NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

718

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.

RECEIVED 2280
AUG 28 2015
Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Grant Circle Historic District
Other names/site number: N/A
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: 4-33 Grant Circle, N.W.
City or town: Washington State: District of Columbia 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Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐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 _X_ 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 _X_ 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 _X_local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

_X_A ___B ___C ___D

DAVID MALONEY / DC SHPO 8/21/2015

Signature of certifying official/Title: **Date**

DC HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: **Date**

Title : **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

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:) _____

per Edson H. Beall 10.13.15

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private: [x]

Public – Local [ ]

Public – State [ ]

Public – Federal [x]

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s) [ ]

District [x]

Site [ ]

Structure [ ]

Object [ ]

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
24	2	buildings
3		sites
		structures
		objects
27	2	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use
Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling/Multiple Dwelling
RELIGION/Religious Facility/Church School/Church-Related Residence
LANDSCAPE/Park

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling/Multiple Dwelling
RELIGION/Religious Facility/Church School/Church-Related Residence
LANDSCAPE/Park

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)
LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Colonial Revival/Spanish Colonial Revival/Gothic Revival/Eclectic

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick/Stone/Other

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

The Grant Circle Historic District is located in the Petworth neighborhood of Washington, D.C. The boundary of the district encompasses Grant Circle and its associated triangle parks as well as the private residential and religious properties in the immediate vicinity. Grant Circle is a major urban and visual feature of the Petworth neighborhood, marking the intersection of Fifth and Varnum Streets and Illinois and New Hampshire Avenues, N.W. These parks are defined by a mix of hedges, lawns, and mature trees, organized into geometric patterns that reflect the strong geometry of the surrounding streets and avenues. In addition to the circle and triangle parks, the district includes nineteen contributing properties, all of which have postal addresses on Grant Circle, N.W. This includes sixteen residential properties (4-16 and 29-32 Grant Circle) and two religious properties, St. Gabriel's Catholic Church (26 Grant Circle) and Petworth Methodist Church (33 Grant Circle). The residential properties are defined by their continuity of scale, material, and character, exhibiting subtle variations on the Washington rowhouse prototype influenced by early-twentieth-century revivalist styles. The religious properties, although each distinct in architectural character and stylistic treatment, complement the revivalist and residential character of the historic district, acting as both architectural and civic landmarks in an otherwise residential neighborhood.

Narrative Description

Grant Circle (Reservation 312)[1]

Grant Circle (Reservation 312), named after Ulysses S. Grant, is a 1.84-acre urban park bound by a two-lane vehicular rotary of the same name, with one lane of parking around the outer edge. The circle is located at the intersection of Fifth and Varnum Streets and New Hampshire and Illinois Avenues, N.W., which radiate from the circle's center. Due to its central location and visual prominence, Grant Circle forms the nexus of the historic district and was the major impetus for development in its immediate vicinity. The design of Grant Circle is a conjunction of the radial and circular geometries, with linear paths that converge on a central, circular walkway. In the outer portion of the circle, paired walkways continue the paths of the streets and avenues into the circle, delineating alternating bands of wedge-shaped and rectangular lawns. An interior, circular lawn at the center of the park is similarly defined by a broad, circular walkway.

The majority of the component lawns within Grant Circle are dominated by flat turf interspersed with trees and low shrubs. Major trees within the circle include the outer ring of American elms, several mature pine and hemlock trees, and a magnificent Cedar of Lebanon within the central circle. Beyond the plantings, Grant Circle has a modest and limited material palette, principally poured concrete paving and concrete bullnose curbs. The park has no fencing, although other small-scale features are scattered throughout, including benches, trash receptacles, small signs, lampposts, and drinking fountains. A small plaque at the central lawn bears an inscription and dedication to President Grant.

Triangle Parks (Reservations 312A and 312I)

Reservation 312A is a 0.19-acre triangular park located to the south of Grant Circle. It is bounded by Illinois Avenue, Grant Circle, and Fifth and Upshur Streets, N.W. The park has a central, semicircular plaza with radiating concrete and fieldstone paths. Sidewalks and street trees ring the perimeter of the park. Deciduous hedges form a partial border around the perimeter of the central lawn, which is dominated by a mature oak tree just northwest of the paved plaza, which appears to retain its original stone and concrete paving.

Reservation 312I is the mirrored counterpart of 312A. It is .20 acre park, located north of Grant Circle and bound by Illinois Avenue, Grant Circle, and Fifth and Webster Streets, N.W. Beyond this, however, the triangular parks are quite distinct in their appearance and programming. The northern park, while it also features perimeter sidewalks, street tress, and a semicircular plaza, also a small playground enclosed with a metal fence, a number of benches, and a greater mix of deciduous trees and shrubs.

Residential Properties on the Circle

There are seventeen private residential properties with addresses on Grant Circle, which equates to seventeen primary residences and eight associated alley buildings. A majority of these buildings share the same general characteristics: rowhouse-type dwellings of masonry construction with two stories, raised basements, and false mansard roofs. As such, they conform to the basic Washington Row typology, with

[1] Both Grant Circle and the associated triangular parks are owned by the National Park Service and are administered through its Rock Creek Park Management Unit.

decorative details that are derivative of Colonial Revival and Italian Renaissance Revival styles. One exception to this rowhouse building form is the no longer extant freestanding house at 16 Grant Circle. This detached frame American four-square was the first building to be constructed on the circle, but was soon followed by rowhouse building forms. More detailed architectural descriptions are continued below.

A complete property inventory, address listing, and building count is included at the end of this section.

4-5 Grant Circle

The two residences located at 4 and 5 Grant Circle are largely identical, two-story, two-bay masonry rowhouses situated on raised basements. Constructed in 1915, these houses were developed by the builder B.H. Gruver, in conjunction with eight additional residences, which are directly adjacent and face Illinois Avenue. The buildings are clad in painted brick, laid in a six-course American bond pattern. The single and paired window openings, with splayed brick jack-arch lintels and concrete sills, contain one-over-one, double-hung windows. Both buildings feature projecting porches with flat roofs and simple, wood cornices. The porches have concrete floors supported on square brick piers, with simple metal railings and concrete stairs. Beneath is porch is a small areaway with a separate stair and entrance. Both houses also feature denticulated cornices, above which are pent mansard roofs with pedimented dormers and stepped parapet end walls. The roofs are clad in asphalt shingles resembling slate tiles.

6-7 Grant Circle

The two identical buildings at 6 and 7 Grant Circle are two-bay, two-story masonry row houses with raised basements, front porches, and false mansard roofs. They were constructed in 1915, designed by architect Merrill T. Vaughn and developed by M.L. Gottwals. The buildings are clad in variegated buff brick laid in a six-course American bond pattern. The window and door openings are square, with brick soldier course lintels and concrete openings, containing double or triple rows of one-over-one, double-hung windows. The porch and roof designs are similar to those at 4 and 5 Grant Circle, albeit with hipped dormers and slightly more elaborate cornice details.

The property at 6 Grant Circle also includes a contributing alley building. Constructed in 1924-1925, it is a square garage with brick walls, a hipped roof, and a large opening and garage door facing the alley.

8-10 Grant Circle

The residences at 8, 9, and 10 Grant Circle were constructed in 1919, designed by George T. Santmyers and developed by builder Harris Shapiro. They have unique rooflines that distinguish them from their adjacent counterparts, but they otherwise share the same basic form and fenestration. These two-bay, two-story, masonry rowhouses sit on raised basements. The front porch, stair, and basement configurations are largely identical to the other houses; however, they do not extend the full width of the façade, and therefore are narrower, with other minor differences. The roofs of these houses are not mansards but rather shed pent roofs, which shelter small, rectangular windows. The end house, at 10 Grant Circle, also has a projection and fenestration facing northeast toward Varnum Street.

11-15 Grant Circle

The four residential properties at 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 Grant Circle are largely identical, with only minor variations. They were constructed in 1919 by B.H. Gruver, to designs by architect George T. Santmyers.

They are two-bay, two-story masonry rowhouses set on raised basements. The houses are clad in buff brick laid in a seven-course American bond pattern. Each of the houses has a false mansard roof with two dormers, all of which feature exposed rafter tails. These houses have projecting porches with flat roofs and simple cornice lines, as well as masonry piers with metal railings. The window openings feature splayed brick jack-arch lintels and concrete sills, housing one-over-one, double-hung windows.

These properties also feature several alley-facing garage buildings. The garage at 11 (rear) Grant Circle features distinctive, beveled concrete block laid in a coursed ashlar pattern. The building also has a hipped roof and garage bay facing Varnum Street. The garage at 12 (rear) Grant Circle has a simpler concrete block structure and gabled roof. The garage at 13 (rear) Grant Circle has a gabled roof and vinyl siding. Finally, the garage at 15 (rear) Grant Circle has a brick structure and pitched roof. All buildings are contributing with the exception of the building at 13 (rear) Grant Circle, which does not appear to retain integrity.

29-32 Grant Circle

The residential buildings at 29, 30, 31, and 32 Grant Circle are somewhat more grandiose than their counterparts across the circle, but otherwise share the same rowhouse typology. The buildings were designed and constructed in 1915-1916 by Charles E. Wire, Inc. They are three-bay, two-story masonry rowhouses with exposed basements and projecting front porches (the house at 32 Grant Circle has one additional bay). The building are clad in buff brick (31 has been painted) laid in a running bond pattern. Each house has a false mansard roof clad in terra cotta tile, with stepped end wall parapets and a single, multi-light dormer with a hipped roof. The buildings at 29 and 31 Grant Circle have rectangular window openings with a soldier course of brick that forms a shouldered architrave, flat concrete sills, and nine-over-one, double-hung windows. The houses at 30 and 32 Grant Circle have round-arched windows on the second story with a triple band of brick courses framing the opening. The porches of each house have flat roofs, simple cornices, concrete stairs, and wood columns supported on arcaded brick walls. These properties also feature castellated stone retaining walls that line the sidewalk, composed of stone laid in a random ashlar pattern.

Facing the alley, 30 (rear) Grant Circle has a contributing garage building, with brick walls and a pitched roof. Attached to this, the single-bay garage building at 31 (rear) Grant Circle has a gabled roof and vinyl siding. It does not appear to retain integrity and is not contributing.

16 Grant Circle—house demolished 2015

Although demolished and not included in the building count, the dwelling at 16 Grant Circle is worthy of discussion due to its unique character on the circle and for its recent demolition leaving the property as a vacant lot, ripe for redevelopment. The property has frontage on both Grant Circle and New Hampshire Avenue, with deep setbacks that create a generous front yard. Completed in 1913-1914, the house was designed and constructed by Leo J. Long. It was a two-story frame building clad in pebble dash stucco with a two-story frame porch extension to the rear, and a masonry foundation. The building was reflective of an American Foursquare type with a hipped roof, broadly overhanging eaves, and an L-shaped, one-story porch.

Religious and Educational Properties on the Circle

St. Gabriel's Catholic Church, School, & Rectory (26 Grant Circle)

St. Gabriel's Catholic Church is a 2.38-acre campus that includes four major buildings: the church, rectory, school and convent. Only the church and rectory, however, are included within the historic district boundaries as they are oriented to the circle while the other two are not. The complex was developed between 1923 and 1930[2] and each building was designed in the Late Gothic Revival style by architects Maginnis & Walsh. They are clad in bluestone blocks laid in a random ashlar pattern, trimmed in limestone. Overall, the group of buildings represents a uniform and impressive architectural expression befitting a major religious institution.

The church building faces Grant Circle with its nave extending east-west and major north and south transepts running perpendicular to it. Details throughout include tapered square piers, pointed-arch windows with stained glass and limestone traceries, gabled slate roof, copper flashing and roofing, and extensive figural carving. A highly ornamented metal spire rises from the intersection of the nave and transept roof peaks.

The rectory, facing Grant Circle to its south, is a similarly scaled, two-and-one-half story stone structure with a slate-covered, gable roof. The main façade is five bays wide with two hipped and one shed dormer. Windows throughout, often paired, are four-over-four, double-hung frames.

