

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Grant Road Historic District
other names _____

2. Location

street & number 4400 and 4500 blocks of Grant Road, N.W. ☐ not for publication
city or town Washington, D.C. ☐ vicinity
state District of Columbia code DC county _____ 001 _____ zip code _____

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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 ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐
See continuation sheet for additional comments).

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments).

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby, certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined eligible for the National
Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ Determined not eligible for the National
Register.
☐ removed from the National Register.
☐ other (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| 13 | 0 | buildings |
| | | sites |
| | | structures |
| | | objects |
| 13 | 0 | Total |

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation/road-related
Commerce/Trade/specialty store
Domestic/Single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation/road-related
Commerce/Trade/specialty store
Domestic/Single dwelling

7. Description**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Vernacular

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Frame

roof Asphalt shingles

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

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Description Summary:

The 4400 and 4500 blocks of Grant Road located in Tenleytown survive as a two-block remnant of a 19th-century country lane that preceded the suburbanization of this section of northwest Washington by several decades. Although other segments of Grant Road still survive east of this two-block area, this section of road, along with the 19th-century houses along it, were an integral part of Tenleytown, and are visible reminders of the area's rural village origins. The road begins on the east side of Wisconsin Avenue, south of Albemarle Street and heads northeasterly, past a group of three of the road's oldest dwellings. Grant Road then crosses over Nebraska Avenue and 39th Street to the longer and more meandering 4500 block, complete with an array of nine frame houses exhibiting a variety of vernacular dwelling forms and styles from the late 19th/early 20th century. The houses are all individually and informally sited along the narrow country lane, placed at varying angles to it and set back various distances from it, reinforcing the road's rural historic character. There are few places in the District of Columbia where such a strong sense of the pre-urban/pre-suburban road system has survived.

The historic district terminates with Grant Road's intersection at Brandywine Street, just before this segment of Grant Road is severed by the wide and diagonal Nebraska Avenue. The historic district consists of the road itself, and 13 contributing resources, including 12 single-family dwellings and one commercial structure all built during the mid- to late 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century.¹ Several infill houses, built in the mid-20th century on subdivided lots along Grant Road, have been excluded from the Grant Road Historic District boundaries.

General Description:

Grant Road begins on the east side of Wisconsin Avenue, just north of Tenley Circle in the Tenleytown area of Washington, D.C. At 33 feet wide, the road is almost half the width of the standard 60-foot wide city street and, although the road is relatively straight at this point, it lacks the sidewalks and street furniture of the typical city street. It is this narrowness and informality that immediately and clearly mark the road as something from a different time and place—indeed an old country lane sandwiched amidst intensely urban fabric. This palpable feeling of “country” is further enhanced by the two-story, 19th-century village store at the corner of Wisconsin Avenue and Grant Road, and by the intact group of three frame rural vernacular dwellings that sit clustered atop a knoll on the north side of the road.

¹ One of the houses, the Christian-Curran House at 3837 Albemarle Street, was likely built in the mid-19th century, but was moved to Grant Road in the 1890s. The group of three houses in the 4400 block may also date to the 1860s. Local legend holds that the house at 4434 Grant Road (the “Tenant House”) was likely built in the 1860s as a tenant house to the nearby 18th-century property known as “The Rest.”

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The two-story store, at **4425 Wisconsin Avenue**, is Tenleytown's oldest surviving commercial building. Built in the 1890s, the two-story part frame (stuccoed) and part stone structure faces Wisconsin Avenue with a long side elevation extending down Grant Road. The building is three bays wide and is covered with a sloped roof. The building's original projecting storefront is no longer intact, offering instead a flat plate glass show window. Although frontally oriented toward the commercial Wisconsin Avenue, the building historically had an entrance facing Grant Road, clearly related to both the travelers passing along the Frederick-Rockville Road and the local residents of Grant Road and Tenleytown.

Across Fort Drive² stands the group of three dwellings in the 4400 block of Grant Road. Local tradition holds that Tenleytown resident Thomas Paxton built all of these dwellings prior to the Civil War, though exact dates of the houses have not been confirmed.³ The first of these, known as the **Burrows House** and located at **4426 Grant Road** (also 3926 Albemarle Street), is a two-story, three-bay, gable-roofed dwelling. The house is characterized by its stonework, including a single-story, three-bay porch supported by stone columns, a stone end chimney and a stone retaining wall, quarried locally and added by local stonemason W. Tyson Burrows who bought the property in the 1880s. The house is set slightly above street grade with its stone retaining wall extending along the front of the property and a small, one-story frame garage fronting Albemarle Street.

The **Parks-Conner House** at **4430 Grant Road**, next door, is a modest, two-story, two-bay frame structure designed in a vernacular Italianate style. The dwelling is characterized by its bracketed wood cornice and its wrap-around porch with turned columns and scroll-sawn knee brackets.

The **Tenant House** at **4434 Grant Road**, is considered to be oldest of the group of three houses, likely having been built as a tenant house to the nearby 18th-century house known as *The Rest*, which is listed in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites. The Tenant House is a two-story, three-bay, center-passage stucco-clad frame structure covered with a gable roof with a central brick chimney. The house has a simple, shed-roof porch that replaced its historic front porch that featured scroll-sawn (gingerbread) detailing.

East of the 4400 block of Grant Road, the 20th-century road network of Albemarle Street, Nebraska Avenue, and 39th Street all converge, crossing over the older Grant Road. Although temporarily interrupted at this three-way intersection, Grant Road resumes itself on the east side

² Fort Drive, intended as a part of a ring road to connect the city's Civil War forts-cum-parks, was constructed in the 1930s, eliminating ten houses on the north and south sides of Grant Road.

