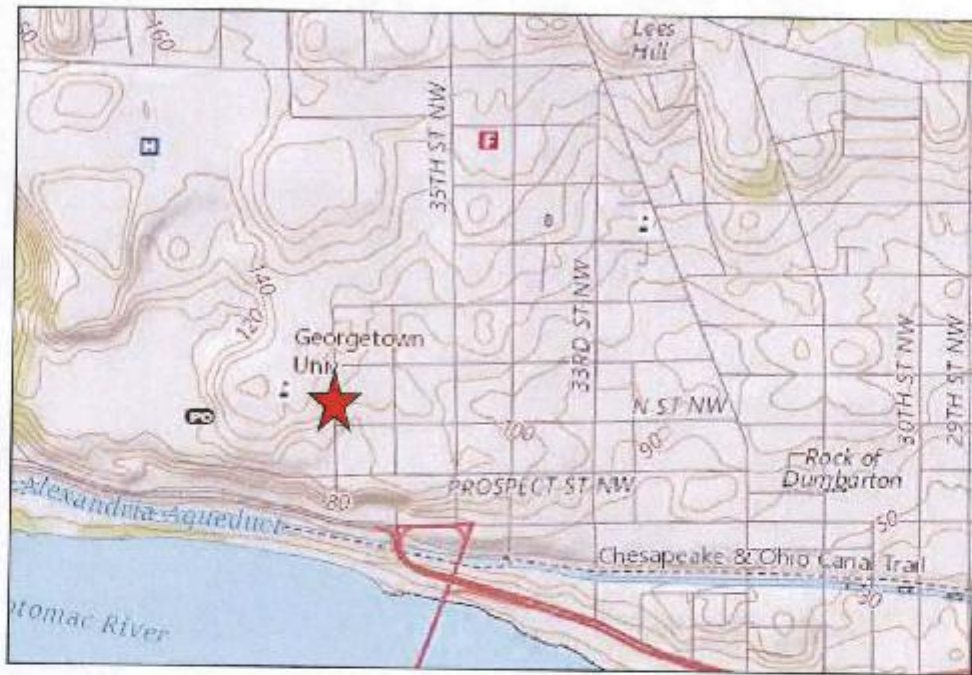
Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

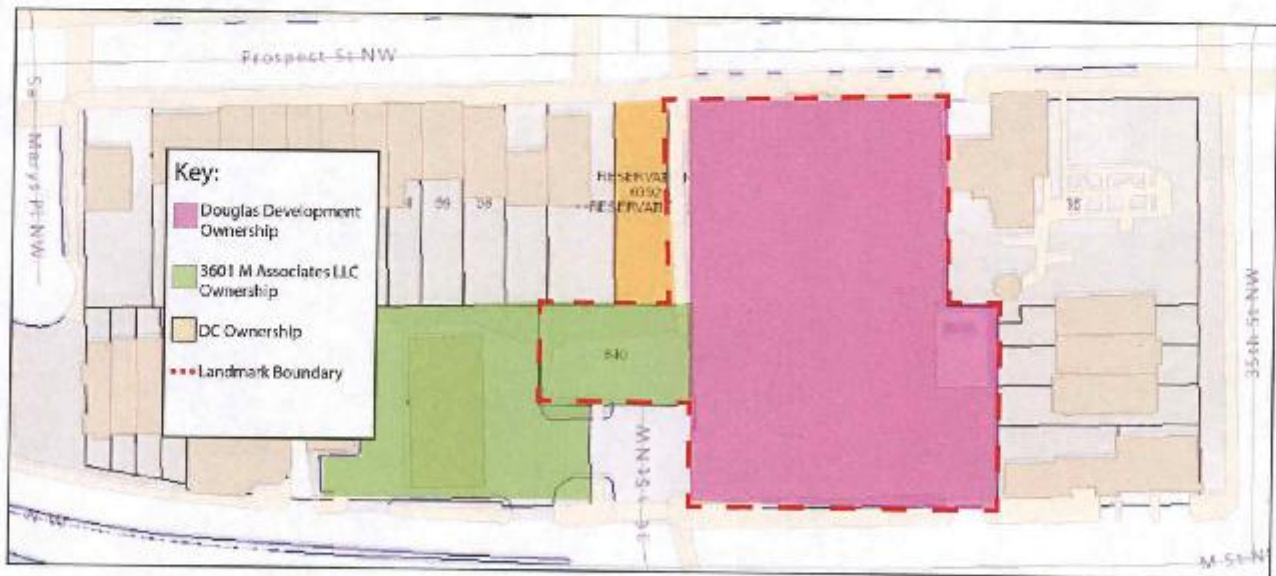
- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any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

Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State



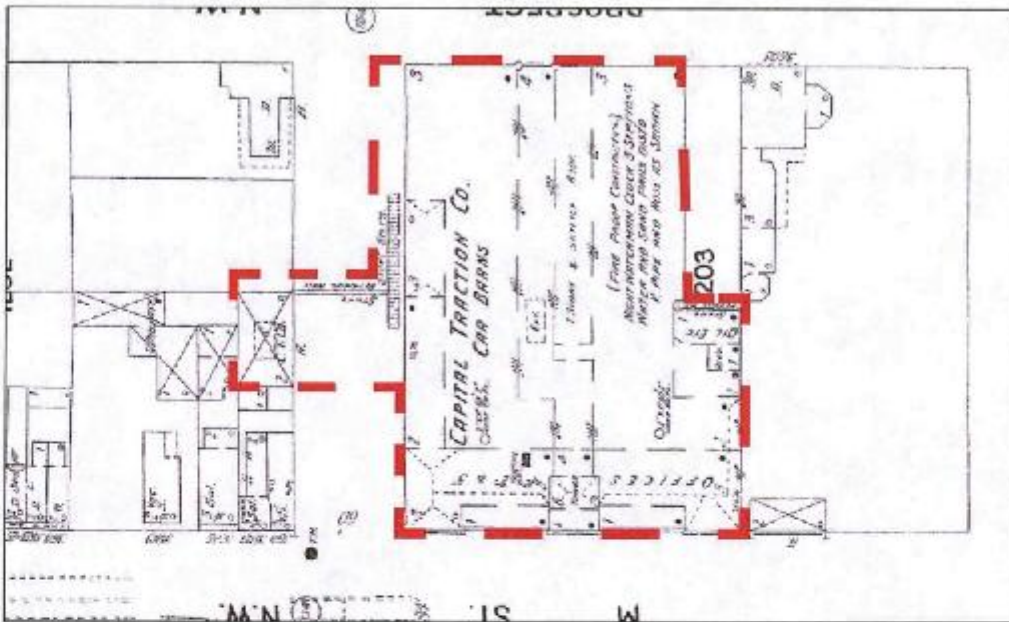
USGS Map & 5 Series 2016 – Georgetown, Washington, DC.