The broad, sweeping landscape of the church property provides a verdant setting for these buildings, with ample turf and mature plantings that complement the landscape of Grant Circle. The northwest corner of the property is paved to create parking and play areas to serve the school

Petworth United Methodist Church, Former Petworth Methodist Episcopal Church (33 Grant Circle)

Developed in 1915-1916 to serve the Petworth Methodist Episcopal Church, the building at 33 Grant Circle was designed by architect Maurice F. Moore in an eclectic, exuberant interpretation of the Gothic Revival Style. The church has a modified octagonal plan, constructed of variegated brown brick, with concrete and terra cotta ornament. The two principal façades, facing Grant Circle and New Hampshire Avenue, feature a single vaulted story set on a raised basement, visually divided by a double belt course of terra cotta. The walls are defined by window openings demarcated by projecting brick piers, which extend from the basement and terminate in finials beyond the elaborately ornamented, terra cotta cornice. The windows themselves are stained glass panels composed within terra cotta tracery, supported by segmental brick arches. The corresponding bays along the basement story feature pairs of pointed-arch windows contained within segmental arched openings. Mirrored entrances, with tiered concrete stairs and double-leaf doors are set in pointed arched openings and face the two main thoroughfares. The entire composition is crowned by a lantern that extends a full story above the main structure. Clad in pressed metal and embellished with circular stained glass windows, the lantern is supported on flying buttresses that extend to meet the roof below.

Facing the alley, at the rear of the church building is a 1938-1939 contributing addition constructed to house youth and educational programs for the church. The three-story addition is more sedate in

[2] Although the convent and school have unique street addresses, all buildings are located on a single tax parcel.

character than the main church building, with a brown brick exterior; rectangular, multi-pane metal windows; and a simple parapet. The main ornament is a copper-clad oriel window facing the alley.

The adjacent residential building at 32 Grant Circle was constructed to house the parsonage of the church. It shares many of the details of its counterparts at 29, 30, and 31 Grant Circle, although it is four bays wide and connects to the church building via a short hyphen.

Resource Inventory

#	Address	Square	Lot	Resource Type	Use	Year(s) of Development	Contributing/ Non-Contributing
1	Grant Circle (Reservation 312)			Site	Park	1916-1929 (approximate)	Contributing
2	Reservation 312A			Site	Park		Contributing
3	Reservation 312I			Site	Park		Contributing
4	4 Grant Circle, N.W.	3243	41	Building	Residence	1915	Contributing
5	5 Grant Circle, N.W.	3243	42	Building	Residence	1915	Contributing
6	6 Grant Circle, N.W.	3243	43	Building	Residence	1915	Contributing
7	6 (rear) Grant Circle, N.W.	3243	43	Building	Garage	1924-1925	Contributing
8	7 Grant Circle, N.W.	3243	44	Building	Residence	1915	Contributing
9	8 Grant Circle, N.W.	3243	45	Building	Residence	1919	Contributing
10	9 Grant Circle, N.W.	3243	48	Building	Residence	1919	Contributing
11	10 Grant Circle, N.W.	3243	49	Building	Residence	1919	Contributing
12	11 Grant Circle, N.W.	3244	29	Building	Residence	1919	Contributing
13	11 (rear) Grant Circle, N.W.	3244	29	Building	Garage	1923	Contributing
14	12 Grant Circle, N.W.	3244	30	Building	Residence	1919	Contributing
15	12 (rear) Grant Circle, N.W.	3244	30	Building	Garage	1921	Contributing

#	Address	Square	Lot	Resource Type	Use	Year(s) of Development	Contributing/ Non-Contributing
16	13 Grant Circle, N.W.	3244	31	Building	Residence	1919	Contributing
17	13 (rear) Grant Circle, N.W.	3244	31	Building	Garage	1919	Non-Contributing
18	14 Grant Circle, N.W.	3244	32	Building	Residence	1919	Contributing
19	15 Grant Circle, N.W.	3244	33	Building	Residence	1919	Contributing
20	15 (rear) Grant Circle, N.W.	3244	33	Building	Garage	1922	Contributing
21	26 Grant Circle, N.W.	3224	800	Building	Church (St. Gabriel's Catholic Church	1929-1930	Contributing
22	26 Grant Circle, N.W.	3224	800	Building	Residence (Rectory)	1924-1925	Contributing
23	29 Grant Circle, N.W.	3226	63	Building	Residence	1915-1916	Contributing
24	30 Grant Circle, N.W.	3226	64	Building	Residence	1915-1916	Contributing
25	30 (rear) Grant Circle, N.W.	3226	64	Building	Garage	1916	Contributing
26	31 Grant Circle, N.W.	3226	65	Building	Residence	1915-1916	Contributing
27	31 (rear) Grant Circle, N.W.	3226	65	Building	Garage	Circa 1919	Non-Contributing
28	32 Grant Circle, N.W.	3226	806	Building	Residence (Parsonage)	1915-1916	Contributing
29	33 Grant Circle, N.W.	3226	807	Building	Church (Petworth United Methodist Church)	1915-1916 (1938-1939 addition)	Contributing

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.)

- [x] 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.)

- [x] 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

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)
Community Planning and Development

Period of Significance
1889; 1913-1939; 1951-1964

Significant Dates
1889 (subdivision)
1913-1939 (development)

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Gottwals, M.L.
Gruver, B.H.
Lipscomb, William P., Co.
Long, Leo J.
Maginnis & Walsh
Moore, Maurice F.
National Park Service
Santmyers, George T.
Shapiro, Harris
Wire, Charles E., Inc.
Vaughn, Merrill T.

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 Grant Circle Historic District is part of the larger 19th-century residential subdivision of Petworth--the city's first subdivision to be planned in accordance with the 1888 Subdivision Act, a Congressional act requiring new subdivisions to conform to the plan of the City of Washington (the L'Enfant Plan). Although other subdivisions, such as Brightwood, the Palisades and Ingleside were also platted as part of this act, none of them presented a street plan as grand as Petworth, complete with circles and diagonal avenues that aligned directly with those of the L'Enfant Plan.

The 1888 Act was relatively short-lived as it quickly became evident that the strict imposition of an extension of the L'Enfant plan on a terrain of already existing and non-conforming subdivisions, as well as topographic conditions that were different from those of the original city, posed significant problems. After several years of debate, Congress introduced and passed the Permanent Highway Act of 1893—a law that authorized the creation of a permanent system of streets for the area outside of the original city. This street system would come in the form of maps and would take many years to complete. As finalized, the Permanent Highway Plan incorporated existing platted subdivisions into its plan and introduced new

streets that followed a modified grid that better conformed to the natural topographic conditions of the formerly rural landscape. The subdivision of Petworth stands out as the most notable of the subdivisions platted in the short interval between 1888 and 1893 and is a significant event in the history of urban planning in D.C.

By the second decade of the 20th century, Grant Circle and its adjacent blocks were fully developed, along with grading, paving and landscaping of the circle and triangle parks. From the outset, Grant Circle and the larger Petworth neighborhood were home to a predominantly white middle-class population, complete with schools and a neighborhood-based commercial district. For several decades this socio-economic dynamic persisted with little pressure for change. However, in a short three-year period, from 1950 to 1953, the racial composition of Grant Circle shifted as first one and then another owner of Grant Circle sold their houses to African Americans, setting off a "white flight." The transformation of a neighborhood from white to black during the 1950s and 1960s is typical both locally and nationally, and yet the speed in which it occurred and the personal accounts of the change from longtime residents are profound. Despite the racial reversal, Grant Circle remained an established, middle-class neighborhood, providing an excellent illustration of the emergence of an African American middle-class in the city.

The Grant Circle Historic District is significant under National Register Criterion A for its reflection of broad patterns of urban development, both in Washington, D.C., and nationwide, from the late-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries. The period of significance incorporates the subdivision of the Petworth neighborhood (1889); its primary period of development as a residential suburb (1913-1939); and its subsequent integration as it evolved from a predominantly white to African American population (1951-1964). The district's contributing buildings are indicative of the blend of vernacular, speculative, and revivalist styles that defined the urban character of Washington, D.C., in the early twentieth century. Although the historic district includes two religious properties and their associated buildings, they are being nominated for their ability to reflect historical associations with the planning and development of Grant Circle and its vicinity. Therefore Criteria Consideration A does not apply to this nomination.

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

Community Planning and Development: The three distinct periods of development in Grant Circle illustrate broad trends in the evolution of urban areas, particularly Washington, D.C., during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as Washington sought to reconcile the legacy of the planned Federal City with the suburban expansion necessary to support its growing population. In 1889, Petworth became the first suburban subdivision in the District of Columbia to conform to the pattern of the L'Enfant Plan for the City of Washington, extending its nomenclature of broad avenues, streets, and circles into former Washington County. Together with Sherman Circle, Grant Circle was one of only two traffic circles outside the boundaries of the L'Enfant Plan that corresponded to the scale and character of the original circles. The form and monumentality of Petworth and Grant Circle reversed a trend of incompatible, speculative subdivision that had characterized the earlier three decades.

Despite its subdivision in 1889, both Grant Circle and its associated private development experienced a lag between planning and realization. The neighborhood's streets and avenues existed largely on paper until the early 1910s, when houses began to populate the parcels around the circle. Grant Circle itself and its associated triangle parks were not improved and landscaped until the 1910s and 1920s. The properties that developed on and around the circle between 1913 and 1939—with their successful comingling of vernacular and speculative dwellings against stylistically refined religious buildings—contributed to the

unique sense of the monumental, yet domestically scaled, atmosphere that defined the neighborhood. Together, Grant Circle, the triangle parks, and the additional contributing buildings display a remarkable physical integrity to this period of development, allowing them to convey their significance as an early-twentieth-century residential suburb.

Finally, the demographic and racial shift witnessed by the Petworth neighborhood in general, and Grant Circle in particular, between 1951 and 1964 are reflective of national trends in urban migration and integration and the establishment of an urban African American middle class. These changes were particularly well documented at Grant Circle, and continue to resonate with the neighborhood's residents.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Early History of the Grant Circle Site: 1772-1887

Long before European settlement, the Washington, D.C., region was inhabited by two Native American tribes—the Anacostank and the Mattapantient Indians. Evidence of this habitation is illustrated on the John White map of 1585, as well as the John Smith map of 1608, encompassing a much larger area of land in the region. More than a decade later, present-day Washington, D.C., would undergo its earliest period of European settlement. In 1772, King George III granted a 536-acre tract to James White, who then built a log cabin within the vast wilderness and named the tract "Pleasant Hill." The 536-acre tract encompassed the present-day site of Petworth and Grant Circle. Despite King George III's generous land grant, White pledged his allegiance to the revolutionary cause and became an officer in the Continental Army.[3]
During White's ownership of the 536-acre tract, "An Act for Establishing the Temporary and Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States," more commonly known as the Residence Act, was passed by Congress. The act authorized President George Washington to select a site for the capital, which became a Federal district measuring ten square miles on the Potomac River. In addition to the selection of a site for the capital, the Residence Act allowed ten years for the acquisition of land and the construction of adequate buildings to accommodate the president, Congress, and various other public offices. In December 1800, the seat of power would relocate from its temporary home in Philadelphia to the District of Columbia.[4]

Washington enlisted Major General Pierre Charles L'Enfant to design the city and specify the sites for its major public buildings. L'Enfant's plan, produced in 1791, was defined by avenues, radiating diagonally from fifteen public squares and circles, overlaid with an irregularly spaced grid. Modeled on Baroque planning and landscape principles, L'Enfant's plan took advantage of the geographic diversity of the land to inform the city's boundaries and the placement of major buildings. Although L'Enfant was later dismissed and replaced by surveyor Andrew Ellicott, who simplified the design and altered it to conform with more accurate survey information, the basic structure of radiating avenues laid atop on irregular grid was preserved.[5] White's 536-acre tract was located within the District of Columbia but outside the boundaries of L'Enfant and Ellicott's plans.