³ An 1864 map of the Environs of Washington by the United States Corps of Engineers clearly indicates a group of three houses on the present site of the 4400 block of the road with the designation "T. Paxton" next to them.

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of 39th Street, across the intersection. Here, the historic lane is more protected from the 20th-century street grid, and becomes an even narrower, meandering road that drops and rises according to the natural terrain. The narrow roadway, its meandering path, its lack of sidewalks, its informal and abundant shade trees, and its modest frame dwellings, together provide a palpable expression of a by-gone era.

The **Christian-Curran** house at **3837 Albemarle Street** and located in the apex lot formed by Grant Road, Albemarle Street and 39th Street, is the gateway to this stretch of Grant Road. According to local tradition, this house was built in the mid-19th century at the "old" Naval Observatory and was then moved to Grant Road circa 1890. The vernacular Italianate house is a long, L-shaped frame structure covered with a hipped roof and featuring a two-bay façade fronting the intersection, though heavily obscured by mature trees and bushes. When Albemarle Street was cut through to Wisconsin Avenue in 1931, the property was reduced in size and the house re-oriented on its new lot.

The **Poore House** at **3831 Albemarle Street**, located behind the Christian-Curran House and built in 1893-94, is heavily obscured from Grant Road, as the front of the property is lined with several large and old oak trees. The original 1.73-acre lot was subdivided in the 1950s and a pair of modern brick "infill" residences built to either side of the historic house. Although not in keeping with the rural historic character of the lane and thus excluded from the historic district boundaries, these houses are modestly scaled compared to contemporary dwellings in the larger area, and thus do not compromise the integrity of the district.

Moving eastward along Grant Road from these "infill" houses, the sense of historic country lane increases as the concentration of older houses intensifies. The house at **4537 Grant Road**, built in 1890, is a 2-1/2-story front gable house with an enclosed pediment, giving the vernacular dwelling a distinctly Greek Revival-style appearance. The house is rectangular in plan, and stretches four bays deep. Next to this house is **4543 Grant Road**, or "**The Admiral's House**," so-named for its long-time owner and occupant, Admiral Hunter, who purchased the house in 1946 and lived there into the 1990s. The house was originally built circa 1890, probably as a small two-story, two-bay L-shaped structure (similar to others on Grant Road), but later enlarged to reflect its current boxy, Colonial Revival-style aesthetic.

Framing a notable bend in the road are two, two-story, two-bay frame houses at **4547 Grant Road** and **4555 Grant Road**, both of which were built circa 1908. The house at 4547 Grant Road provides an intact example of a folk Victorian worker's cottage, featuring an original front porch of turned columns and scroll-sawn knee brackets and a vernacular Gothic cross gable with a ridge pole. The house at 4555 is a two-bay, flat-fronted Italianate-style frame example

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featuring a contemporary entry porch, designed to connect the front yard to the rear wing, remodeled to accommodate the primary entrance to the house.

One more two-story, two-bay flat-fronted Italianate-style house, built in 1890, stands at **4561 Grant Road**, similarly with its original turned porch posts and bracketed wood cornice. The next two houses at **4565 Grant Road** and **3812 Brandywine Street**, are somewhat larger, two-story, three-bay, central-passage houses. The house at 3812 Brandywine Street, built in 1890, historically occupied a corner lot formed by Grant Road and Nourse Lane, the first road to branch off of Grant Road from its beginning at present-day Wisconsin Avenue (the alley behind Brandywine Street between 37th and 38th is a remnant of this Nourse Lane). After Brandywine Street was cut through, this house was rotated on its lot to front directly on Brandywine Street. Despite its re-orientation, the house clearly relates to those of Grant Road and is visibly part of its rural origins and thus forms the edge of the historic district.

Grant Road crosses Brandywine Street and culminates in a cul-de-sac before it intersects with Nebraska Avenue. Although another Italianate-style dwelling survives on this half-block stretch of road, a mid-20th-century brick dwelling built to face Brandywine Street and constructed on the site of an historic corner store compromises the architectural integrity and the historic feeling and associations of the road. The district boundaries have thus been drawn to terminate at Brandywine Street, capturing the corner house at 3812 Brandywine and both sides of Grant Road.

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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 pattern of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property 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)

Property is:

- ☐ **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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

Area of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture; Military; Transportation

Period of Significance

Circa 1860-1931

Significant Dates

1861-65

1880s-90s

1931

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Paxton, Thomas; Burrows, Tyson

9. Major Bibliographical References**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

Previous documentation on files (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

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

D.C. Historic Preservation Office

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Summary Statement of Significance:

The Grant Road Historic District consists of a two-block remnant of a major east-west connector road that historically led from Tenleytown (formerly Tenallytown), on the important Frederick Road (Wisconsin Avenue), east to the rural Broad Branch Road and to the small farmsteads in the larger Rock Creek area. The two-block historic district includes the road itself—an intact stretch of country lane that preceded and survived the platting of this section of northwest Washington—as well as 13 contributing resources, all dating to between the mid-19th century and 1909.

The Grant Road Historic District is significant as a surviving enclave of modest rural vernacular dwelling forms and the sole cohesive collection of buildings that historically formed an integral part of the larger village of Tenleytown. In 1791, Tenleytown, which began in the late 18th century as a small stagecoach stop along the Frederick/Rockville Road connecting the port at Georgetown to the rural Maryland countryside, was included within the boundaries of the new, Federal District of Columbia. Despite its inclusion in the District, Tenleytown continued to evolve and exist as a small and independent rural village until the second decade of the 20th century.

