

KALORAMA
TRIANGLE

HISTORIC DISTRICT



WASHINGTON D.C.



Library of Congress, Prints and Photograph Collection, 1938

The Kalorama Triangle Historic District includes 353 historic buildings. Almost exclusively residential in character, its curvilinear streets are filled with fine examples of late 19th and early 20th century urban dwellings and apartment buildings.

The city has extended so far to the north and west that the heights of the Holmead estate are now becoming the most attractive portion of the city for residences. The summer temperature is at least five degrees lower than in the city, and refreshing breezes sweep over from the valley of Rock Creek. There is no city in the land that has been so lavishly supplied by nature with locations for rural homes. Within a few months some of our leading citizens have taken steps to utilize and beautify these elevations overlooking the city. The lands on the Washington Heights, a part of the old Holmead estate, have been platted, streets have been opened, trees set, and building lots put into market... These lots lying close and overlooking the city...are the choicest investment offered to the public.

National Republican, 1882

Kalorama Triangle is a residential enclave in Northwest Washington bounded by three major thoroughfares: Connecticut Avenue, Calvert Street and Columbia Road. Bordering on Rock Creek, this area historically was part of the 19th century estate “Kalorama” and enjoyed a reputation for its natural attributes — its hilly terrain, cool breezes and fine views over the city of Washington. Developed largely between 1897–1931, the neighborhood is filled with architecturally significant free-standing and attached houses, commercial buildings, and a variety of modest and grand apartment buildings sited along curvilinear tree-lined streets.

KALORAMA TRIANGLE

The Kalorama area remained rural until the last years of the 19th century. The origins of the Kalorama estate date back to a 600-acre land grant from Charles II of England to a former indentured servant, John Langworth. The property was part of Anthony Holmead's "Widows Mite" holdings in the 18th century, and was later owned by Gustavus Scott, a commissioner for the District of Columbia. In 1795, Scott constructed a large classically styled house at 23rd and S Streets called "Belair." Poet Joel Barlow bought the estate in 1807, and renamed it "Kalorama" after the Greek word for "fine view." The property changed hands throughout the 19th century, but continued to be known as Kalorama.



"Kalorama" by Charles Godman, US Department of State

Barlow's Kalorama estate, as seen in a romantic landscape by Charles Godman. Located on a hill on the Washington side of the Potomac, the estate had *"...a most beautiful situation; it wants only the improvements we contemplate, to make it a little paradise...this place presents one of the finest views in America."* Barlow, 1807.

KALORAMA TRIANGLE HISTORIC DISTRICT



Located just beyond Boundary Street (Florida Avenue), and hence outside the incorporated city limits, Kalorama Triangle was first subdivided for urban development in the early 1880s. Although Kalorama may have appeared ripe for development, the anticipated construction did not immediately materialize. The financial panic of 1893 and the uncertainty created by the local Highway Act of 1893 were major factors in the delay.

Under the ownership of poet and diplomat Joel Barlow, Kalorama became a social and political center in the early 19th century. Thomas Jefferson and inventor Thomas Fulton were frequent guests to the estate.



Historical Society of Washington, DC

"Joel Barlow"
by Robert Fulton



2009 Columbia Road stands on what was once known as “Flagg’s Wyoming Terrace” a 2-acre subdivision of the large Kalorama estate located between Columbia Road and Wyoming Avenue. Built in 1899, the house is currently used as a residence and art gallery.

In 1893, in response to the rampant and uncoordinated development of land outside of Boundary Street, the U.S. Congress ordered the preparation of a street plan that would extend L’Enfant’s design of the city of Washington into the rest of the District. Confusion surrounded this Highway Act because it was unclear whether suburbs already laid out would have to comply by redesigning existing roads. Land transfers and construction came to a halt for fear of the condemnation of expensive property for future street rights-of-way. With passage of an amended act in 1898 exempting existing subdivisions, publication of a map with the city’s new plan, and an improved economic situation, development of the Kalorama area was finally poised to take off. The construction of the Calvert Street Bridge (1891, replaced 1931), Taft Bridge (1907), and streetcar lines running along Connecticut Avenue and Columbia Road resulted in a period of rapid and sustained development for the Kalorama Triangle neighborhood.

The earliest years of Kalorama Triangle’s development followed the specific expansion of the streetcar lines. Lines were laid along 18th Street and Calvert Road in 1892, and north on Columbia Road, connecting for the first time at 18th Street in 1897. By 1903, the area was completely subdivided and many buildings had been constructed. The newly improved Connecticut Avenue physically bisected a rural area previously viewed as a single expanse. Two neighborhoods, Kalorama Triangle and Sheridan-Kalorama, each distinctive in their social and physical composition, soon evolved. Sheridan-Kalorama, with its larger lots and predominance of individually commissioned free-standing houses, developed as the more affluent area, serving as home to some of Washington’s wealthiest and most prestigious residents. Kalorama Triangle’s growth was more urban in character and dependent on the streetcar. Its building stock, predominantly made up of speculatively built rowhouses and apartment buildings, was developed for a prosperous middle class market.