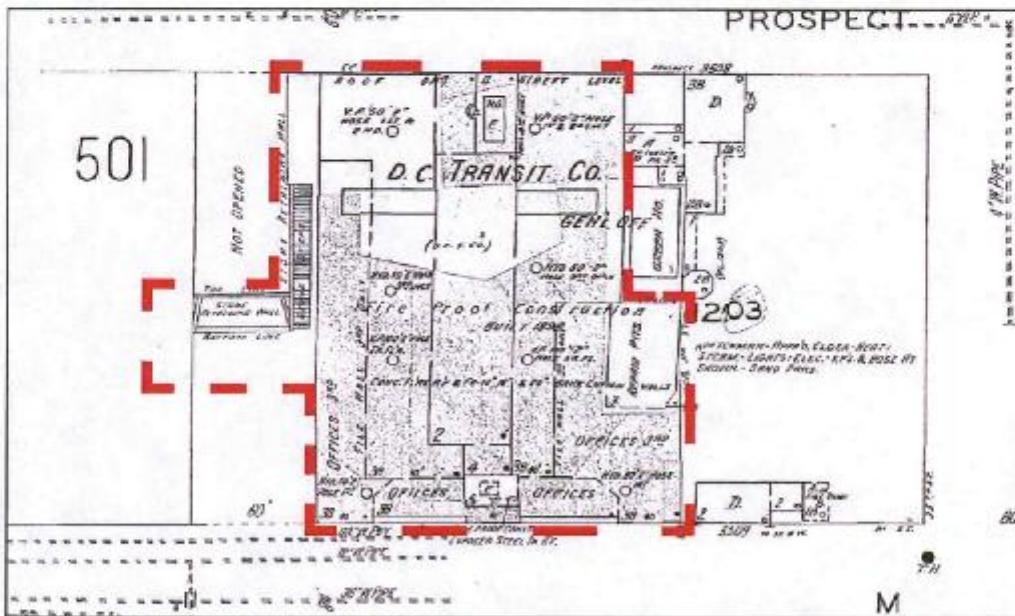
Boundaries depicted on DC Atlas Plus Map.

Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State



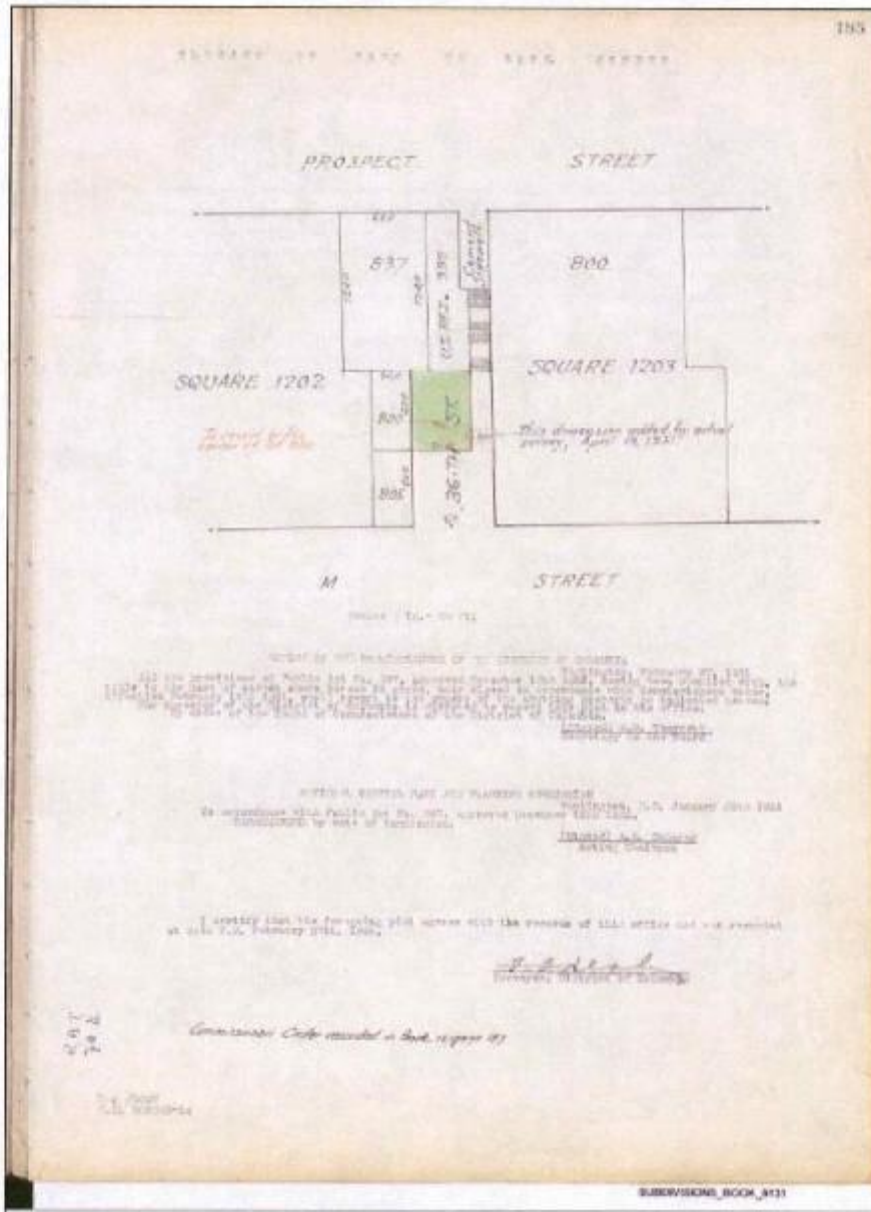
1903 Sanborn Map, sheet 61.
Landmark Boundary outlined in red.