During the Civil War, Grant Road (so-named during the war) gained significance as a road as a section of it became part of the military road built to link the defenses of Washington. Fort Reno, built in 1861 at Tenleytown, was immediately adjacent to this section of Grant Road. However, the growth of Grant Road as part of Tenleytown did not occur until after the Civil War as the former connector road emerged as a tightly knit residential enclave inhabited by active members of the Tenleytown community.

During the 1880s and 1890s, Grant Road became one of the most densely developed streets in Tenleytown and an integral part of the village community. Tenleytown and Grant Road enjoyed this quiet village existence for several decades. However, during the mid-20th-century, as Washington expanded its residential neighborhoods to accommodate a tremendous increase in the city's population, the small village of Tenleytown became absorbed into the larger and burgeoning northwest quadrant of Washington. Despite the laying of roads and wholesale elimination of 19th-century buildings in Tenleytown (particularly in the residential "Reno" subdivision) during this period, this segment of Grant Road, though not unscathed, survived. As such, Grant Road, including its narrow and meandering path and the rural vernacular buildings along it, provides a visible reminder of the rural origins of this part of northwest Washington and a clear and palpable expression of a by-gone era.

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The Grant Road Historic District is significant under Criterion A of the National Register of Historic Places for the following reasons:

Grant Road represents a rare remnant of the pre-Civil War country roads that crisscrossed rural Washington County in the District of Columbia. It retains sufficient characteristics of setting to convey the feeling of a rural road, namely its meandering character, grade changes, narrowness and its support of mid-to late 19th century vernacular building forms. Grant Road represents the vanished rural heritage of Washington, D.C. and provides tangible visible evidence of the development of the former Washington County from agrarian hinterland to suburban neighborhood.

The Grant Road Historic District meets Criterion C of the National Register of Historic Places for the following reasons:

The existing two-block section of rural road contains an intact and cohesive grouping of buildings that represent typical 19th-century rural settlement patterns. The residences are well-preserved examples of folk housing, including I-house forms, Italianate-style "boxes," and various simple front- and side-gabled forms. The single commercial building at Grant Road and Wisconsin Avenue that served as the historic post office and general store building survives as the oldest commercial building in Tenleytown. Together, the road and its buildings provide a visible contrast to the subsequent and surrounding 20th-century suburban development of Tenleytown and serve as a physical reminder of the area's rural past.

The period of significance for the Grant Road Historic District extends from the mid-19th century, when the first houses were built there, to 1931 when Nebraska Avenue was cut through, traversing Grant Road and causing the elimination and re-orientation of a number of its dwellings.

Resource History and Historic Context:

Pre-Civil War Evidence of Grant Road:

The old country lane named Grant Road was so designated sometime between 1867 and 1870. Prior to that, the road was referred to as "New Cut Road," or the "Road from Turnpike to Broad

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Branch” and is known to have existed at least by 1859⁴, providing access from the strategic crossroads community of Tenleytown to rural areas east of that concentrated settlement. The road began at present-day Wisconsin Avenue just south of the principal intersection of roads at Tenleytown, then meandered east across Broad Branch and beyond to where it connected at Rock Creek to the Milkhouse (Rock Creek) Ford Road.

The village of Tenleytown began in the late 1700s with the establishment of a tavern—John Tennally’s Tavern—at the juncture of the two long-established routes of present-day Wisconsin Avenue and River Road. Wisconsin Avenue, historically referred to variously as Frederick Road, Georgetown-Frederick Road, the Georgetown-Tenleytown Road, the Rockville Road, and the Rockville-Frederick Road, pre-dated European settlement of the area, and historically provided access between the rural Maryland countryside and the port at Georgetown. In 1797, a stagecoach operated weekly service over the well-traveled road, and in 1805, it became an official toll road, being macadamized between 1817 and 1823. River Road, cut and laid in the 1780s, led from Georgetown to Great Falls and beyond to the mouth of the Monocacy River. Tennally’s Tavern, likely the first business establishment above Georgetown and surrounded by open farmland, soon grew into a small, but thriving farming community that included a church, school, several business establishments, and a collection of houses.

The country lane later called Grant Road emerged as a connector road that provided access from Tenleytown to rural areas east of the crossroads community. The road, clearly shown on the Topographical Map of the District of Columbia by A. Boschke (published 1861) but still undesignated by name, intersects the east side of the “Rockville Road,” (Wisconsin Avenue) just south of the cluster of buildings forming the village of Tenleytown. The road appears as a meandering lane, cutting easterly across large tracts of farmland and forests. An 1864 map of the Environs of Washington by the United States Corps of Engineers, shows several buildings along the first segment of Grant Road as it diverges from the Rockville Road. The buildings shown on the map with the name T. Paxton next to them, are likely the present buildings still standing in the 4400 block of Grant Road. The 1870s District of Columbia City Directories lists Thomas Paxton, farmer, as a resident of Tenleytown.

⁴ There is no firm evidence as to the date of creation of Grant Road. The road is clearly shown on the Topographical Map of the District of Columbia, surveyed by A. Boschke in the years 1856, '57, '58, and '59, and published in 1861. It is not shown on the 1853-54 Edmund French Map of the Located Route of the Metropolitan Rail Road and the Adjacent Country comprising the District of Columbia and the Counties of Montgomery, Frederick, and Washington. However, it is quite possible that the road originated as an Indian path, as the Rock Creek valley was crisscrossed with such paths; or that it emerged in the 18th or early 19th century as a path between farms in the area and mills in the Rock Creek Valley. Clearly, by the mid-19th century, Grant Road existed as a “connector” road between the Rockville or Frederick Road and the Rock Creek valley.