Department store owner Alvin Lothrop’s mansion at 2001 Connecticut Avenue cost \$100,000 to construct in 1908. Dominating the prominent intersection of Connecticut Avenue and Columbia Road, the house helped set an affluent tone for the emerging Kalorama neighborhood.



Historical Society of Washington DC, circa. 1885

KALORAMA TRIANGLE'S BUILDINGS

The earliest houses in Kalorama Triangle were large detached residences which were distinctly suburban in character. Developer George Truesdall constructed a large turreted villa in the 1880s at Columbia Road and Wyoming Avenue named “Managanssett” [pictured above]. Although most have been demolished, suburban estates dotted the hills of Kalorama at the turn of the century.

The opening of the Columbia Road streetcar line in 1897 and the enormous demand for housing in Washington soon redefined Kalorama Triangle’s suburban character as urban architectural forms began to transform the area. Early speculative development included the duplex houses in the 2000 block of Kalorama Road, constructed in 1897, and the individually designed houses in the 2000 blocks of Columbia Road and Wyoming Avenue, constructed in 1898. The Lothrop mansion, at the intersection of Connecticut and Columbia, remains one of the monumental Beaux Arts residences in the neighborhood. Despite the early construction of suburban houses and individual townhouses, the most common building form in Kalorama Triangle became the rowhouse. The neighborhood was soon characterized by the rows of substantially sized, attached speculative dwellings. The areas first wave of rowhouse construction, between 1900–1906, most typically exhibits attributes of the then



Evening Star, April 24, 1920

popular Romanesque style, with rusticated stone detailing, round-headed window and door openings, foliate carving, and a dark palette of red or brown brick. By 1900, rowhouses had been built on 19th Street, Calvert Street, Columbia Road, Kalorama Road, Biltmore Street, and Mintwood Place. After a period of vigorous construction, building in Kalorama Triangle dropped off dramatically between 1906 and 1910. When building resumed, the Romanesque style was no longer fashionable, and more classically inspired rowhouses were constructed. The handsome row of Georgian Revival rowhouses located along Belmont Road and 19th Street was constructed in 1910. The row’s columned porticos, dormer windows, Flemish bond brickwork, multiple light windows, shutters, and stone trim are characteristic of the Georgian Revival style. The rowhouses along Allen Place, constructed in 1913–14, show the influence of the Mission and Arts and Crafts movements with their red tile roofs, patterned brick work, and overhanging eaves with exposed rafters.



Architect Thomas Fuller constructed this house at 2317 Ashmead Place in 1893. The landmark house is an early and important representation of the influence of the English Arts and Crafts movement on American residential architecture.



Arts and Crafts Rowhouses, 2028–2032 Allen Place



Georgian Revival Rowhouses, 2300 Block of 19th Street

Although the neighborhood's rowhouses appear distinctly urban to modern eyes, many developers of the neighborhood were attempting to convey a suburban image for Kalorama Triangle through the use of front porches and generously proportioned front yards.

APARTMENT BUILDINGS

The land along the trolley lines, particularly on Connecticut Avenue and Columbia Road, was soon deemed too valuable for rowhouse construction. Between 1901 and 1927, 25 apartment buildings were constructed in Kalorama Triangle, with significant concentrations along the two major streetcar lines.



Romanesque Rowhouses, 1800 Block of Mintwood Place

The Mendota, at 2220 20th Street, was the first apartment building constructed in the neighborhood. Designed by architect James G. Hill, the building's classically detailed exterior and spacious three-bedroom units provided a fashionable and practical alternative to the problems of acquiring and maintaining a single-family rowhouse. Some apartment buildings, such as 2029 Connecticut and 2101 Connecticut, were among the city's most luxurious, with large, elegantly detailed rooms, high ceilings, and servants' quarters. Others, like the Biltmore and Beacon, were more modest in size and interior amenities, meeting the housing needs of more middle class tenants.

Although streetcars offered easy access to the downtown shopping district, neighborhood stores soon emerged in response to the rapidly developing residential area. The small, one-story, limestone-clad commercial buildings along the west side of Columbia Road were constructed in the 1920s and 1930s, and exhibit the streamlined classical style popular in the period. Open storefronts with large expanses of glass allowed pedestrians and streetcar riders to see into the stores in order to assess their offerings.

By 1931, Kalorama Triangle was fully developed with a myriad of rowhouses, town houses, apartment buildings, and commercial buildings of large and small scale. Having been built in a relatively short period, this assemblage of buildings is cohesive in scale, size, material and use. As a result, the neighborhood illustrates the successful transference of high-style architecture to speculatively built buildings for a middle-class audience.



Columbia Road



Woodward Apartments



A major attraction of many apartment buildings in Kalorama Triangle is the spectacular city views. The view from the Altamont Apartments was advertised in a promotional brochure in the 1920s.