1960 Sanborn Map.
Landmark Boundary outlined in red.

Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State



DC Office of the Surveyors, February 27, 1911, Subdivision Book 131 Folio 185.

Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

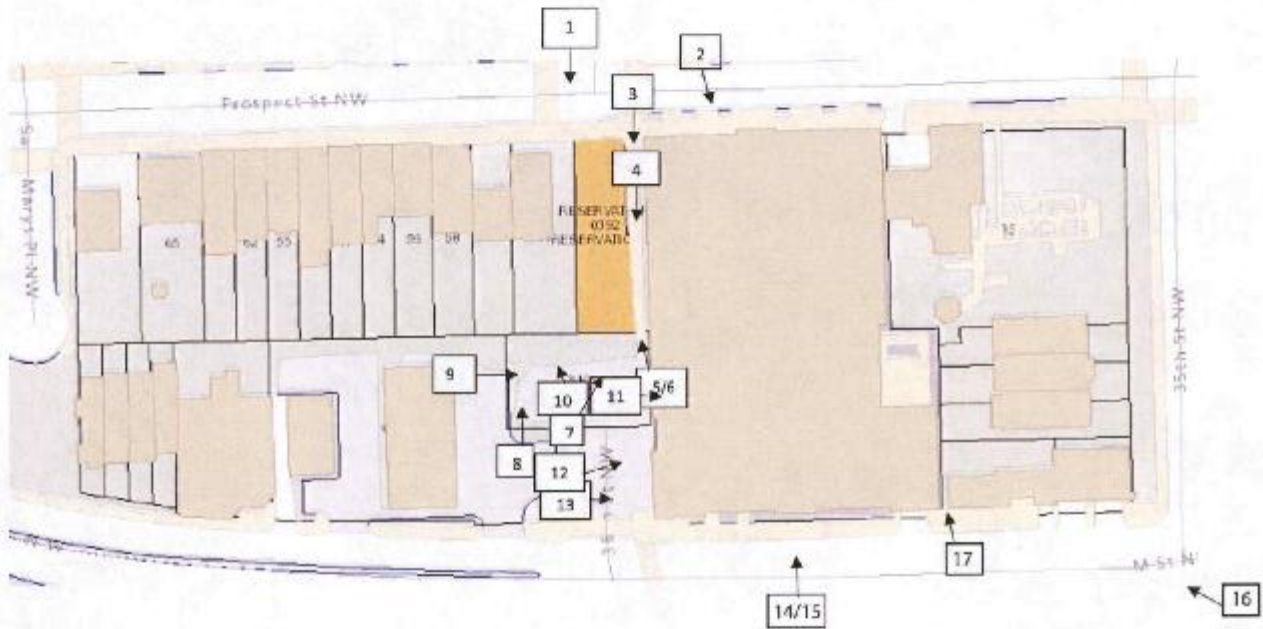


Photo Log

Name of Property: Georgetown Retaining Wall, Exorcist Steps
City or Vicinity: Washington
County: State: District of Columbia
Photographer: Alyssa Stein
Date Photographed: January 31, 2017

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Photo 1 of 19.
Enclosed Reservation 392 and Thirty-Sixth Street, NW, facing south.



Capital Traction Company Union Station

Name of Property

Photo 2 of 19.

Prospect Street Entrance, facing south.

Washington, DC

County and State



Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

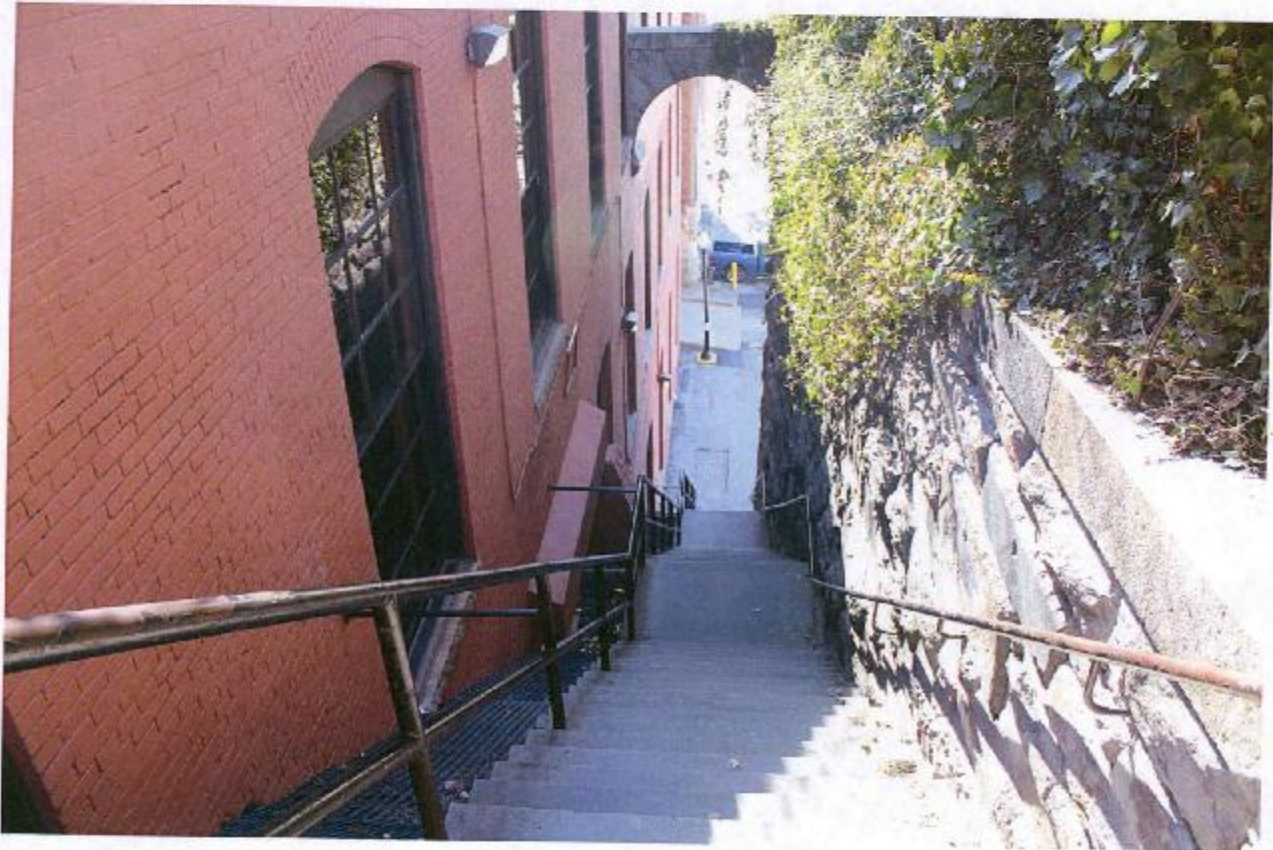
Photo 3 of 19.
Thirty-Sixth Street, NW facing south.



Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

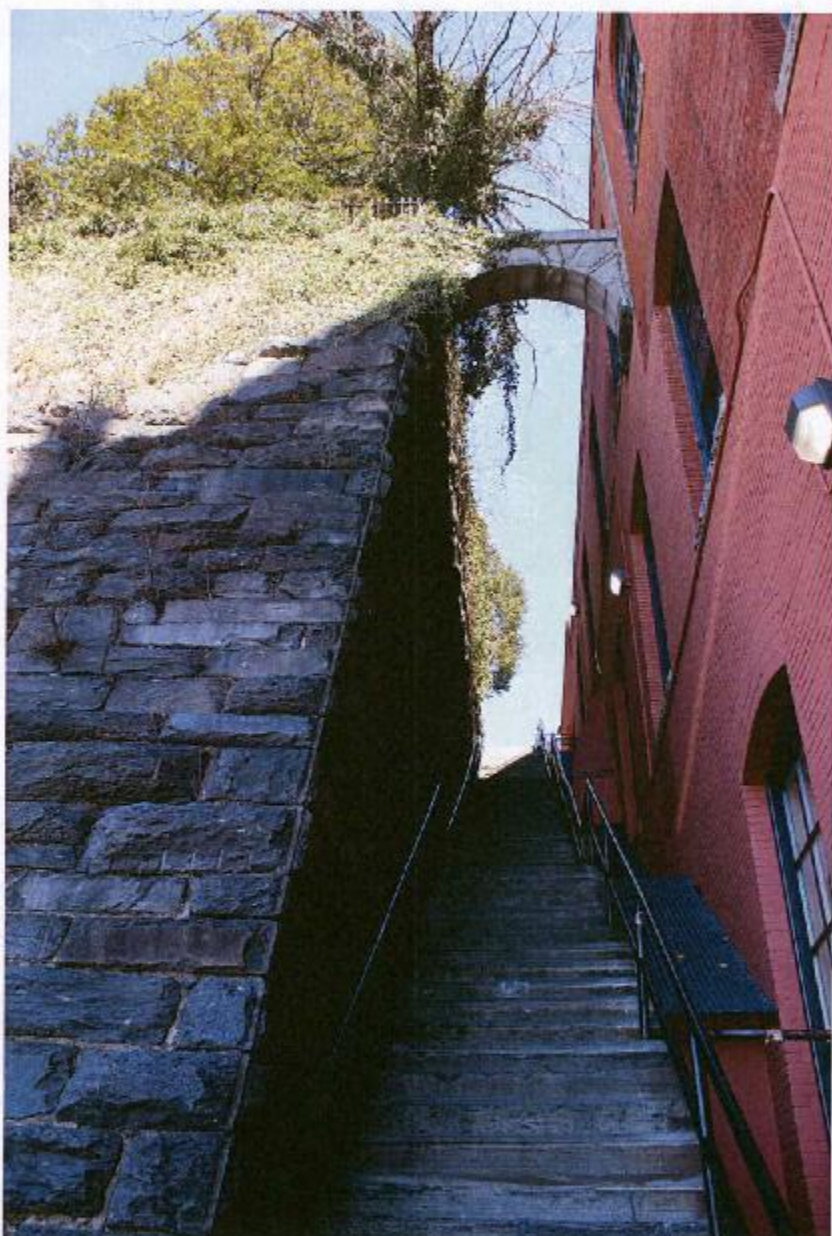
Image 4 of 19.
Exorcist Steps, top of stairway, looking down in a southern direction.



Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Image 5 of 19.
Exorcist Steps, foot of stairway, looking up in a northern direction.



Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Image 6 of 19.
Base of Exorcist Steps, looking northwest.



Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

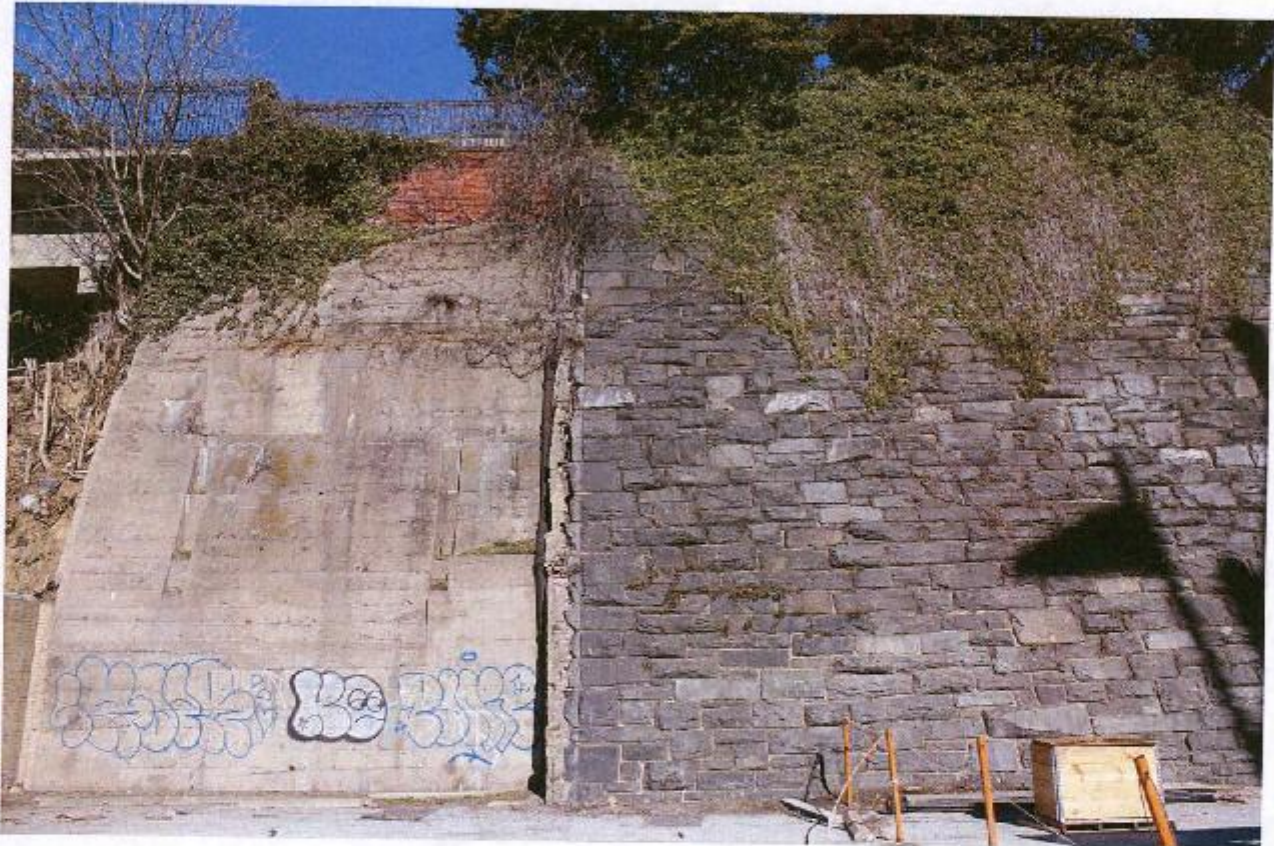
Image 7 of 19.
Stone-faced Retaining Wall, looking northeast.



Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

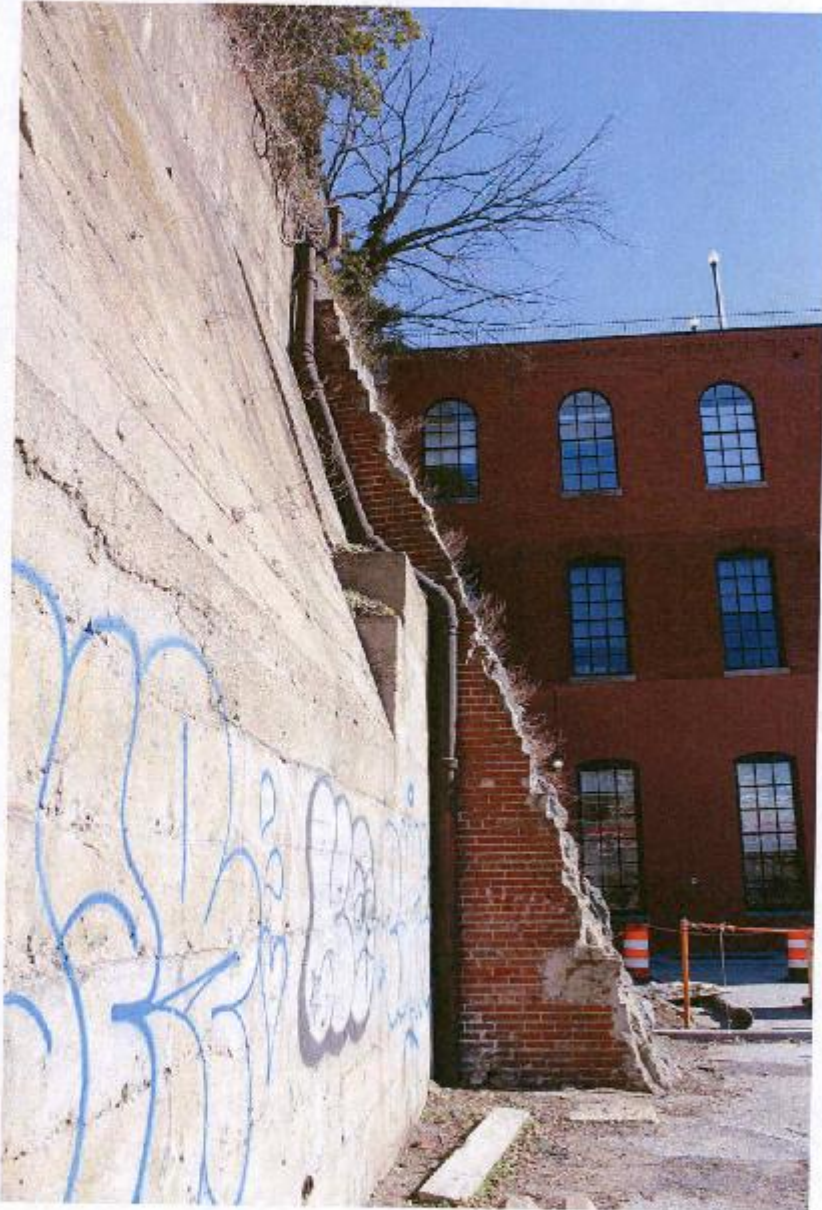
Image 8 of 19.
Stone-faced Retaining Wall and concrete-faced Retaining Wall, looking north.



Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

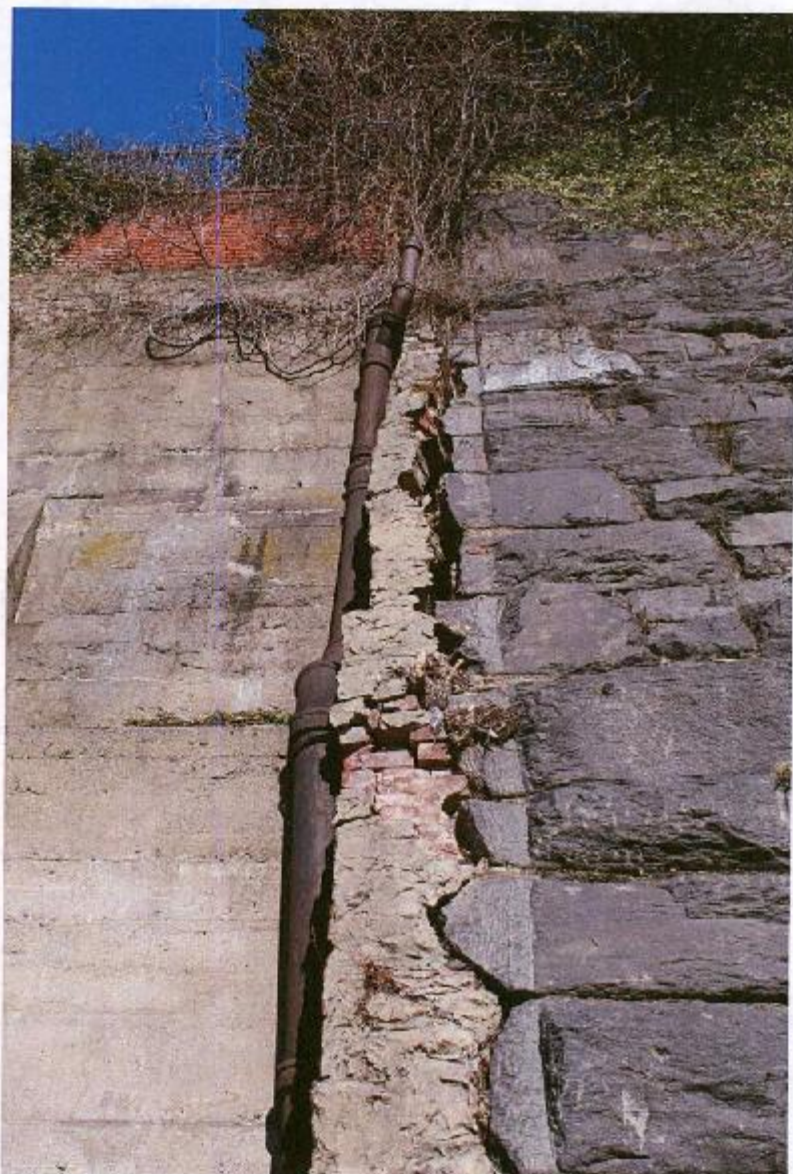
Image 9 of 19.
Concrete-faced Retaining Wall, exposed cant of stone-faced Retaining Wall, looking east.



Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Image 10 of 19.
Connection of two Retaining Walls, looking north.

