

---

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD

Historic Landmark Case No. 14-14

### Davidson Office Building

927 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW

Square 218, Lot 0067

Meeting Date: July 28, 2016  
Applicant: D.C. Preservation League  
Affected ANC: 2F  
Staff Reviewer: Kim Williams

---

The Historic Preservation Office recommends that the Board designate the Davidson Office Building at 927 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW a historic landmark in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites and forward the nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

### Architectural and Historical background

The Davidson Building at 15<sup>th</sup> and K Streets NW is one of a collection of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century office buildings that surround McPherson Square. This collection of buildings represents the transition of the square from residential to offices, as well as the growth of the city's financial district from around the Treasury building north to McPherson Square. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, banks and offices related to the city's financial interests were centered on lower 15th Street across from and north of the Treasury Building and around 14<sup>th</sup> and G Streets. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, the development of office buildings associated with the city's financial markets began to push north to McPherson Square and in the process completely transformed what had been a wealthy residential neighborhood of 19<sup>th</sup>-century residences into a commercial/office building area.



The twelve-story Davidson Building was designed by B. Stanley Simmons and executed in an Italian Renaissance Revival style. The owner, real estate firm, Davidson & Davidson intended to use it for its firm's own offices and to lease it to the recently formed Federal Trade Commission. This arrangement came at a time when federal government office space was scarce and thus the renting of space in private buildings, the norm. However, that rental agreement was short-lived as criticism surrounding the taxpayer cost of renting office space prompted the federal government to build more purpose-built federal government office buildings and move its workers out of rented space. In 1923, real estate developer William S. Phillips purchased the building, re-naming it the Phillips Building; then in 1929, Albert Carry Properties purchased it and named it the Carry Building. Although the building was known as the Carry Building until Joseph C. Carry's death in 1965, it is generally known by its original name, the Davidson Building today.

Before the construction of the Davidson building, the southeast corner of 15th Street & K Street NW was the site of a "fine old residence," a three-story brick dwelling, built in 1888 by Charles Edmonston for General Andrew A. Humphreys. In 1908, the Congressional Club, a women's organization established to provide a non-partisan setting for friendships among the spouses of members of Congress and the Supreme Court, used the residence for their programs until it erected its own purpose-built club building at 16th Street, New Hampshire Avenue, and U Street NW.

The first residential displacement on McPherson Square occurred in 1912 when the University Club, established to cater to downtown businessmen, was built on the west side of the Square, replacing several dwellings. In 1912, two small and now-demolished office buildings were erected at 1430 K Street and 900 14<sup>th</sup> Street in place of older dwellings, and in 1917, the Davidson Building broke ground on the site of former residences, becoming the first multi-story, purpose-built office building on the square. During the 1920s, the square's residential properties were replaced one-by-one by office buildings (principally real estate-related and financial institutions). At the time, the local press focused much attention on this change from residential to commercial, often lamenting the loss of the "old" residences, but also recognizing the "march of progress."

Upon its completion, the 130-foot-tall Davidson Building was the tallest building in the city (it remained so until completion of the National Press Building in 1926). The building housed the Davidson & Davidson Company on the first story and the Federal Trade Commission on the other eleven floors. After the FTC moved out the following year, the building was filled with a variety of tenants, with the ground floor space occupied by the real estate offices of Charles D. Sager. The subsequent purchasers of the building—William Phillips and Albert Carry—were heavily engaged in real estate.

## **Evaluation**

The Davidson Building is eligible for listing in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites under Criterion D (Architecture and Urbanism), Criterion E (Artistry) and Criterion F (Creative Masters). The Davidson Building embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an early 20<sup>th</sup>-century office building reflecting a historic style of architecture. It is also the work of local notable architect, B. Stanley Simmons and provides an important example of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century commercial architecture that gives McPherson Square its character today.

For the same reasons above, the Davidson Building meets National Register Criterion C with Architecture and Community Planning and Development as its Areas of Significance. The Period of Significance is 1917, corresponding with the building's date of construction. The building retains good integrity with alterations limited to replacement windows and doors.