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The Civil War and the "new military road":

During the Civil War and the construction of Fort Pennsylvania (later named Fort Reno) at Tenleytown, the unnamed Grant Road gained prominence. In 1861, following the Union defeat at Bull Run, the need for a defensive system around Washington became apparent, and the construction of a series of 26 forts and supporting artillery batteries to block all approaches to the city began. Another 29 forts and eight batteries were eventually constructed in northern Virginia to defend the capital.⁵ The highest point in Washington, located just above the convergence of the Rockville, River, and Brookville Roads at Tenleytown, was selected as the site of one of the forts. Built by the 119th Pennsylvania Volunteers, Fort Pennsylvania was one of the first of the 26 forts constructed, being completed by September 1861. The earthwork fortifications contained a large L-shaped magazine, and eventually became the largest fort protecting the capital, with the heaviest artillery and largest garrison.⁶ In 1863, the fort was renamed Fort Reno following the death of Union Major General Jesse Lee Reno at the Battle of South Mountain.

At the same time that the rural landscape was being cleared for the construction of forts, a military road was laid to link the forts north of the city. This military road passed just south of Fort Pennsylvania. An 1864 map by Albert Boschke, titled Partial Topographic Map of Washington, D.C., Arlington County, and Alexandria shows the ring of military fortifications and the roads connecting them, and clearly indicates that the still-unnamed Grant Road became part of this ring road linking the forts. Oral tradition holds that the road was likely named Grant Road for Ulysses S. Grant, who after becoming commander of the Army of the Potomac personally inspected the defenses of Washington.⁷ Indeed, all pre-Civil War-era maps showing this section of Washington and the road itself, leave it unnamed. On the 1867 "Map of the Roads in Washington County," by B.D. Carpenter, surveyor for Washington County, Grant Road is designated as "Road from Turnpike to Broad Branch." The first known recordation of the name "Grant Road" appears on the 1870 "Map of the Roads in Washington County," also by B.D. Carpenter.⁸ This designation continues with all subsequent maps of the area.

During the Civil War, the military forts, camps and hospitals in Washington became havens for freedmen and escaped slaves ("contrabands") looking for food and housing. In return for this

⁵ Judith Beck Helm, *Tenleytown, D.C.: Country Village into City Neighborhood, Washington, D.C.*: Tenally Press, 1981. p. 45.

⁶ Helm, p. 48.

⁷ Local legend also holds that the naming of the road may have reflected the road's use as a right-of-way to move military equipment and troops from fort to fort. Helm, p. 40.

⁸ These two maps, both by B.D. Carpenter and both showing area roads, fairly definitively date the naming of Grant Road to between 1867 and 1870.

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protection, the “contrabands” would serve the soldiers in a variety of ways such as laborers, cooks, blacksmiths, and horse groomsmen. Like many of the forts, Fort Reno attracted a large settlement of African Americans that endured after the War. When the U.S. Army eventually returned the land on which Fort Reno had been constructed to its previous owner, many freed blacks were already well established there. In 1869, heirs of the original owner sold the land to two real estate speculators, who platted the land into a residential subdivision that they named Reno. Many of the black residents living there were able to purchase the lots on which they had already erected houses, encouraging the progressive development of Reno as a predominantly African-American community. In the decades that followed, Reno (still commonly called Fort Reno) evolved into an established working-class black community, replete with its own churches and schools, that was adjacent to, but distinct from, the village of Tenleytown.

Post Civil War Growth:

After the Civil War, Tenleytown resumed its rural village existence.⁹ The remote and outlying area, though war-torn and depleted of nutrients, was devoted to the cultivation of crops and the grazing of cattle. Period trade magazines touted the cheap land to attract the small-scale and immigrant farmer to the region. Germans flocked to Tenleytown, operating dairies and opening businesses as butchers, tailors, and shoemakers.¹⁰ As the economy grew, more people came, including Irish and Italian immigrants, who built houses, stores and businesses.

By the last decade of the 19th century, Tenleytown was a thriving working-class community composed of farmers, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, carpenters, painters, construction laborers, skilled tradesmen, merchants, meat and poultry men and grocers. The residents, most of whom also worked in Tenleytown, as opposed to downtown D.C., built modest two-story frame houses that were clustered primarily along the east side of present-day Wisconsin Avenue, Belt Road, and the north and south sides of Grant Road. While the majority of these 19th-century buildings no longer survive, those of Grant Road do.

The Grant Road Buildings:

In the decades following the Civil War, Grant Road evolved from being a connector road that led to and from the early 19th-century village at Tenleytown to an integral part of the village itself. In 1864, when Congress provided Washington County children with one- or two-room frame school buildings, two of these were established on Grant Road. The white children’s school, built near the present Murch School, was a two-room frame building located on the north side of

⁹ Although Tenleytown remained a rural village, the subdivision and growth of Fort Reno increased the population in the area substantially.

¹⁰ Helm, p. 71-72.

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Grant Road, high on a hill. Another school building, located on Grant Road, near Broad Branch, accommodated all of the African-American children living east of Wisconsin Avenue, and in particular, those living in the freedmen's community at Fort Reno. The school continued its existence until 1903.¹¹ Grant Road was also the site of extensive stables built near the present-day intersection of 38th and Albemarle Streets, and used to shelter horses and mules needed for road construction, site re-grading and general conveyance.¹² A field north of the stables provided pastureland for the horses, as well as for cows.