In 1801, the District of Columbia Organic Act legally incorporated the District of Columbia, dividing it into two counties: Washington County to the north and east of the Potomac River and Alexandria County

[3] Antonia Gordon, "An inquiry into the Petworth area: its origin, history, and some aspects of the present" (unpublished manuscript, 1979).
[4] John W. Reps, *Monumental Washington* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 4-5.
[5] John W. Reps, *Monumental Washington* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 4-5.

to the west and south. The newly formed District of Columbia also included the cities of Alexandria, Georgetown, and Washington, each independently incorporated with their own charters and set apart from the unincorporated counties. The land that encompasses present-day Petworth and Grant Circle was within Washington County, north of Boundary Street (now Florida Avenue). That same year, James White died and his heirs sold the 536-tract to Captain Balch, who himself died in 1803.[6]

The 536-acre tract was then sold to Colonel John Tayloe III of Mount Airy, Virginia. Colonel Tayloe renamed the tract "Petworth," presumably in reference to a country seat and earldom near Sussex, England—an estate with which the English-educated Tayloe may have been familiar. The English version of Petworth had been laid out by the eminent landscape gardener Lancelot "Capability" Brown in the 1750s. The name Petworth has been assigned to a portion of the 536-acre tract ever since. Like many wealthy planters of the pre-Civil War period, the Tayloes owned slaves, who likely cultivated the land at Petworth.[7] Between 1803 and 1828, like many of his class level at the time, Colonel Tayloe divided his time between town and country, living at his home, the Octagon House, at the corner of Eighteenth Street and New York Avenue, N.W., in the Washington City and at his country seat, Petworth, in Washington County. Little is known of Petworth in this period; however, it is said that his estate was enclosed, in part, by a post and rail fence, containing both a manor house and racetrack. However, the precise details of the manor house are unknown. In 1828, Colonel Tayloe died and the family subdivided the 536-acre tract, selling off a 286-acre portion.[8]

In 1847, the City of Alexandria and Alexandria County were retroceded to Virginia, leaving Washington County as the only unincorporated section of the District of Columbia. The ownership of the 286-acre tract was unclear; however, by 1855, the tract had been further subdivided, and Theodore Mosher owned roughly 186 acres that would eventually be the site of Petworth, in part, and Grant Circle. Between 1855 and 1857, Mosher built a large house on the tract, which was located approximately two blocks north of present-day Sherman Circle in what would become the 600 block of Delafield Place, N.W. This house remained one of the few buildings in the area until the early twentieth century.[9] By 1868, Mosher's 186-acre tract was acquired by Marshall Brown, the second-generation proprietor of the Indian Queen Hotel on Pennsylvania Avenue.[10] Twelve years after purchasing the 186-acre tract, Brown's principal residence

[6] "Draft: Sherman Circle, Rock Creek Park – DC Street Plan Reservation" (unpublished report, National Park Service, Cultural Landscapes Inventory, 2011), 32.
[7] Harriet D. Hill, "Petworth Named for Sussex Town," *Washington Post*, February 6, 1921, 47.
[8] "Draft: Sherman Circle, Rock Creek Park – DC Street Plan Reservation" (unpublished report, National Park Service, Cultural Landscapes Inventory, 2011), 32.
[9] In 1860, the Mosher household included Theodore Mosher, recorded as a thirty-six-year-old male farmer with fifty thousand dollars in real estate holdings and five thousand dollars in personal property with his place of birth as "Wash Co D.C."; Mary Brent Mosher, recorded as a thirty-two-year-old female born in Maryland; the Mosher children—Theodore, Imogene, May, Eliza, Robert, and James, ranging from thirteen to two years of age, all of whom were born in Washington County; and Catherine Moore, a sixty-year-old Governess, born in Pennsylvania. Mosher's closest neighbors were young laborers and their families. However, another wealthy farmer was also nearby, William McMorrison from New Hampshire, who owned $80,000 worth of real estate and $10,000 in personal property. Although the Moshers would sell their land holdings in 1868, they could still be found in the area through the 1880s. *Seventh Census of the United States* (1850), *Eighth Census of the United States* (1860), and *Ninth Census of the United States* (1870) (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 29).
[10] An early account of Marshall Brown can be found in the 1850 census, showing Brown as a thirty-three-year-old "Hotel Keeper" worth nearly $60,000.

was at 1801 Eye Street, N.W., which indicates that Brown, like Tayloe, used the residence in Washington County as a country seat, unlike Mosher, whom census records listed as a farmer.[11]

In 1871, Congress passed the second District of Columbia Organic Act, revoking the individual charters of the cities of Georgetown and Washington and merging them with Washington County under one government of the District of Columbia.[12] Brown died in 1881, stipulating in his will that his Petworth estate be sold. Jesse Brown and Rosa Wallach sold the estate for the sum of $47,500 in 1886 to the "Marshall Brown Syndicate," a newly formed investment group. Between 1886 and 1899, the Brown family continued to occupy the former Marshall Brown mansion and its immediate grounds. After the family's occupation of the Brown Mansion ended, the house was repurposed as the Columbia Golf Club, which would later become the Columbia Country Club. In 1887, the Marshall Brown Syndicate merged with another investment syndicate, which had recently purchased the 250-acre tract from the heirs of Colonel Tayloe. The Tayloe tract was located south of the Brown tract. With the merger, the subdivision of "Petworth" was announced by the syndicate. Interestingly enough, much of the original 536-acre tract had been reunited at this time, even though it would soon be subdivided.[13]

Detail of 1881 Carpenter Map, Plate 14. The 182-acre Marshall Brown Property is outlined in red. *Map of the Real Estate in the County of Washington, D.C... (B.D. Carpenter, 1881).*

The Development of the Subdivision and the Early System of Highways in the District of Columbia

The beginnings of urban planning in relation to the control of private and public development were not established in Washington until the 1880s. The L'Enfant Plan encompassed 6,100 acres of potential urban space, satisfying the demands of public and private development throughout much of the nineteenth century. As Washington City gradually exhausted its supply of vacant land and improved forms of transportation became available, however, expansion into the formerly rural Washington County became both practically and economically viable.[14]

In the 1870s and 1880s, property owners in Washington County began to subdivide their land into smaller lots destined for residential and commercial development. These property owners were a mixture of investors and the heirs of large estate holders. This

[1] [illegible] Census of the United States (1860), and Ninth Census of the [illegible] hives and Records Administration, Record Group 29).
[1] [illegible] Brown estate consisted of 182 acres, indicating either a [illegible] e 1868. "County of Washington Assessment Records for [illegible] Washington, D.C. National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 351).
[13] "Draft: Sherman Circle, Rock Creek Park – DC Street Plan Reservation" (unpublished report, National Park Service, Cultural Landscapes Inventory, 2011), 32-33.
[14] Michael R. Harrison, "The 'Evil of the Misfit Subdivisions': Creating the Permanent System of Highways in the District of Columbia," *Washington History* Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2002): 27-29.

development occurred in two stages: speculation, subdivision, and sale of the land; and purchase and development of the actual parcel by builders or individuals. To enhance the properties' attractiveness, some of the land speculators chose to subdivide in a manner that delineated potential streets. This did not necessarily mean that a paved road was completed or even that the land was fully cleared, but it was an easement that developers could work with to plan and build their communities.[15]

Due to the topographic changes beyond Florida Avenue and outside the Washington City boundaries, developers strayed from L'Enfant's plan due to the difficulty in following the lines of the broad avenues within the outlying terrain. Alternative roads were created that conformed to the topographic conditions of the area rather than the radial plan. Furthermore, L'Enfant's grand layout of wide streets was not only expensive for developers to create, but it also reduced the amount of land that could be sold as private lots. Other grids were created to suit the immediate needs of the developers, and the deviation from the L'Enfant Plan soon became apparent in numerous suburbs throughout Washington.[16]

Examples of the early subdivisions established between 1854 and 1888 included Uniontown (now Anacostia), Barry Farm, LeDroit Park, Mount Pleasant, and Trinidad. The 1854 Uniontown subdivision was comprised of 700 small lots created from a one-hundred-acre tract. The site of this development was near the foot of the Navy Yard Bridge across the Eastern Branch of the Potomac River (now the Anacostia River). Beginning in 1873, the development of LeDroit Park consisted of the subdivision of a fifty-five-acre tract, which is now cradled by Howard University and Florida Avenue. Beginning in the mid-1860s and continuing into the early twentieth century, Mount Pleasant was subdivided from the former estate of the same name. In 1888, William Wilson Corcoran's 165-acre Trinidad estate was purchased and subdivided by the Washington Machine Brick Company. Immediately adjacent to the Institute of the Deaf and Dumb and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad right-of-way at the west, the company used sixty-five acres for business operations and subdivided the remaining hundred acres into individual lots that were sold with the promise of "streets were being opened."[17]

Without delving into their intricate histories, each of these subdivisions developed a system of streets that deviated from the L'Enfant Plan, and laying out such streets would go unregulated until 1888. Prior to this time, the District of Columbia Board of Commissioners made miscellaneous decisions regarding streets and roads in the District of Columbia. This organization stemmed from the earlier 1791 agreement that the land acquired for the city gave Congress control over its "streets and avenues." The system of the Board of Commissioners was created as a result of the Organic Act of 1874, abolishing the territorial government. The Organic Act shifted power over the streets from congress to the Engineer Commissioner. In time, this commissioner managed the repair and improvement of all thoroughfares including the publicly dedicated county roads—then known as "highways." Between 1874 and 1887, this was the system of government for public streets. However, in 1887, property owners sued at the proposed widening of Columbia Road. The property owners won the suit, and it was declared that only Congress could create or extend a county street or improvement through an official appropriation of funds. Therefore, all future improvements by the Commissioners were sanctioned by Congressional appropriations. In the 1890s, the following highways were opened and/or improved by Congress: Thirty-Seventh Street, opened below Tenallytown Road; North Capitol Street, completed to the Old Soldiers

[15] Michael R. Harrison, "The 'Evil of the Misfit Subdivisions': Creating the Permanent System of Highways in the District of Columbia," *Washington History* Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2002): 28-29.
[16] Michael R. Harrison, "The 'Evil of the Misfit Subdivisions': Creating the Permanent System of Highways in the District of Columbia," *Washington History* Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2002): 28-29.
[17] Michael R. Harrison, "The 'Evil of the Misfit Subdivisions': Creating the Permanent System of Highways in the District of Columbia," *Washington History* Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2002): 29-34.

Home; and Observatory Circle, created along the new course of the extended Massachusetts Avenue. Facing limited authority, the Commissioners were unable to pass numerous other street proposals that involved access to existing suburban developments.[18]

In concert with the course of Washington's suburban development, there also existed a growing advocacy for comprehensive planning. As early as 1879, Army First Lieutenant Francis V. Greene, an assistant to Engineer Commissioner Major William J. Twining, called for government intervention. Greene and many others advocated for a plan that would respect the grandeur of Washington City's layout, calling to everyone's attention the havoc created by uncontrolled development. Greene even read a petition signed by 107 Washingtonians demanding control over what would become urban planning. Between 1886 and 1889, the House and Senate District Committees would hear at least ten bills related to comprehensive street planning.[19]

Congress approved an act (45 Stat. 451) that led to a more comprehensive approach to street planning on August 27, 1888, requiring new subdivisions to conform to the plan of the City of Washington. Subsequently, the Board of Commissioners published orders for platting and subdividing in compliance with the terms of the Subdivision Act, as it was generally called. The orders spelled out the precise widths for all thoroughfares, requiring that avenues and streets correspond to the direction and dimension of those in the city.[20]

After the Subdivision Act went into effect, City Engineer Frederick P. Spalding approved sixteen subdivisions, including Petworth, Brightwood, the Palisades, and Ingleside. And while new subdivisions were developed under the new law that created vast neighborhoods such as Petworth and Brightwood, problems began to unfold as a result of too many years of non-compliance, in addition to differences in topographic conditions between Washington City and its outlying areas. For example, roughly forty three of the older, non-conforming suburbs pre-dated the act, encompassing 4,100 acres. Opinions regarding the feasibility of maintaining the plan of Washington City fluctuated. However, in 1891, Spalding called for a comprehensive plan yet again, urging that new subdivisions be made a part of the whole.[21]

Spalding organized prominent members of the community to support the effort, and a bill was finally introduced by Augustus S. Worthington to create a street plan for the undeveloped portions of the District, also working in the non-complying suburbs whenever possible. The bill included that the local contribution to complete the work would be financed through a $3.2 million bond issue. And while this was debated for several years, it never actually passed in this format. Finally, on March 2, 1893, a law was passed by congress that authorized the creation of a permanent system of highways.[22]

Initial Platting and Development of the Petworth Subdivision and Grant Circle

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[18] Michael R. Harrison, "The 'Evil of the Misfit Subdivisions': Creating the Permanent System of Highways in the District of Columbia," *Washington History* Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2002): 34-38.
[19] Michael R. Harrison, "The 'Evil of the Misfit Subdivisions': Creating the Permanent System of Highways in the District of Columbia," *Washington History* Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2002): 37.
[20] EHT Traceries, Inc. *The Extension of the City: The Highway Plan of 1893 and the Permanent System of Highways in the District of Columbia* (Washington, D.C.: D.C. Historic Preservation Office, June 2009), 24-25.
[21] Michael R. Harrison, "The 'Evil of the Misfit Subdivisions': Creating the Permanent System of Highways in the District of Columbia," *Washington History* Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2002): 42.
[22] EHT Traceries, Inc. *The Extension of the City: The Highway Plan of 1893 and the Permanent System of Highways in the District of Columbia* (Washington, D.C.: D.C. Historic Preservation Office, June 2009), 31-32.