The Altamont, constructed in 1915, featured commodious and well-appointed apartments. The 7th floor had a palm room, a café opening onto the roof garden, and additional kitchens for entertaining.



The Altamont circa 1920



Woodward Interior

The Woodward is a 7-story apartment marking the north-western edge of Kalorama Triangle. Designed in 1909 for S.W. Woodward, the building is sited in the curve of Connecticut Avenue, and enjoys magnificent views.

The building's applied ornamentation is borrowed from the Spanish Mission style, and the Churrigueresque entrance encrusts the central bay with Roman, Baroque and Moorish elements.

KALORAMA TRIANGLE'S RESIDENTS

Kalorama Triangle was the product of new ideas and ideals in middle-class living—residents who relied on the convenience and affordability of the streetcar to commute to downtown jobs, yet who were prosperous enough to enjoy the well-designed, spacious speculative housing that was built in this residential enclave.

Early residents of the area reflected the affluence of the emerging suburban community. These included engineer and developer George Truesdell, architect Thomas Fuller, and Woodward & Lothrop department store co-founders Samuel W. Woodward (who constructed a house in 1886 on the present site of 2101 Connecticut Avenue) and Alvin M. Lothrop. Dr. Anita Newcomb McKee, a former Acting Assistant Surgeon General who had organized the Army Nursing Corps, built 1901 Biltmore Street in 1901.

Jeanette Rankin,
the first woman
elected to Congress,
was a resident of the
Mendota Apartments
in the 1910s and 20s.



Library of Congress, circa 1916

By the turn of the century a prosperous middle class began to emerge in Kalorama Triangle attracted by the fine housing stock conveniently accessible by public transportation. Residents included numerous government clerks for the Federal and District governments, salesmen, lawyers, real estate agents, artists, physicians, butlers, waiters, and teachers. The 1910 Census reveals the neighborhood attracted residents with a range of income levels and housing needs. While Samuel Woodward lived in a mansion on Connecticut Avenue with his family and six servants, two blocks away at 2308 20th



Airyview Apartments, 2415 20th Street, NW

Street, a widow ran a boarding house whose lodgers included a tutor, a public school teacher, and a clerk at the Bureau of Printing and Engraving. On the 1800 block of Mintwood Place, the residents included a deliveryman, a business manager, a patent office examiner, a lawyer, a painter, an insurance agent, and an artist.

Apartment buildings were also inhabited by solidly middle-class tenants. In 1910, the Biltmore Apartments registered clerks, government lawyers, army lieutenants, a caterer, a building engineer, and a salesman among its residents. The Mendota, a slightly more prestigious building, included among its residents two Library of Congress librarians, four lawyers, two druggists, two teachers, ten clerks, two clergymen, a geologist, a curator, an accountant, an army officer, and the president of a storage company. Increasingly, and particularly through the war years, large percentages of single or widowed women found homes in apartment buildings.

By 1914, over half of the residents of the Mendota were women; the same was true for the more modest Beacon apartment building at 18th and Calvert Streets. Despite the changing gender demographics at the Mendota, it remained an exclusive building. In 1918, 48 residents of the 49-unit building were listed in Washington's social register.



Kalorama Triangle continues to enjoy a fine site and convenient location, defined by three major thoroughfares that surround the neighborhood. Screened from the surrounding hectic commercial areas, it is characterized by a quiet, residential appearance and ambience.

The Kalorama Triangle Historic District was listed in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites in 1986, and on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987. The historic district includes 353 historic buildings. The neighborhood continues to enjoy a diverse residential character. Few intrusions mar its curvilinear streets, and the majority of late 19th and early 20th century urban dwellings have been handsomely preserved or restored. The avenues of large apartment blocks and smaller rows of attached houses sited along tree-lined streets continue to work together to create a dynamic, architecturally varied, urban neighborhood.



In decorating the dining room and planning the window for palms and ferns, the idea was that of cheerfulness; in the hall, being the center of the house, that of substantial durability; in the parlor and library restful hospitable comfort. I believe, combined with the advantages of its location it would be difficult, if not impossible to duplicate at the price.

Dr. Anita Newcomb Mckee, 1901 Biltmore Street



Architectural variety, hilly terrain and curving streets, often ending in other streets or breaking off and resuming somewhere else give the Triangle its distinctive and self-contained character...

*Washington Star
March 17, 1963*



The Kalorama Triangle Citizen's Association, an all-volunteer organization founded in 1919, addresses all issues of interest to Kalorama residents, from the practicalities of maintaining clean, attractive and safe streets and parks to broader issues of zoning, land-use planning, economic development, public education, and historic preservation. In recent years, the members and officers of the Association have represented the neighborhood before the D.C. Council and city boards and commissions, supported educational and youth programs, prepared and sponsored the neighborhood's historic district designation application, and sponsored tree planting and park beautification programs in the Kalorama neighborhood.



2000 Block of Allen Place

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