During the 1880s, the still rural Grant Road began to be more heavily developed with modest-sized, single-family dwellings. By 1894, as indicated by the G.M. Hopkins Map, a collection of dwellings on varied-sized lots extended along Grant Road from its intersection with present-day Wisconsin Avenue to the present-day dead-end of this section of Grant Road at Brandywine Street. The two oldest surviving houses are considered to be "The Tenant House" at 4434 Grant Road located across Fort Drive in the first block of Grant Road off Wisconsin Avenue, and the "Christian-Curran House now designated as 3837 Albemarle Street and located at the intersection of Grant Road and Albemarle Street. The "Tenant House" a three-bay, side-gable frame (stuccoed) house possibly built in the mid-19th century may have been constructed as a tenant house for "The Rest," a nearby circa 1800 plantation house still standing and listed in the District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Sites.¹³ The two-story, two-bay, frame "Christian-Curran House" was also likely built in the mid-19th century, but moved from its original location on the grounds at the Naval Observatory to Grant Road around 1890.¹⁴

By 1894, as depicted on the G.M. Hopkins Map, more than 30 dwellings stood along this two-block stretch of Grant Road, making it one of the most densely developed streets in the village. An 1899 article in the *Evening Star* describes Grant Road as the "thumb" of Tenallytown's hand, with "twisting and turning knuckles, grabbed onto by more than its share of houses."¹⁵ In the first decade of the 20th century two more dwellings were constructed.

Of these 30-plus original Grant Road buildings within this two-block stretch, 13 survive. Generally, the surviving houses are modest two-story frame structures reflecting a variety of 19th-century folk building forms and details. There are several two-story, two-bay frame dwellings, some with sloped roofs and bracketed cornices, others with front-gable roof forms,

¹¹ Helm, p. 93-94.

¹² Dennee, Tim, "Grant Road Historic District (proposed), Historic Preservation Review Board," February, 2002.

¹³ "Grant Road in Tenleytown Northwest Washington: A Historic District," Report prepared in 2002 by the residents of Grant Road in support of the application for historic district designation.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

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and almost all with single-story front porches. Similarly, there are several two-story, three-bay "I-house" forms with gable roofs and center-passage plans.

Several residents of Grant Road built more than one house along the road. Local resident Thomas Paxton is said to have built three Grant Road houses, all located in the first block (4400 block) of Grant Road off of Wisconsin Avenue. The westernmost of these houses incorporates stone quarried from the Tenleytown quarry and worked by local stonemason W. Tyson Burrows. Andrew L. Payne, who raised poultry on his Grant Road property, is also known to have built several houses on the road, including the frame I-house at 4565 Grant Road, built in the 1880s, and two smaller, two-bay frame houses at 4561 and 4555 Grant Road, erected in 1890 and 1908, respectively.

A single commercial building, constructed in the 1880s, is located at the intersection of Grant Road and Wisconsin Avenue. This frame store, which faces Wisconsin Avenue, historically had two entrances—one on Wisconsin Avenue and the other on Grant Road. Built by John J. O'Day and originally known as O'Day's General Store, the building also served as the Tenleytown Post Office, with Mr. O'Day acting as postmaster. The building later became a pharmacy, restaurant and dry cleaners. During the 1930s, after the pharmacy gained a soda fountain, the building became a popular meeting place. It survives today as the oldest commercial building in Tenleytown.¹⁶

The owners, builders and residents of Grant Road were active members of the village and provide a microcosm of the larger Tenleytown community. For the most part, they were farmers, butchers, marketmen, storekeepers, stonemasons, laborers, carpenters, policemen, streetcar motormen, and other working-class types who both lived and worked in Tenleytown. Up until the 1920s, Tenleytown remained a tight-knit rural village. As president, Theodore Roosevelt often took evening horseback rides, following Grant Road from the White House into and through Rock Creek Park to this rural enclave within the city.¹⁷

20th Century Growth of Tenleytown and its Effect on Grant Road:

From the beginning, the village of Tenleytown clearly benefited from being a rest stop on the Washington-to-Rockville route. Travelers coming from and going to the port of Georgetown stopped at Tenleytown, bringing business to the crossroads community and encouraging its growth as a post office and center of the larger agricultural community. The establishment of the

¹⁶ Helm, p. 81.

¹⁷ According to oral histories, President Roosevelt would stop to greet the residents of 4426 Grant Road, at least twice boosting the Burrows girls onto his horse and taking them for rides. See "Grant Road in Tenleytown in Northwest Washington: An Historic District," Report prepared in 2002 by the residents of Grant Road in support of the application for historic district designation.

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Georgetown and Tennallytown Railway Company in the late 1880s, and the company's construction of the electric streetcar line in 1890 from Georgetown through Tenleytown to the District line, enhanced the accessibility and value of Tenleytown and its surrounding properties. With the arrival of the streetcar, development in Tenleytown accelerated. Wisconsin Avenue, Grant Road, Belt Road, and streets in Fort Reno were densely developed with residences and commercial buildings. Between 1892 and 1897, Tenleytown increased its population from 731 to 1,127. At the turn of the century, Tenleytown boasted four grocers, a butcher shop, a dry goods store, a machine shop, a public scale to weigh farm produce, a restaurant, a commercial yard, two attorneys, three doctors, a pharmacist, a firehouse, several public schools, and six churches.