Debates surrounding the passage of the 1888 Subdivision Act occurred simultaneously with the purchase, platting, and formal subdivision of Petworth. In 1888, the two real estate syndicates that had purchased the former Tayloe and Brown estates merged, forming a 387-acre tract. The syndicates hired William Forsyth, the District Surveyor, in a private capacity to extend the L'Enfant Plan into their new subdivision, which retained its historic name of Petworth. A controversy arose in August 1888, when the syndicate was accused of attempting to evade the pending legislation by reducing the widths of certain streets and avenues and eliminating others entirely. However, their intentions were foiled by the passage of the Subdivision Act on August 27. On January 16, 1889, plats of the Petworth subdivision were formally recorded as the first planned development under the new laws regulating such development, effectively making Petworth the first subdivision in the District of Columbia to be planned in accordance with the L'Enfant Plan.[23]

Apart from minor deviations, the layout of Petworth was so much akin to that of Washington City that it effectively became an extension of the L'Enfant Plan. The continuation of the grid arrangement was traversed by three diagonal avenues: New Hampshire and Kansas Avenues, which ran northeast-southwest, and Illinois Avenue, which ran northwest southeast. Where the avenues intersected, Fortsyth established two new traffic circles. The circles were initially named for Civil War Union Generals William Tecumseh Sherman and Philip Henry Sheridan. After a new Sheridan Circle was dedicated along the Massachusetts Avenue extension in June 1889, Sheridan Circle in Petworth was renamed Grant Circle, in the memory of Union Commanding General and two-time President Ulysses S. Grant. Also in June 1889, the owners of the subdivision formally donated the circles and their associated triangle reservations to the United States Government.[24]

[23] Matthew B. Gilmore and Michael R. Harrison, "A Catalogue of Suburban Subdivisions of the District of Columbia, 1854-1902," *Washington History* Vol. 14, No. 2 (Fall/Winter 2002): 49.
[24] "At the District Buildings," *Washington Post*, January 21, 1889, 8.

1894 Hopkins Atlas, Volume 3, Plate 21.

The newly subdivided Petworth plat stands in sharp contrast to the surrounding properties.

Real Estate Plat-Book of Washington, D.C. (Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins, 1894).

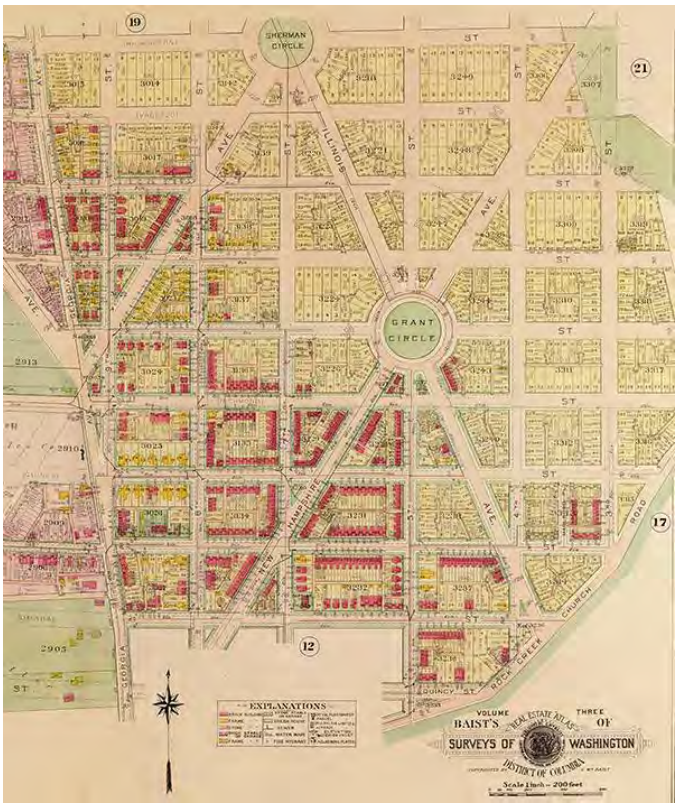
The naming of the circles was in keeping with the nomenclature of Washington City's original circles and squares, which memorialized military and political heroes. Ironically, neither circle received a monument to either of the generals, as was the general custom. A statue of General Sherman was installed south of the Treasury Building in 1904. After this, the "Grant Circle" organization was founded to honor the memory of General Grant. Despite the name, the organization had no connection to the physical Grant Circle, but was rather a women's civic society. This organization would eventually erect a Grant Memorial in Washington, but not at the site of Grant Circle.

Residential Development in Petworth, 1880s-1910s

In 1888, Congress authorized the Brightwood Railroad Company to construct a horse-drawn streetcar line along Seventh Street, the western border of Petworth, between Boundary Street and the District line. The company was owned and funded by the Petworth real estate syndicate, which also spent $40,000 on construction preparation in the southernmost section of the subdivision. Although Petworth seemed poised to flourish as a suburban residential community, the Panic of 1893 halted the developers' ambitions. Development in Petworth and the improvement of Grant and Sherman Circles would languish until the twentieth century.

Also during this period, the northern portion of Petworth continued to be occupied by the Brown Family, who evidently rented the old Marshall Brown mansion from the syndicate. After the family departed the property in 1899, the syndicate leased the building to the Columbia Golf Club to be used as a clubhouse. When the syndicate proposed a dramatic increase in rents, the club relocated to its present location in Chevy Chase, Maryland, reorganizing itself as the Columbia Country Club. A second golf club, the Washington Suburban Club, redeveloped the golf course and associated amenities, although a 1913 fire

severely damaged the Brown mansion and the course and grounds languished until they were developed as residences in the 1920s.[25]



Detail of 1913 Baist Atlas, Volume 3, Plate 18, showing the concentration of development in the southwestern corner of Petworth, just barely reaching Grant Circle.

Baist's Real Estate Atlas Surveys of Washington, D.C. (Philadelphia: G.W. Baist, 1913).

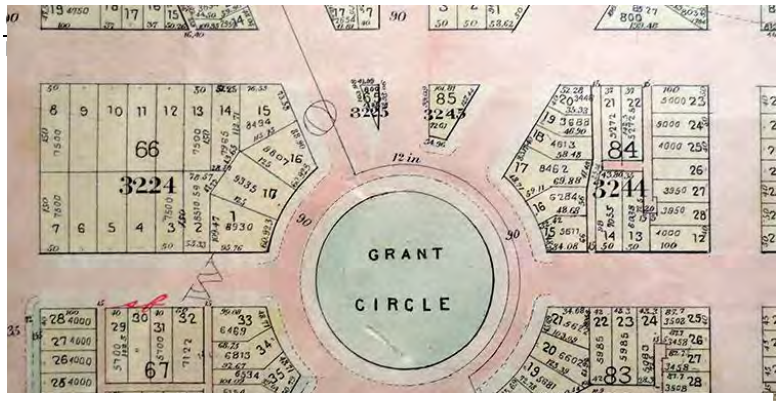
In the first decade of the twentieth century, development in Petworth moved forward, beginning in pockets in the southwestern corner and gradually extending north and east. *Baist's Real Estate Atlases*, published in multi-year intervals during a good portion of the twentieth century, provided a visual representation of the growth and character of residential development in Petworth. The first stride towards the current density of Petworth was made between 1900 and 1910, including the construction of semi-detached houses of masonry or frame construction, masonry rowhouses, and the occasional detached frame or masonry house. The housing shortage experienced in Washington during the 1920s and the corresponding demand for new apartment buildings and single-family rowhouses prompted a surge in development in Petworth. By the 1930s, the neighborhood had been built out almost to capacity.

Residential Development on Grant Circle

Between 1913 and 1929, Grant Circle and its adjacent blocks were fully developed. Unlike later development that would occur in Petworth after 1920, the development of Grant Circle was completed by several small developers, two religious organizations, and one individual.

As originally subdivided, the squares around Grant Circle had fifteen parcels facing the circle, including two on the triangular parks. Lot 17 (then known as 4307 New Hampshire Avenue, later 16 Grant Circle) on the northeast curve of the circle was the first of these to be developed. Leo J. Long, whose profession is listed in contemporary city directories as a carpenter and later a contractor, filed a permit for the construction of the house in June 1913, acting as the architect, owner, and builder. Long's house, which followed the American Foursquare typology was a wood frame structure, clad with pebbledash stucco.

[25] "Draft: Sherman Circle, Rock Creek Park – DC Street Plan Reservation" (unpublished report, National Park Service, Cultural Landscapes Inventory, 2011), 32-33.



Detail of 1907 Baist Atlas, Volume 3, Plate 18, showing the original subdivision of squares around Grant Circle.

Baist's Real Estate Atlas Surveys of Washington, D.C. (Philadelphia: G.W. Baist, 1907).

In the year that intervened between the completion of Long's house circa 1914 and the filing of the permits to construct the next set of residences on the circle, the scale and character of buildings around the circle changed. In February 1915, the builder B.H. Gruver filed a permit to construct ten houses on lots 33-42 (subdivided from former lots 8 and 10) facing Illinois Avenue and Grant Circle.[26] Unlike Long's detached frame house, these were masonry buildings constructed in attached rows, on parcels only twenty feet wide.

The character of construction around the circle continued to follow this rowhouse pattern. In July 1915, the builder M.L. Gottwals filed a permit to develop the two parcels adjacent to Gruver's (lots 43 and 44, at the southeast corner of the circle).[27] Designed by Washington architect Merrill T. Vaughan, these houses were all but indistinguishable from their counterparts to the west. Near the end of that same year, the development company Charles E. Wire, Inc. filed permits to construct four houses facing the southwest corner of the circle, on lots 63-66.[28] These buildings were somewhat more grandiose than their residential counterparts to the north and east, but otherwise followed the same essential pattern.

The final set of private residences developed on the circle was constructed in 1919. In March, Gruver filed permits for a row of five houses on lots 29-33.[29] Sharing a square with Long's house, these buildings were designed by well-known Washington architect George T. Santmyers, Later that month, the developer Harris Shapiro enlisted Santmyers to design three matching rowhouses on lots 45, 46, and 47 (now lots 45, 48, and 49).[30]

Alley Development

Like much of Washington, Petworth was platted to include alleys that corresponded with the primary streets in the neighborhood. Given the irregular organization of the squares around Grant Circle, the alleys did not align with the prototypical H- or T-configuration, and it appears that adjustments to their plans were made over time to ensure access. Many owners erected garages at the rear of their properties facing the alley, most within one to five years of construction of the primary building. These buildings, although vernacular and utilitarian in nature, nevertheless complemented the architectural character of their houses. Some, like those behind 11 Grant Circle, featured molded concrete blocks that added a decorative flair to the building.

[26] Permit #3015, February 1, 1915.
[27] Permit #325, July 21, 1915.
[28] Permit #2590, December 3, 1915.
[29] Permit #2533, March 11, 1919.
[30] Permit #2745, March 26, 1919.