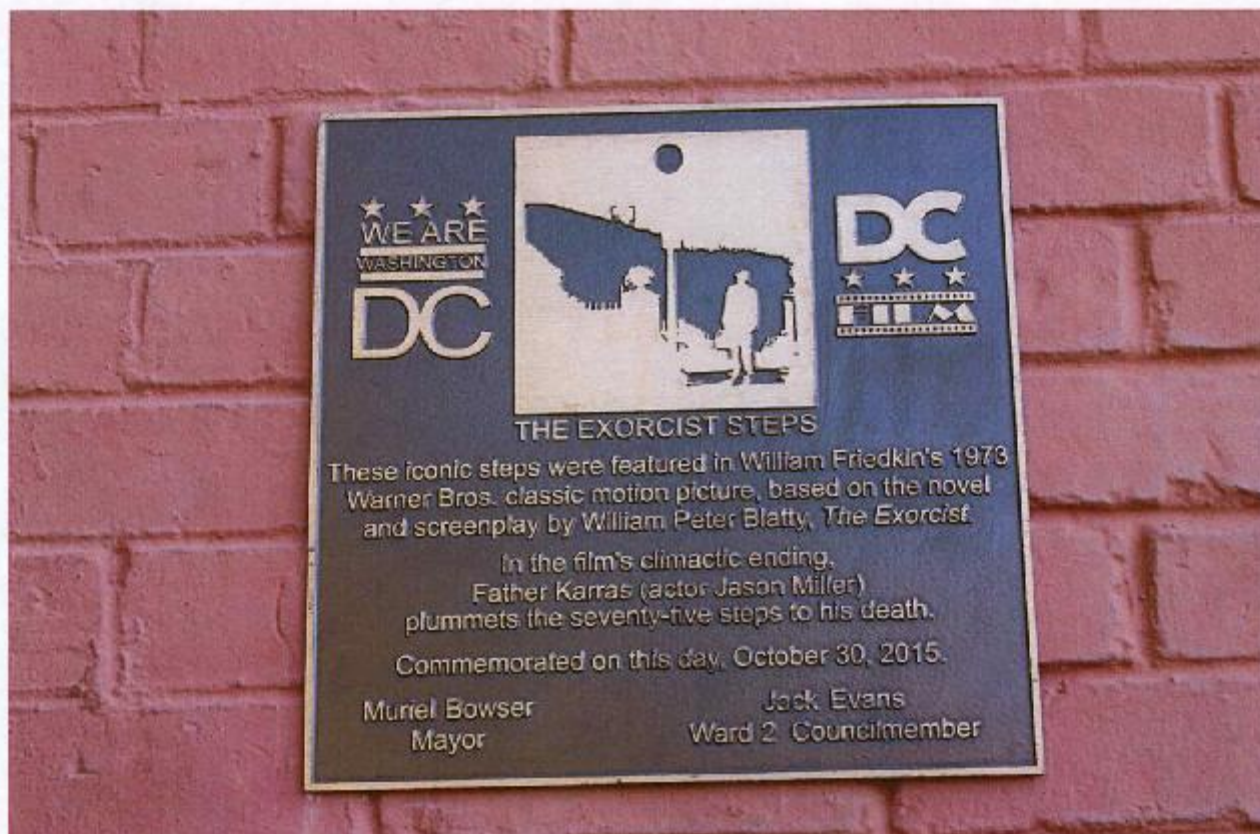


Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Image 11 of 19.

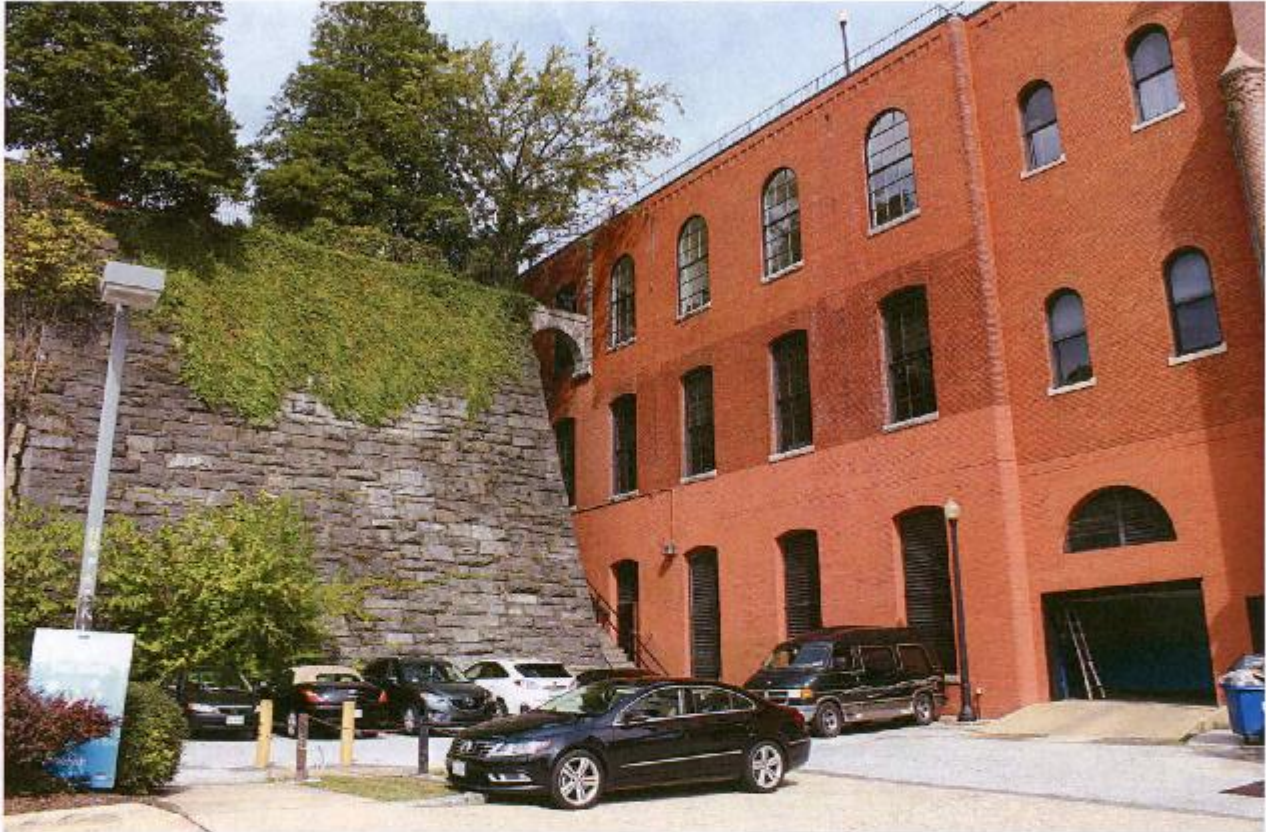
Exorcist Steps commemorative plaque, located on west elevation of Georgetown Car Barn, looking east.



Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Image 12 of 19.
West elevation, looking northeast.



Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

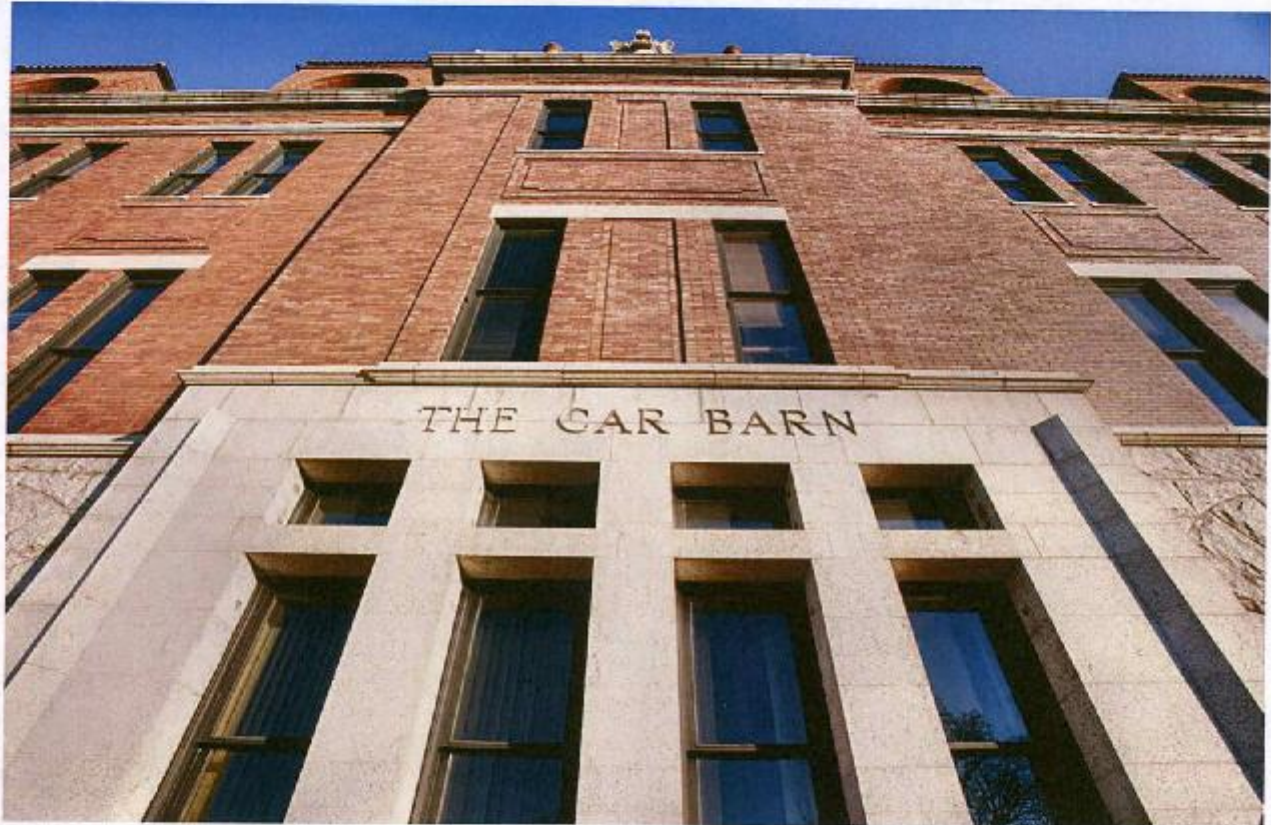
Image 13 of 19.
Round arch openings with contemporary windows, west elevation, looking east.



Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Image 14 of 19.
Central Block, south elevation, looking north.



Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Image 15 of 19.
"Capital Traction" pediment, south elevation.



Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

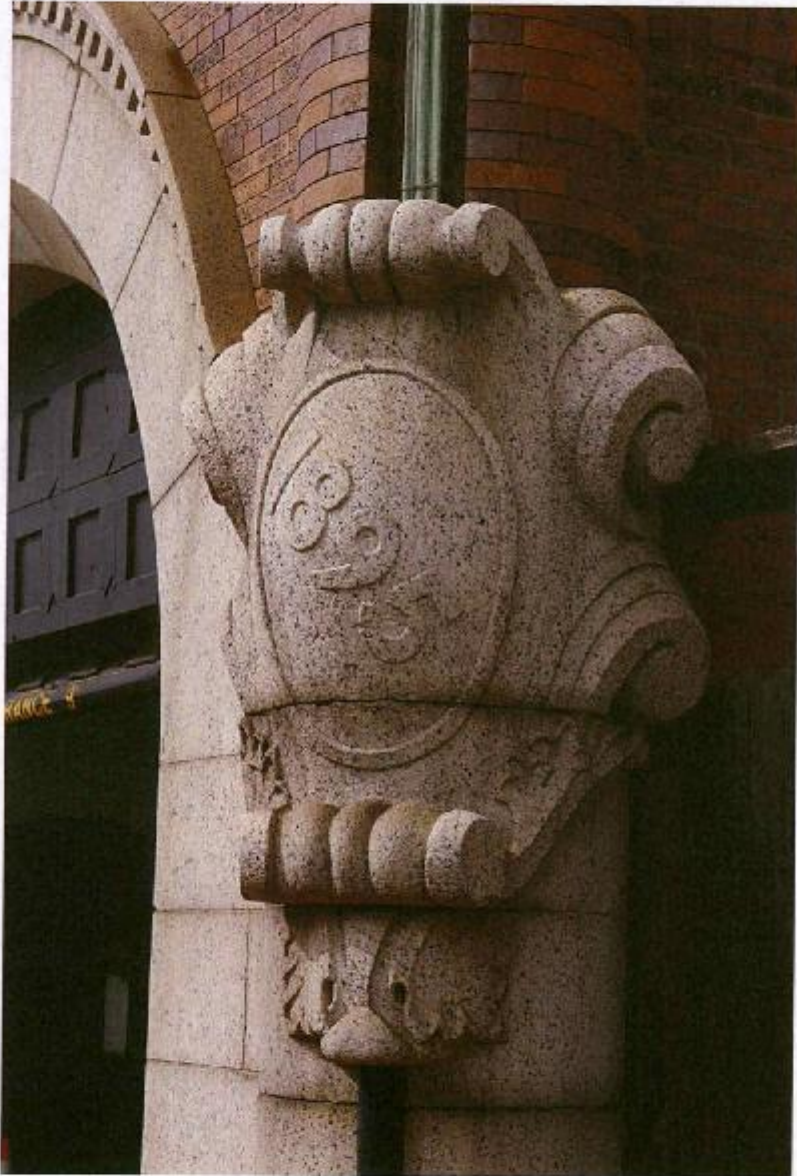
Image 16 of 19.
South elevation, looking northwest.



Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Image 17 of 19.
Corner medallion, southeast corner of building, looking northwest.



Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Image 18 of 19.
Interior. Conference Room, southwest corner of first floor.



Capital Traction Company Union Station
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Image 19 of 19.
Interior. Garage.



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

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