As post World War I Washington expanded, Tenleytown quickly began to lose its identity as a working-class village distinct from Washington. The development of upper-middle-class suburban subdivisions such as Chevy Chase, Cleveland Park, University Park, Friendship Heights, and Armesleigh Park began to transform the nature of development in the area. In 1918 in an attempt to capitalize on this trend, local developers Harry Kite and Samuel Kite, Jr. led the push for the suburbanization of the Tenleytown area. The Kites purchased acres of land east of Wisconsin Avenue and subdivided it as a residential suburb intended for middle-class, single-family dwellings.

As these residential subdivisions were platted, new streets were cut and laid, following the 1898 Permanent Highway Plan that had established the layout of streets in the areas beyond Washington City and Georgetown.¹⁸ In 1919, prompted by the need for automobile lanes in addition to the two streetcar tracks, Wisconsin Avenue was widened and repaved. In the 1920s, many new streets following the Permanent Plan were cut through, and houses built to attract the middle-class professional were erected along them. Albemarle Street, first built from Connecticut Avenue west to Reno Road, was, in 1931, extended further west to Wisconsin Avenue, crossing over Grant Road. As a result, several houses facing Grant Road were demolished (3900-3904 Grant Road), while two others were moved (the now-demolished Chappell house was moved a few feet to the north, while the Christian-Curran House was shifted slightly on its lot). The cutting of Albemarle Street also resulted in the elimination of the rear yards of the three houses in the 4400 block of Grant Road.

Shortly thereafter, the situation was exacerbated by the opening of 39th Street to Albemarle Street and the cutting and laying of the diagonal Nebraska Avenue. Nebraska Avenue was laid to cross Wisconsin Avenue at Tenley Circle, then continued in a straight northeasterly direction across

¹⁸ In 1895, Congress officially ended the legal distinction between Georgetown, Washington City and Washington County.

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Grant Road at Albemarle Street. Several houses were demolished to accommodate the new avenue. In 1937, C. Harold Gray remarked in writing:

“Tenleytown was the nucleus of an extensive country road net which has since largely disappeared...In extending Washington’s straight streets through the community, many of the buildings were removed and its appearance changed almost beyond recognition.”¹⁹

The cutting through of Nebraska Avenue connected Tenleytown more directly via automobile to Chevy Chase and Connecticut Avenue, while Tenley Circle, paved in 1936, became a busy bus and streetcar connection. As a transportation hub, Tenleytown began to attract businesses and shoppers from outside the immediate neighborhood. Chain stores, such as Sears and Roebuck and Co., Giant Food Shopping Center, Kresge’s and Peoples Drugstore all moved into the area, replacing older 19th century building stock.²⁰

In addition to the changing transportation patterns and residential growth, four seminal government-induced developments of the 1920s and 30s contributed to the demise of the rural character of Tenleytown:²¹ 1) The Water Department built a new, larger reservoir and water tower at Fort Reno to meet the needs for increased water; 2) the Board of Education built a new junior high (Deal Junior High) and high school (Wilson Senior High) at Tenleytown; 3) Congress passed a bill to allow the National Capital Parks to acquire the entire Fort Reno area and to develop a landscaped public park; and 4) the National Capital Park and Planning Commission designed a scenic Fort Drive to connect the city’s Civil War forts.

To fulfill these goals, the government exercised its right of eminent domain, eventually acquiring the majority of the land forming the residential subdivision of Fort Reno and eliminating all of the streets and buildings within it. Residents of Fort Reno, mainly African Americans who had lived there since the Civil War, were forced off their land and obliged to seek housing elsewhere. Similarly, in the government’s effort to construct the scenic Fort Drive (which never fully materialized), ten houses on Grant Road were razed.²²

The citizens associations representing the new, middle-class residents, applauded these “improvements.” The new residents were eager to rid the area of the unsightly old buildings, particularly those at Fort Reno, but also those on Grant Road, and to increase park facilities and

¹⁹ *The Washington Post*, May 30, 1937.

²⁰ Helm, p. 219-220.

²¹ Helm, p. 197.

²² The Grant Road houses demolished for Fort Drive are numbered on the 1927 Sanborn Map as 3937-3935, 4007 on the north side of the road, and 3916-3922 on the south side.

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school facilities for their children, all of which would also raise the property values of their increasingly affluent neighborhood.²³ Despite these concerted efforts, the meandering Grant Road and 13 of its 19th-century buildings in the 4400 and 4500 blocks survived into the mid-20th century.

Many of the residents of Grant Road who endured the mid-20th century changes around them were the children of the original owners and builders. Miss Ada Poore, known as the Saint of Tenleytown for her charity and service, lived in the house at 4521 Grant Road (3831 Albemarle Street) built by her father, William F. Poore, in 1893-94. Mrs. Florence B. Heath, daughter of William Tyson Burrows, a stonemason who worked on a number of Grant Road houses, lived at 4426 Grant Road (3926 Albemarle Street) from her birth until her death in the mid-1970s. The house at 4430 Grant Road is still owned and occupied by descendants of the original builder.²⁴

Once Nebraska Avenue was constructed, the subdivision of land into building lots was quick to follow. In the 1940s, on these deep lots which extend from Nebraska Avenue south to Grant Road, a collection of middle-class brick residences were constructed to face the avenue, leaving the rear of the dwellings open to Grant Road. Despite the suburbanization of the immediate vicinity, the depth of the Nebraska Avenue lots has helped Grant Road retain its rural character.

In the 1950s and 60s, the larger lots of Grant Road were re-subdivided and built upon with infill houses. Though appropriately scaled for the road, the houses do not contribute stylistically to the rural character of Grant Road and have not been included in the historic district boundaries.