1935 Photograph of Petworth Methodist Episcopal Church, taken on the occasion of its thirtieth anniversary.

Evening Star Collection, Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library

Church Development on the Circle

Petworth United Methodist Church (former Petworth Methodist Episcopal Church)

Petworth Methodist Episcopal Church was constructed in 1915-1916, with a major addition in 1938-1939. The building was designed by Irish-born architect Maurice F. Moore and constructed by Charles E. Wire, who was a member of the congregation and resident of the neighborhood. The design of the church—which one article states was modeled after church architecture during the life of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism—was noted for its innovative octagonal design, which incorporated diverse programmatic features including the main auditorium (with a 600-person capacity); a basement parish hall and gymnasium; and rooms for the choir, vestry, and nursery.[31] Although the building was nestled tightly between its adjacent rowhouses, its unique architectural character as well as frontage along Grant Circle and New Hampshire Avenue assured its visual prominence.

In October 1915, Wire filed a permit to construct the building, which had an estimated cost of $35,000. The brick façade was originally intended to be trimmed with limestone, although terra cotta was later substituted. The cornerstone was laid in December, and the building was completed around September 1916.[32] The development of the church building was completed concurrently with the four residential properties (now 29-32 Grant Circle) to the north. Wire also developed these properties, filing a permit to build in December 1915.[33] The southernmost residence, connected to the church building via a short hyphen, became the parsonage for the Methodist Episcopal Church.

In the late 1930s, the church constructed an addition to expand its educational facilities on the site. Although the large, three-story addition was not visible from Grant Circle or New Hampshire Avenue, it approximately doubled the footprint of the original building, with frontage along the rear alley. The new facility, estimated to cost $45,000 to construct, was designed to house a new nursery, classrooms for various age groups, a new chapel, and other offices. It was simpler in character than the original building, with a flat roof and metal-frame windows. A groundbreaking ceremony for the new building was held in August 1938, in a ceremony attended by 500 parishioners, including one of the two surviving charter members of the Petworth Methodist Church.[34]

[31] "Innovations for Church," *Washington Post*, October 24, 1915, B6; "Church To Be Begun Soon," *Washington Post*, May 30, 1915, B6.
[32] Permit #1794, October 1, 1915.
[33] Permit #2590, December 3, 1915.
[34] "Petworth Methodist Church Starts Sunday School Building," *Washington Post*, August 8, 1938, 11; "Church Heads To Take Part in Petworth Rites," *Washington Post*, August 6, 1938, X5.

1930-1950 Photograph of St. Gabriel's Church, taken from Grant Circle.

Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division

St. Gabriel's Catholic Church, School, and Rectory

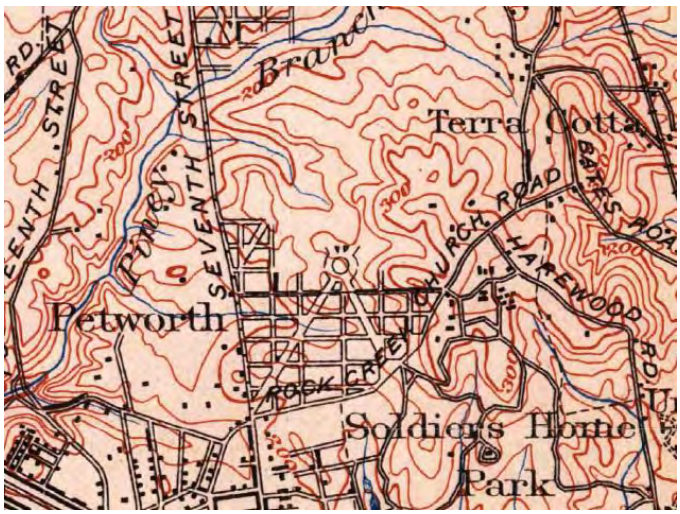
St. Gabriel's was founded by Father (later Bishop) John M. McNamara in 1919, and it became the first Catholic parish in the rapidly expanding neighborhood of Petworth.[35] In February 1920, D.J. Dunigan (who was also a major residential developer in the vicinity of Grant Circle) filed a permit to erect a modest frame building facing Varnum Street, likely as a temporary place of worship while the parish raised funds for a more permanent edifice.[36] Although the church property facing Grant Circle remained mostly undeveloped for a number of years, the remainder of the square was developed with single-family rowhouses between 1920 and 1922.

In May 1923, McNamara filed a permit to construct a school on the property, at the northwest corner of the site facing Webster Street.[37] The two-story, stone-clad building was designed by the Boston-based architectural firm Maginnis & Walsh. Frederick V. Murphy, a professor of architecture at the Catholic University of America, also contributed to the design of the school building. During this time, Murphy was also collaborating with Maginnis & Walsh to design the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. Although simple in form and character, the school's stone façade and Late Gothic Revival style set an architectural precedent that would be continued throughout the campus's subsequent development. It also established a relationship between St. Gabriel's and the firm of Maginnis & Walsh that would last until the completion of the church itself in 1930 (see below for more information on the firm).

The following year, the construction of the school was followed by a convent located directly to the south, facing Varnum Street.[38] McNamara filed the permit for the building in May, and several months later filed another for a second dwelling to the east, facing the circle, that would become the church's rectory.[39] Both buildings were designed by Maginnis & Walsh. In September 1924, the school officially opened to 373 students, instructed by the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, who occupied the convent. Both the convent and rectory were completed in 1925.[40]

[35] McNamara was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Baltimore by Pope Pius XI in 1927. He was consecrated the following year by Archbishop Michael J. Curley.
[36] Permit #4332, February 19, 1920. Other documentation suggests that the church operated out of a former Knights of Columbus building on the same site constructed during World War I. Neither building appears on contemporary maps, and it is not clear what exactly was constructed.
[37] Permit #11101, May 28, 1923.
[38] Permit #1499, August 12, 1924.
[39] Permit #4775, November 12, 1924.
[40] "Parish History," St. Gabriel's Church, accessed February 12, 2015, http://stgabrieldc.org/about-us/parish-history/.

After nearly a decade of development on the property, Bishop McNamara's ambition for St. Gabriel's finally culminated in the construction of a permanent church for the site. Permits were filed for the building in October 1929, with an estimated cost of $250,000 for the stone, concrete, and steel structure.[41] The following spring, McNamara and Archbishop Michael J. Curley presided over the laying of the church cornerstone, in a dedication ceremony that drew a crowd of 5,000 attendees.[42] Following a vigorous fundraising campaign, the church was completed and dedicated, again by Curley and McNamara, in December 1930.[43]



1900 USGS Map, showing gradual improvement of the Petworth Subdivision (Grant Circle at center, Sherman Circle not yet developed).

United States Geological Survey

Landscaping of Grant Circle and Triangle Parks

Much like the residential development within the Petworth plat, the subdivision's actual avenues, streets, and circles experienced a delay between their subdivision in 1889 and actual eventual improvement in the 1910s and 1920s. The southern portions were the earliest to develop. As late as 1916, however, parts of the vicinity of Grant Circle were still lacking in major improvements. That year, the Commissioners of the District of Columbia recommended the following infrastructure improvements: grading, paving, and laying sidewalks along Varnum Street from Seventh Street to Grant Circle; macadamizing Fifth Street between Rock Creek Church Road and Grant Circle; and improving Grant Circle itself.[44]

These improvements likely included grading the circle, laying a concrete sidewalk around its perimeter, and paving the traffic rotary (of the same name) around the circle. A plan for the permanent improvement and landscaping of Grant Circle was produced in April 1921 by Irving W. Payne, a landscape architect for the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds of the National Capital.[45] In 1922, an article published by the *Washington Post* recorded the tension between neighborhood children—who enjoyed the unimproved park as a play and ball field—and residents, who regarded them as a nuisance:

> Improvement of Grant Circle at the intersection of New Hampshire avenue and Varnum streets is planned by the office of public buildings and grounds. This will remove it forever as a possible play space for the hundreds of little children of that section.

[41] Permit #128389, October 23,
[42] "New St. Gabriel's Corner Stone Laid," *Washington Po*
[43] "Archbishop Curley to Dedicate Church," *Washington P*
[44] "Officers Re-elected by Petworth Citizens," *Evening Sta*
[45] "Reservation 312: Grant Circle General Plan." Office c ıl
Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 79, F

> At the present time the large circle is nothing but a circle of unimproved land, but when the children went there to play this year they found a number of "baseball forbidden" signs surrounding the circle.[46]

These plans, however, were not implemented, but rather were superseded by a later set of drawings in March 1924.[47] These drawings, also produced by Payne, were largely identical to the earlier, 1921 set. A majority of planting and some additional grading of Grant Circle appear to have been conducted between 1925 and 1926. The 1926 annual report of the Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks noted that, by this time, a majority of improvements had been completed, but recommended that an additional $5,000 be spent to complete them. In that same report, the Director allocated $15,000 for the improvement of Sherman Circle and its four associated triangle parks (although these were not permanent improvements, which would occur later).[48]

"'Their' Playground"—cartoon accompanying 1922 article, showing children sitting on the curb of Grant Circle. *Washington Post*

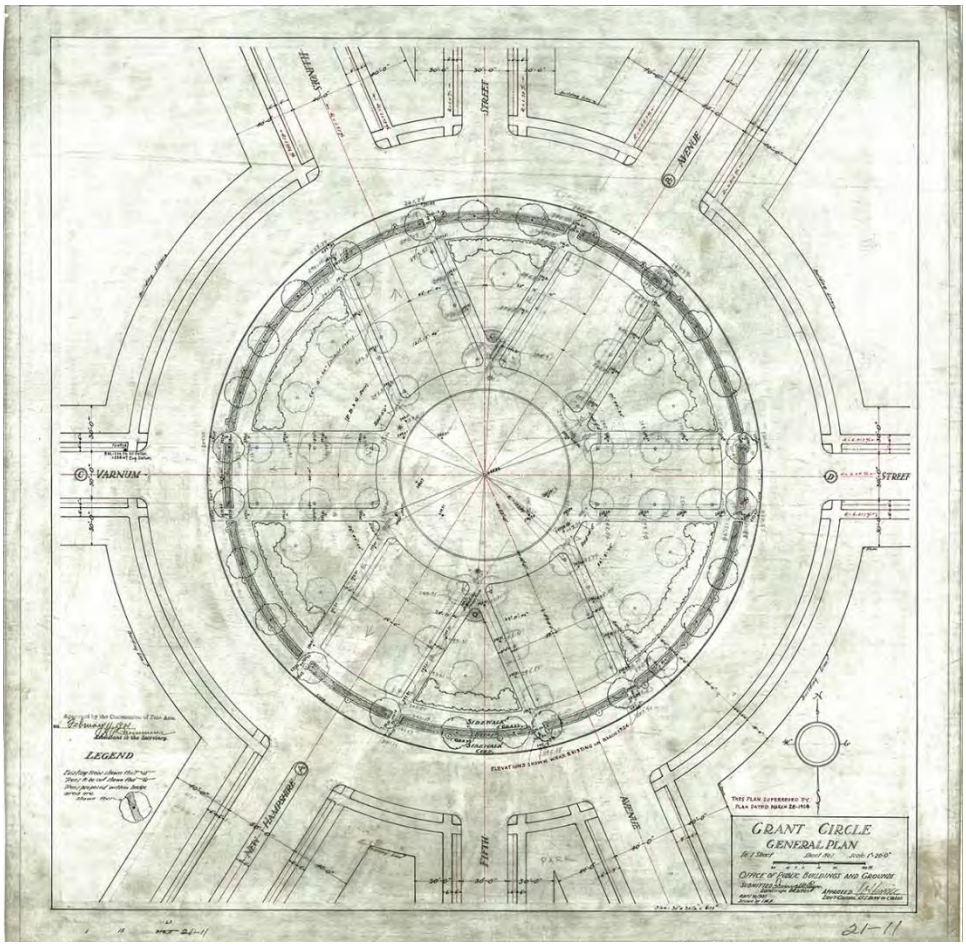
Concurrent development of the Grant Memorial at the foot of the U.S. Capitol necessitated the removal of the Bartholdi Fountain, an elaborate figurative fountain which until then was located on the site of the old Botanic Garden. From 1925 to 1926, the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts recommended that the fountain be installed in Grant Circle, although this recommendation was never acted upon, and the fountain was later relocated to a new site south of the current Botanic Garden.[49]