In 1999, despite local efforts to stop the demolition, a developer razed the John Chappell House located on the northwest side of the intersection of Grant Road and Albemarle Street for new construction. Constructed in 1890 for Dr. John W. Chappell, it was a large, three-bay frame building covered with a hipped roof and featuring a generous front porch and expansive lawns and gardens. The dwelling/doctor's office stood as one of the most distinguished buildings of Grant Road and was one of the most visible reminders of the rural heritage of this part of northwest Washington.

²³ Helm, p. 201.

²⁴ "Grant Road in Tenleytown Northwest Washington: An Historic District" Report prepared in 2002 by the residents of Grant Road in support of the application for historic district designation.

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Following the demolition of the Chappell house, the residents of the 13 historic dwellings of Grant Road banded together to initiate the historic district designation of the intact, two-block stretch of Grant Road from Wisconsin Avenue to Brandywine Street. In February 2002, the D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board designated the segment of Grant Road between Wisconsin Avenue and Brandywine Street, including the street and its buildings, to the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites as the Grant Road Historic District. At the same time, the D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board determined the Grant Road Historic District eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

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Major Bibliographical References:

"Footsteps: Historical Walking Tours of Chevy Chase, Cleveland Park, Tenleytown, Friendship," 1976.

"Grant Road in Tenleytown Northwest Washington: An Historic District," Report prepared by the residents of Grant Road in support of the application for historic district designation, 2002.

Helm, Judith Beck. Tenleytown, D.C.: Country Village into City Neighborhood, Washington, D.C.: Tenally Press, 1981, revised and republished, 2000.

Hopkins, G.M. *Atlas of Washington*, Philadelphia, 1878, 1887, 1894.

"A Real Little Thrums, Tenallytown Full of Quaint Gossip and Story," p. 20, *Washington Star*, February 12, 1899.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Maps, 1927.

Simmons, George. "Roadside Sketches: Up Near Tenleytown," *Washington Star*, August 8, 1891.

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.5 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

| | | | | | | | |
|---|------|-------------|---------------|---|------|-------------|---------------|
| 1 | 1 8 | 3 1 9 8 0 6 | 4 3 1 2 9 7 9 | 3 | 1 8 | 3 2 0 1 5 6 | 4 3 1 3 2 1 3 |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing | | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| 2 | 1 8 | 3 2 0 1 3 6 | 4 3 1 3 2 1 8 | 4 | 1 8 | 3 1 9 8 1 1 | 4 3 1 2 9 6 4 |

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kim Prothro Williams, Architectural Historian
Organization D.C. Historic Preservation Office date November 2003
street & number 801 North Capitol Street telephone 202 442-8800
city or town Washington state District of Columbia zip code 20002

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- X A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
X A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

- X Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO)

Name _____
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction 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. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Verbal Boundary Description:

Beginning at a point at the northwest corner of the building at 4425 Wisconsin Avenue, then continuing northeasterly the length of the building to the rear of the lot line of lot 818, Square 1775, then heading south to the north side of Grant Road, then continuing northeasterly along the northern edge of Grant Road, across Fort Drive to the building at 4426 Grant Road, then heading northwesterly along the northwest lot line of 4426 Grant Road, to the intersection of Albemarle Street, then heading due east along the south side of Albemarle Street and along the rear lot lines of 4426, 4430 and 4434 Grant Road, to the intersection of Nebraska Avenue, then heading northeasterly along the trajectory of what was historically Grant Road to the continuation of Grant Road on the eastern side of the intersection of Albemarle Street, Nebraska Avenue and 39th Street, then continuing in a meandering, northeasterly direction along the north side of Grant Road to its intersection with Brandywine Street, then heading due east along the south side of Brandywine Street to the east side lot line of 3812 Brandywine Street, and the east rear lot lines of 4565, 4561 and 4555 Grant Road, then returning in a northwesterly direction to exclude the lot designated 4551 Grant Road, and continuing along the front lot line of said building to its shared lot line with 4547 Grant Road, then returning in an easterly direction to the rear lot of 4547 Grant Road and continuing southerly to the southeast corner of the lot line for 4543 Grant Road, then heading westerly to Grant Road, then following the south side of Grant Road to the corner of the lot holding 4537 Grant Road and returning easterly and then southerly to include that entire lot, then back to Grant Road to exclude the two lots with infill buildings at 4515-4529 Grant Road, then at the edge of this lot, easterly following a pipestem to include that lot now designated 3831 Albemarle Street and including a dwelling that originally faced Grant Road, then back to the south side of Grant Road, excluding the lots designated 3841 and 3835 Albemarle Street then to the irregular apex lot formed by Grant Road, Albemarle Street, Nebraska Avenue and 39th Street, including all such lot, designated as 3837 Albemarle Street and historically having a Grant Road address, then continuing southwesterly along the south side of the trajectory of Grant Road all the way to its intersection with Wisconsin Avenue, then northerly along Wisconsin Avenue, including the front lot width of 4425 Wisconsin Avenue and back to the point in the beginning.