The following year, a large flower bed in Grant Circle was replaced with a grove of evergreen trees and shrubs.[50] Soon after this landscaping was completed, an automobile accidentally plowed through the circle, necessitating the replacement of five of the large evergreen trees and one deciduous tree.[51] A 1927 survey of public reservations, completed by the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, captured a very open landscape at Grant Circle, with immature plantings (including no trees in the center) and no paving on the interior. The interior sidewalks were probably not added until after 1928, as recorded in a jointing plan produced by the Office of Public Buildings and Public Grounds.[52]

Therefore, it appears that the improvement of Grant Circle was completed in phases between 1921 and 1928. The design of the paving and planting within the circle was first planned in 1921 and again in 1924, was implemented between 1925 and 1927, and underwent major alterations to the planting of the

[46] "Children To Lose Another Play Site by Improvements," *Evening Star*, April 6, 1922, 1.
[47] "Reservation 312: Grant Circle General Plan." Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. March 28, 1924. National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 79, Records of the National Park Service.
[48] *Annual Report of the Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1926), 32.
[49] "Grant Circle Urged for Bartholdi Fount," *Washington Post*, March 9, 1926, 22.
[50] *Annual Report of the Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1927), 32.
[51] *Annual Report of the Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1928), 23.
[52] "Grant Circle: Jointing Plan," Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital. June 13, 1928. National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 79, Records of the National Park Service.

central bed in both 1927 and 1928. Although not explicitly mentioned in available reports or drawings, it is likely that the existing Cedar of Lebanon was planted in the circle in 1927 or 1928.[53]



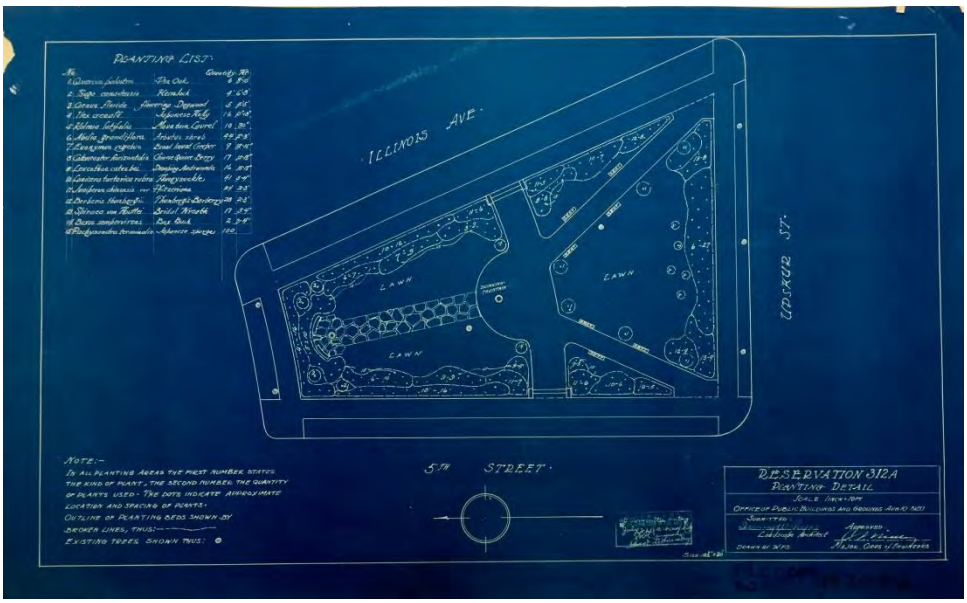
"Grant Circle: General Plan," Produced by the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, landscape architect Irving W. Payne, April 1921.

National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 79, Records of the National Park Service

[53] To obtain a more complete understanding of the development of Grant Circle and its associated triangle parks, additional research should be conducted at the office of the National Capital Region, National Park Service, which maintains detailed land records regarding the improvement and maintenance of its public reservations.

1927 Photograph facing northeast along New Hampshire Avenue toward Grant Circle.

Historical Society of Washington, D.C.



"Reservation 312A: Planting Detail," Produced by the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds.

National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 79, Records of the National Park Service.

The improvement of Reservation 312A (south of Grant Circle) appears to have been conducted in tandem with the circle. A plan was produced in August 1920 to pave and plant the triangle park.[54] Although it is not clear when these improvements were completed, the existing configuration of the park is largely faithful to this original design. As late as the 1960s, Reservation 312I (north of the circle) had some planting but no interior paving, and therefore it is not clear when that triangle was improved.

[54] "Reservation 312A: Planting Detail," Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. August 10, 1920. National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 79, Records of the National Park Service.

1954 Aerial Photograph over Grant and Sherman Circles

Evening Star Collection, Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library

Later Development of Grant Circle

To the north of Grant Circle, Sherman Circle was later to develop. Permanent improvement of the circle was completed by 1936, with plans prepared in 1928.[55] The two parks had strong formal similarities, both featuring simple yet attractive designs of concentric circles connected with radial paths. In contrast to Grant Circle, however, whose massive Cedar of Lebanon acted as a central focal point, the center of Sherman Circle was left open to preserve the viewshed along Illinois Avenue. Nevertheless, the landscape of Grant Circle was always compared favorably to that of Sherman, both in appearance and general condition.[56]

In the early 1990s, extension of the Metro's Green line proposed tunneling under New Hampshire Avenue and Grant Circle. Amidst fears that the landscaping on Grant Circle would be damaged by Metro construction, the residents rallied to ensure protection of the circle and its mature trees. Tunneling under the circle was completed in 1997, and the park was subsequently rehabilitated with new concrete sidewalks, turf, and trees. Four mature conifers, including the Cedar of Lebanon at the center, were protected during construction. Today, the only visual reminder of this disruption is a set of metal grates on the southern side of the circle.[57]

[55] "Draft: Sherman Circle, Rock Creek Park – DC Street Plan Reservation" (unpublished report, National Park Service, Cultural Landscapes Inventory, 2011), 13-14.
[56] "Draft: Sherman Circle, Rock Creek Park – DC Street Plan Reservation" (unpublished report, National Park Service, Cultural Landscapes Inventory, 2011), 62-63.
[57] Stephen C. Fehr, "Grant Circle Warily Eyes Going Green," *Washington Post*, March 7, 1992, E:1; Alice Reid, "Refurbished Park Is a Reward for Petworth," *Washington Post*, December 26, 1997, B:3.

Early Domestic History of Grant Circle

From the time of its primary development as a residential neighborhood, Grant Circle and the larger Petworth neighborhood were home to a predominantly middle class population interspersed with upper- middle-class residences and housing suited for working class families. Just a few blocks to the west of Grant Circle, a large complex of schools was built during the time the neighborhood was developed. One-story shops could be found on Upshur Street a few blocks east or west of the circle, and near the schools were larger commercial venues.[58]

The early families of Grant Circle were solidly middle class, as most of the houses were for purchase from the time they were constructed, and most rentals were the result of Washington's transient population. By 1930, the houses that faced onto Grant Circle included the following households: an electrotype moulder for the U.S. Government (4 Grant Circle); a railway clerk (5); a foreman carpenter for a building contractor (6); an audit reviewer for the U.S. Government, insurance clerk, and stenographer (7); a clerk for the U.S. Government (8); an accountant (9); and a detective (10).[59]

During this period, Petworth developed a reputation for being a tight-knit community with a strong sense of civic engagement, having numerous large community groups that were highly vibrant during its first fifty years of existence. In 1939, the *Washington Post* published a lengthy article on the culture of the neighborhood, which merits an extended quotation here:

> Petworth, which is centered by Grant Circle and has within its boundaries the biggest group of public educational buildings in the District, has been a long time a-growing. And now it is demanding a peaceful middle age in which to enjoy its development.
>
> By the time Petworth Branch Library was opened last January, almost everything the community had been fighting for—except playgrounds—had become realties. Since the turn of the century, civic and religious groups had been fighting to get first one street paved and then another to get first one plot set aside for schools then two.
>
> …Since Petworth residents like their community and have no desire to be forced "out into the suburbs" against their wishes, they remaining organized. Their Citizens' Association of 1,300 members is the second largest in the District. Their Women's Club this year celebrated its silver anniversary, stronger and more civic-minded than ever. Their Home and School Association, their churches, and numerous other groups are geared for trigger action when the "threat of invasion" is breathed.

Grant Circle —It's a Sunday Kind of Place

By Matt McDade
Post Reporter

Take a quiet country village from the hinterlands, place it in the heart of this glittering metropolis — and the effect would be that of Grant Circle on Sunday.

The Circle is a Sunday kind of place, a placid island where Illinois and New Hampshire aves. meet with a hopscotch of cross streets.

Not a traffic signal or neon sign intrudes on the pattern of green in the Circle, or its perimeter of snug, brick row homes and two imposing houses of worship. The center of Petworth, Grant Circle is an insular and middle-aged are a which, in appearance at least, has remained remarkably remote from the traffic that flows about it.

Sunday Sights, Sounds

As befits a village square, the Circle is dominated by a great Cedar of Lebanon, in place of man-made statuary.

Yesterday, the only sign of commerce was the bustling enterprise of four newsboys, stationed near St. Gabriel's Church with a stack of Sunday papers. Worshipers of both St. Gabriel's and nearby Petworth Methodist Church lined up to buy.

The sights and sounds were those of Sunday, too. Beginning at 7 a. m., when the first mass was celebrated, arrivals and departures at St. Gabriel's marked the passing of the hour. Services at Petworth Methodist got under way with church school at 9:30 a. m. Shortly after morning worship opened at 11, the strains of "Jesus, Stand Among Us" rolled from the open church doors.

The natives of Grant Circle and immediate area are proud of their beautifully landscaped Circle—one of the largest in Washington—and the two churches. They are faithful churchgoers.

"Grant Circle—It's a Sunday Kind of Place," *Washington Post*, December 10, 1951

[58] The Roosevelt and McFarland School complex was actually located outside the boundaries of the original subdivision, but are usually considered as part of the neighborhood.
[59] *Fifteenth Census of the United States* (1930) (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 29).

> …No Washington section has more community consciousness, nor works harder to keep it. Petworth is distinctively Petworth. Other sections might work to get a piece of statuary for the circles in their neighborhood, for instance; but Petworth has worked to keep statuary out of Grant Circle—preferring Cedar of Lebanon.[60]

White Flight and the Emergence of an African American Middle Class in Grant Circle

On November 11, 1950, one of the first advertisements of its kind was published by the *Evening Star* in relationship to Grant Circle:

COLORED
Grant Circle, N.W.
First offering on this circle for colored. Must sell quickly. Dignified 6-rm, brick, concrete front porch, 2 inclosed back porches; gas h.w.h.; full bsmt., garage and large back yard. Excellent condition. Call Mr. Selden. Sun, and eves., FR. 9256. Weekdays.
John R. Pinkett, Inc.
1302 New Jersey ave, n.w. DU, 0707.[61]

An earlier similar advertisement had been placed in the same paper in May of 1950 for the corner house on New Hampshire Avenue, abutting Grant Circle, but the outcome of this advertisement is unclear.[62] Prior to 1950, advertisements for houses in Grant Circle and Petworth were worded very similarly; however, there was one major difference—the word "Colored" was not spelled out in bold at the top line in relationship to the neighborhood. Grant Circle was one of the "white" middle class neighborhoods in what was basically a southern town. This advertising format was the standard at the time, specifying to African American buyers where they were and were not welcome. While African Americans suffered from this injustice perhaps more than any other group in America, this type of discrimination was not exclusive to blacks. For example, Jews were discriminated against in the same manner with traditional Judaic symbolism. For example, a developer might use a Star of David at the top of the advertisement or in one of its corners. These were common forms of printed discrimination in most American newspapers through the time of the Civil Rights Movement. In the aftermath of the movement, words like "Colored" became less common and discrimination took on new forms. For example, instead of "No Jews," an advertisement might simply read "churches nearby."[63]

In late 1950, Samuel B. Harris made one of the boldest moves of his life, when he became one of the "first purchasers" on Grant Circle. As an African American, Harris's decision to buy 5 Grant Circle was one that took incredible courage at a time when his actions were seen by his new neighbors as completely alien to their social order. Harris's reception to the neighborhood was entirely negative. Not only would no one speak to him, but he received threats in writing and over the telephone for the first year or two that he owned the home. Naturally, this was frightening to a relatively quiet, but well-dressed postal worker. Nevertheless, Harris persevered.[64]

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[60] Christine Sadler, "Our Town: Petworth Really a Community Conscious Area," *Washington Post*, October 3, 1939, 15.
[61] "Colored," *Washington Evening Star*, November 10, 1950.
[62] "Colored Special," *Washington Evening Star*, May 1950 (various dates).
[63] Irwin Richman, telephone interview by Oscar Beisert, January 28, 2015.
[64] Paul E. Logan, interview by Oscar Beisert, February 9, 2015.