Boundary Justification:

The proposed boundary includes all of that section of Grant Road lying between Wisconsin Avenue and Brandywine Street, including the road and its thirteen contributing houses, which together retain the rural historic character of the early road. All of the lots within the boundaries

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include buildings that were built during the period of significance for the historic district (circa 1860 to 1931), and exclude those built after the period of significance. +

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LIST OF CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS

Contributing Buildings:

4425 Wisconsin Avenue
4426 Grant Road
4430 Grant Road
4434 Grant Road
3837 Albemarle Street
3831 Albemarle Street
4537 Grant Road
4543 Grant Road
4547 Grant Road
4555 Grant Road
4561 Grant Road
4565 Grant Road
3812 Brandywine Street

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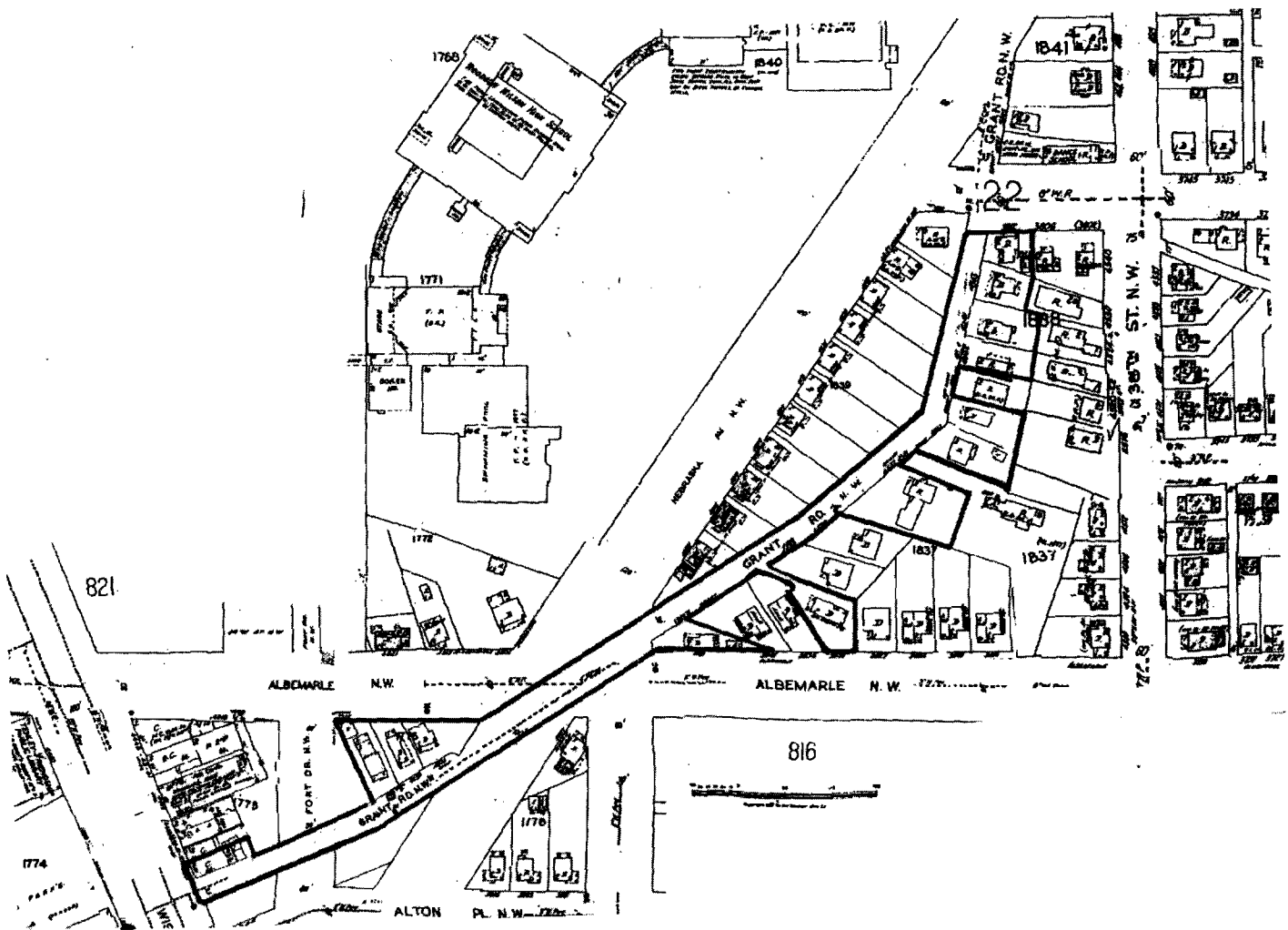
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SITE MAP



Grant Road Historic District

Washington, D.C.

Base Map from the *Sanborn Building and Property Atlas of Washington, D.C.* 1997

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PHOTOGRAPHS

- 1) Grant Road Historic District
Washington, DC
Kimberly Prothro Williams
December 2003
DCHPO
View looking northeast down Grant Road from the intersection of Nebraska Avenue,
Albemarle Street, and Grant Road
1/5
- 2) Grant Road Historic District
Washington, DC
Kimberly Prothro Williams
December 2003
DCHPO
View looking north/northeast along the 4500 block of Grant Road
2/5
- 3) Grant Road Historic District
Washington, DC
Kimberly Prothro Williams
December 2003
DCHPO
View looking southeast at 4561 Grant Road showing "typical" two-bay Grant Road
dwelling form
3/5
- 4) Grant Road Historic District
Washington, DC
Kimberly Prothro Williams
December 2003
DCHPO
View looking southwest at Grant Road from Brandywine Street, showing 3812
Brandywine Street and 4565 Grant Road
4/5

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PHOTOGRAPHS

- 5) Grant Road Historic District
Washington, DC
Kimberly Prothro Williams
December 2003
DCHPO
View looking southwest from 4543 Grant Road to the intersection of Grant Road with
Albemarle Street and Nebraska Avenue, N.W.
5/5