Nearly one year later, James and Anna Lewis, a young African American couple, purchased the corner house at 4215 Illinois Avenue, which had been advertised as being available in the *Evening Star.*[65] When the Lewises moved in, there was heavy opposition that eventually was tied up in legal proceedings with neighbors. The Lewises won the lawsuit and, as a result, centenarian Anna Lewis is to-date one of Grant Circle's first African American residents. In 2015, Lewis celebrated her 103rd birthday; having lived on Grant Circle for nearly sixty-five years, she is also the circle's longest inhabitant.[66]

Just four months after Samuel B. Harris purchased 5 Grant Circle, Ella Elizabeth Wing, a sixty-four-year-old first generation American of German and Swiss parentage, discreetly approached Harris, her new neighbor, to let him know that the following advertisement had been placed in the *Evening Star* on April 15, 1951:

COLORED
4 Grant Circle
$14,950
20-ft.row brick home in excellent condition: living rm., dining rm., fine kit., 3 bedrooms, bath, inclosed porch and basement with front and back entrances and lavatory; awnings and storm windows; terms available.
OPEN TODAY
1 TO 6
WAGGAMAN-BRAWNER
ME.3860; Eves., JU. 7-8864. [67]

Several decades earlier, Clinton Franklin Wing, an Electrotype Molder at the U.S. Government Printing Office, probably felt as though he had arrived when he purchased 4 Grant Circle in the 1920s. He and his wife, Ella Elizabeth Wing, moved into the house and would live there, like many people did at the time, for many years until African Americans began moving into the neighborhood in late 1950.[68] When "Mrs. Wing," by then a widow, approached her new neighbor, Harris contacted his brother-in-law, Alphonso Logan, who had married Harris's sister Jane. Born in 1906, Alphonso Logan was the son of Ellis Logan, who worked in a furniture store and rented house for his family at 1220 Twelfth Street, N.W. After the untimely death of her husband, Mary Logan, Alphonso's mother, would remain in this house with where she would raise her five children. Alphonso was single for many years before he married Jane Harris, but the two would move on to purchase 4 Grant Circle. Paul E. Logan, remembering the day that he, then a young child, accompanied his parents to see the house in the spring of 1951: "Mrs. Wing offered us the high quality living and dining room furniture for just $125. There was one of those curved breakfronts in the dining room. It was like she wanted out of there as quickly as possible and couldn't even take all of her possessions."[69]

[65] "For Colored, Grant Circle and Ill. Ave.," *Washington Evening Star*, November 1, 1951, 59.
[66] Paul E. Logan, interview by Oscar Beisert, February 9, 2015.
[67] "4 Grant Circle," *Washington Evening Star*, April 15, 1951, 99; Paul E. Logan, interview by Oscar Beisert, February 9, 2015; *Sixteenth Census of the United States* (1940) (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 29).
[68] *Fifteenth Census of the United States* (1930), *Sixteenth Census of the United States* (1940) (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 29).
[69] Paul E. Logan, interview by Oscar Beisert, February 9, 2015.

Grant Circle —It's a Sunday Kind of Place

By Matt McDade
Post Reporter

Pride of Community

The old families of the Circle —like the Joneses and Fieldings and Bookhultzes—came there many years ago, when Petworth was a young development in a woodland.

Until recently, the natives had a feeling of permanence that is unusual in the transient atmosphere of the Nation's capital.

But younger generations are moving from the Circle to the suburbs. The legion of tradespeople who lived a quiet village-like lfie, is giving way to newcomers.

Accepting the change, two old families on the south side of the Circle recently made a pact. If one decides to sell the family home and move away, so will the other.

"Grant Circle—It's a Sunday Kind of Place," *Washington Post*, December 10, 1951 (continuation of previous article)

Near the end of the "white exodus," in 1953, George E. Newport, then forty-three, and his wife Vernah made, what their daughter later described as, the hardest decision of their lives. "They focused on the stand up shower and the right to vote. Father became a democrat and mom a republican, having not seen a reason to think of it before. Although they were upset when Harry Truman replaced FDR," said Vernah Newport Williams of her family's removal from Petworth to Maryland, as one of the last "white hold-outs" in the neighborhood.[70] The Newports had been a Grant Circle fixture since 1917, when Williams's grandfather, Admiral John F. Newport, a lifelong naval officer and Tennessee transplant, moved into the corner house at 432 Upshur Street. After the previous owner foreclosed on his new house, the Newports bought the place, built a garage for their "Model A," joined the Petworth Citizens Association, and raised three generations of their family.[71]

Shirley Otesia Barr was just a girl when her parents bought what would become their family home at 11 Grant Circle. In 2015, when Ms. Barr stands at the oblong branch of the Cedar of Lebanon in Grant Circle; she remembers when it was low enough to sit on. Otis Barr, her father, bought the house in the early 1950s, just like the Harrises and the Logans, as one of the early African American buyers. "My parents loved the house when they bought it. It was beautiful," said Ms. Barr, recollecting her early days in Grant Circle.[72]

An important part of the history of Grant Circle is the story of the demographics that changed in 1950. The "white flight" that occurred is a representation of how white, middle-class Washingtonians felt about living near African Americans in the mid-twentieth century. This was a national trend throughout American cities that occurred from the post-World War II period through the 1950s and 1960s. At Grant Circle, this change led to more than just a change in demographics, it documented the emergence of an African American middle class.

Major Architects, Builders, and Developers

The buildings around Grant Circle represent the work of several of Washington's most prolific residential developers and architects, who collectively had a great influence on the Washington's suburban expansion, developing subdivisions that followed the urban pattern of Washington City but also exhibited a remarkable continuity across neighborhoods. Additionally, Maginnis & Walsh was a nationally known architectural firm, with predominantly religious institutional clients, including several major commissions in Washington, D.C.

[70] Verna Williams, interview by Oscar Beisert, February 8, 2015.
[71] Petworth Citizens Association Pamphlet, circa 1920 (Historical Society of Washington, D.C.).
[72] Shirley Otesia Barr, interview by Oscar Beisert, February 5, 2015.

Benjamin H. Gruver, later Gruver Cooley (4-5, 11-15 Grant Circle)

The most active developer on Grant Circle was B. H. Gruver, a development company founded in 1908 by J.S. Gruver upon his arrival to Washington.[73] He was later joined by his cousin, Benjamin H. Gruver. Between 1914 and 1926, Benjamin appears to have led the firm, with his initials appearing on advertisements and building permits. Between 1914 and 1926, B.H. Gruver developed nearly five-hundred residences in neighborhoods throughout the District, including Petworth, Brightwood, Cleveland Park, and Mount Pleasant.[74]

Between 1915 and 1919, the firm developed nearly half of the private houses with addresses on the circle, in addition to many more on the streets and avenues that ran through and near it. Like the Grant Circle and its vicinity, many of these buildings were constructed in contiguous rows with only minor architectural variation between them. Additionally, most were designed by the George T. Santmyers, Washington's most prolific architect during the period.

In the late 1920s, Benjamin's son Dorie C. Gruver took over management of the company. During this period, the Gruver firm was most noted for its development of Glover Park. Santmyers continued to be the Gruvers' architect of choice, designing homes in much the same urban pattern, although he incorporated more diverse rooflines as well as Tudor Revival architectural elements. In 1946, the Gruvers merged with Charles and William Cooley, another family-run development company active in Glover Park, to form Gruver Cooley Construction, a firm that remains active to the present.[75]

Charles E. Wire, Inc. (29-32 Grant Circle)

Charles E. Wire had a long history of development in the Petworth neighborhood and is credited with the instrumental role he played in the early development of Petworth after the extension of the streetcar line and its electrification in the 1890s. Wire, who had begun his building and real estate company in Washington in 1904, continued his partnership with the architect William C. Allard into 1907, further developing areas of Webster Street (where Wire also lived), and by 1909, moving into areas of Mount Pleasant and Columbia Heights. During this period, Wire also began to work with his brother, designer and engineer William J. Wire, developing areas in Columbia Heights and Sixteenth Street Heights.[76]

Around 1913, Wire established his own speculative development company, Charles E. Wire, Inc. Through his new firm, Wire designed, developed, and constructed a number of buildings on and around Grant Circle. In 1915, Wire constructed the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Petworth, now known as the Petworth United Methodist Church, which was designed by architect Maurice F. Moore. At the time of its construction, Wire, a nearby resident, was also a congregant of the church. Shortly thereafter, Wire obtained a permit for the construction of four adjacent row houses on Grant Circle.

Wire's accomplishments continued with the development of 140 homes and a limited amount of retail space on a ten acre piece of land located in Fourteenth Street Heights. During this period, Wire had also

[73] "Glover Park, As Advertised," Glover Park History, accessed February 10, 2015, http://gloverparkhistory.com/glover-park/residential-development-since-1926/glover-park-advertisement/.
[74] D.C. Historic Building Permits Database, accessed February 11, 2015.
[75] "Our History," Gruver Cooley Construction Company, accessed February 10, 2015, http://gruvercooley.com/about-gruver-cooley/our-history.
[76] EHT Traceries, "Charles E. Wire," in *DC Builders and Developers Directory* (Washington, D.C.: D.C. Historic Preservation Office, 2012), 2.

begun to invest in Chevy Chase, Maryland. In the early 1920s, Wire formed Charles E. Wire & Sons, with his son Charles Raymond. His other sons, Preston and Marvin, may have also worked for their father and brother's company. This newly formed entity constructed two very successful developments in this area of Maryland: Chevy Chase Grove and Blagden Park. Both were begun in 1925, the former being identified by the *Washington Post* as one of the most successful developments in the National Capital. Wire also constructed a home for himself within this development, 3521 Rittenhouse Street. In 1935, Wire declared bankruptcy, and by 1940 had moved to a row house on Madison Street, N.W. After this time, he continued his business as a real estate agent, frequently selling houses developed by his son, Marvin M. Wire.[77]

George T. Santmyers (8-15 Grant Circle)

George T. Santmyers stands as one of Washington's most prolific and important architects of the twentieth century. Over his fifty years of practice within the District of Columbia, the design of 15,689 buildings has been attributed to Santmyers, a staggering figure. In comparison, only a handful of other architects in the Nation's Capital designed over 1,000 buildings, none of which having designed more than 1,600 during their respective careers.[78]

Santmyers had established himself as a draftsmen and architect in Washington around 1909. By 1914, at the age of 25, he had set up his own architectural firm. At the beginning of his career, his commissions consisted mainly of single-family homes, principally rowhouses, a few small apartment buildings, and rows of one-story stores.[79] It is during this period that Santmyers was commissioned by Harris Shapiro, a Washington, D.C. builder, to design 8-10 Grant Circle, a set of three row houses to the south of Varnum Street, N.W., along the southeast side of Grant Circle. B.H. Gruver, another Washington, D.C. builder, hired Santmyers almost simultaneously to design 11-15 Grant Circle.

By the mid-1920s, Santmyers began to receive commissions for a number of larger apartment buildings, in addition to row houses and flats. This trend continued through the 1930s and 1940s with the establishment of the Federal Housing Administration. Throughout his career, Santmyers's use of architectural styles evolved, from his early use of the Colonial Revival style and inspiration from classical architecture to his exploration of the modern aesthetic and, lastly, his later designs in the Art Deco, Art Moderne, and International styles.[80] Santmyers is widely recognized for his employment of the latter styles, but his inclusive design legacy in Washington remains unmatched.

Maginnis & Walsh (St Gabriel's, 26 Grant Circle)

By the time they began work on the St. Gabriel's campus in the early 1920s, Maginnis & Walsh had established a sterling national reputation as designers of Roman Catholic churches and institutions, predominantly throughout New England and the Mid-Atlantic regions. The firm Maginnis, Walsh, and Sullivan was formed in 1898 by architects Charles D. Maginnis, Timothy Walsh, and Matthew Sullivan.

[77] EHT Traceries, "Charles E. Wire," in *DC Builders and Developers Directory* (Washington, D.C.: D.C. Historic Preservation Office, 2012), 2-3.
[78] EHT Traceries, "George T. Santmyers," in *DC Architects Directory* (Washington, D.C.: D.C. Historic Preservation Office, 2010), 2.
[79] EHT Traceries, "George T. Santmyers," in *DC Architects Directory* (Washington, D.C.: D.C. Historic Preservation Office, 2010), 2.
[80] EHT Traceries, "George T. Santmyers," in *DC Architects Directory* (Washington, D.C.: D.C. Historic Preservation Office, 2010), 2-4.

Sullivan later left the firm, which operated as Maginnis & Walsh from 1908 onward. Charles Maginnis, a proponent of the Arts and Crafts Movement, and often collaborated with master craftsman to produce decorative arts that would embellish his architectural designs. Maginnis went on to receive a Gold Medal from the American Institute of Architects, and served as president of the organization in the 1930s.[81]

During the period they were involved with the construction of St. Gabriel's Church and its associated buildings, Maginnis & Walsh were also the architects for two other major religious buildings in Washington: the Notre Dame Chapel at Trinity College and the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, on the campus of the Catholic University of America.[82] For the latter building, which is the largest Roman Catholic Church in the United States and among the largest churches in the world, the firm collaborated with Frederick V. Murphy, a professor of architecture at Catholic University.[83]

Maurice F. Moore (Petworth Methodist Episcopal, 32 Grant Circle)

Maurice F. Moore was born in Dublin, Ireland in 1874. After graduating from the College of Science and Arts in Dublin, Ireland in 1892, he attended Manhattan College in New York City until 1893. From 1899 until 1905, he was enrolled in an architectural course of study with the International Correspondence School. From 1904 to 1906, Moore was attending lectures at the University of California.[84]

Moore's professional career as an architect began at the firm of Bliss and Forille in San Francisco. Here, Moore served as an architectural draftsman from 1904 until 1906. From 1906 until 1908, he worked with the Reed Brothers, later becoming the chief draftsman at the architectural offices of White and Schumacher in 1908. That year he took a job with the Office of Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department in Washington, D.C., remaining in that position until 1920.[85] While working as a government employee, Moore took on the commission for the First Methodist Episcopal Church. After his tenure with the government ended in 1920, Moore took more private commissions, including private dwellings at 300-310 Kentucky Avenue, S.E., (1921); 301-311 Kentucky Avenue, S.E. (1922); and 1343-1349 C Street, S.E. (1922). He also specialized in religious buildings, with works including St. Martin's Parochial School (1925), St. Augustine's Chapel, School and Convent at 1715 Fifteenth Street, N.W.; and the Convent de Bon Secours (1927).[86]

[81] Milda B. Richardson, "Chancel Remodeling: Charles D. Maginnis (Maginnis & Walsh)" in *The Makers of Trinity Church in the City of Boston,* ed. James F. O'Gorman (Boston, MA: Trinity Church in the City of Boston, 2004), 175-177.
[82] Neither Walsh nor Maginnis would live to see the Shrine completed, however. Walsh died in 1934 and Maginnis in 1955.
[83] "Architecture," Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception," accessed February 11, 2015, http://www.nationalshrine.com/site/c.osJRKVPBJnH/b.4764147/k.9FF6/Architecture.htm.
[84] *National Register # 04001237, Convent de Bon Secours* (Washington, D.C.: National Register of Historic Places, 2003), 8:7.
[85] *National Register # 04001237, Convent de Bon Secours* (Washington, D.C.: National Register of Historic Places, 2003), 8:7-8.
[86] *National Register # 04001237, Convent de Bon Secours* (Washington, D.C.: National Register of Historic Places, 2003), 8:8; D.C. Historic Building Permits Database, accessed February 11, 2015.

Merrill T. Vaughn (6 and 7 Grant Circle)

Merrill T. Vaughn was born in Dover, Delaware in 1883 and was educated at Lehigh Prep in Pennsylvania from 1900 to 1901. From approximately 1900 to 1917, Vaughn was active in the District of Columbia, designing a range single-family dwellings, stores, and flats and apartment buildings. Vaughn was noted in particular for the latter category of building, including the Colonnade at 1822 Vernon Street, N.W. (1910, within the Washington Heights Historic District); the Knickerbocker at 1840 Mintwood Place, N.W. (1909, within the Kalorama Triangle Historic District), and the Saint Regis at 2219 California Street, N.W. (1912; within the Sheridan Kalorama Historic District).[87]

[87] *District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Sites, Alphabetical Version* (Washington, D.C.: D.C. Historic Preservation Office, 2009), 36-141.

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Interviews

Irwin Richman, telephone interview by Oscar Beisert. January 28, 2015.

Paul E. Logan, interview by Oscar Beisert. February 9, 2015.

Shirley Otesia Barr, interview by Oscar Beisert. February 5, 2015.

Verna Williams, interview by Oscar Beisert. February 8, 2015.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

____ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
____ previously listed in the National Register
__X_ 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:

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

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A_____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 10 acres

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: 38.944055° Longitude: -77.021176°
2. Latitude: 38.943580° Longitude: -77.018183°
3. Latitude: 38.942493° Longitude: -77.018267°
4. Latitude: 38.942426° Longitude: -77.020544°

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

The historic district encompasses the nineteen properties with addresses on Grant Circle, N.W., in addition to Grant Circle (Reservation 312) and its associated triangle parks (Reservations 312A and 312I). The boundaries have been drawn from the centerline of

streets and public alleys or from the outer boundaries of contributing properties, as appropriate.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries were drawn to include Grant Circle itself, its associated triangle parks, and all properties with addresses facing the circle. Together, these parcels and their associated buildings convey the architectural and urban character of the district as well as its primary period of development. It is recommended that additional survey and research be undertaken in the future, to develop a more inclusive context of the properties surrounding the circle as well as development of the greater Petworth neighborhood.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Bill Marzella, Kimberly DeMuro, and Oscar Beisert
organization: EHT Traceries, Inc. and Off Boundary Preservation Brigade
street & number: 1121 Fifth Street, N.W.
city or town: Washington state: DC zip code: 20001
e-mail bill.marzella@traceries.com
telephone: (202) 393-1199
date: February 13, 2015

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.)

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.

Key to Photographs

Name of Property:	Grant Circle Historic District
City or Vicinity:	Washington, D.C.
Photographer:	Bill Marzella, EHT Traceries, Inc.
Date Photographed:	February 4, 2015
Location of Original Digital Files:	DC Historic Preservation Office
Number of Photographs	26

View looking northeast showing 4-10 Grant Circle
1 of 26

View facing east showing 4-7 Grant Circle
2 of 26

View facing east showing 8-10 Grant Circle
3 of 26

View looking north showing garage at 6 (rear) Grant Circle
4 of 26

View looking northeast showing 11-12 Grant Circle
5 of 26

View facing east showing 13-15 Grant Circle
6 of 26

View looking northeast showing 16 Grant Circle (demolished May 2015)
7 of 26

View looking southeast showing 16 Grant Circle
8 of 26

View looking north showing garage at 11 (rear) Grant Circle
9 of 26

View facing northwest showing garages at 11-13 (rear) Grant Circle
10 of 26

View looking northwest showing garage at 15 (rear) Grant Circle
11 of 26

View looking west showing St. Gabriel's Catholic Church, 26 Grant Circle
12 of 26

View looking southwest showing St. Gabriel's Catholic Church School, 26 Grant Circle
13 of 26

View looking west showing St. Gabriel's Catholic Church Rectory, 26 Grant Circle
14 of 26

View looking southwest showing St. Gabriel's Catholic Church Convent, 26 Grant Circle (outside of historic district boundaries)
15 of 26

View looking east of Grant Circle from roadway
16 of 26

View facing southwest showing 29-33 Grant Circle
17 of 26

View looking southwest showing 30-32 Grant Circle
18 of 26

View looking west at Petworth United Methodist Church, 33 Grant Circle
19 of 26

View looking west at rear elevation of Petworth United Methodist Church, 33 Grant Circle
20 of 26

View looking northeast at rear of Petworth United Methodist Church, 33 (rear) Grant Circle
21 of 26

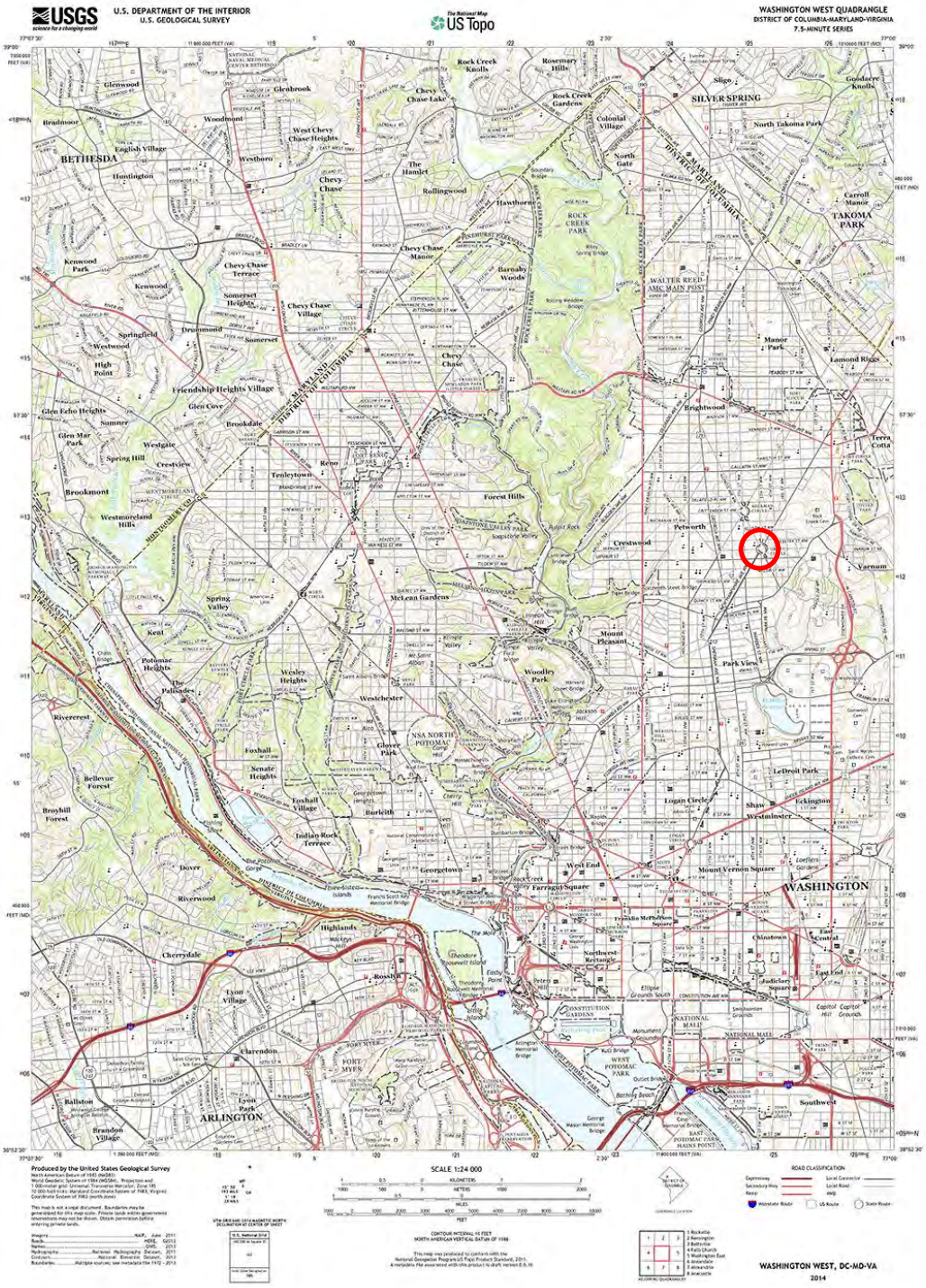
View facing northeast of 30 and 31 (rear) Grant Circle
22 of 26

View facing east of Grant Circle
23 of 26

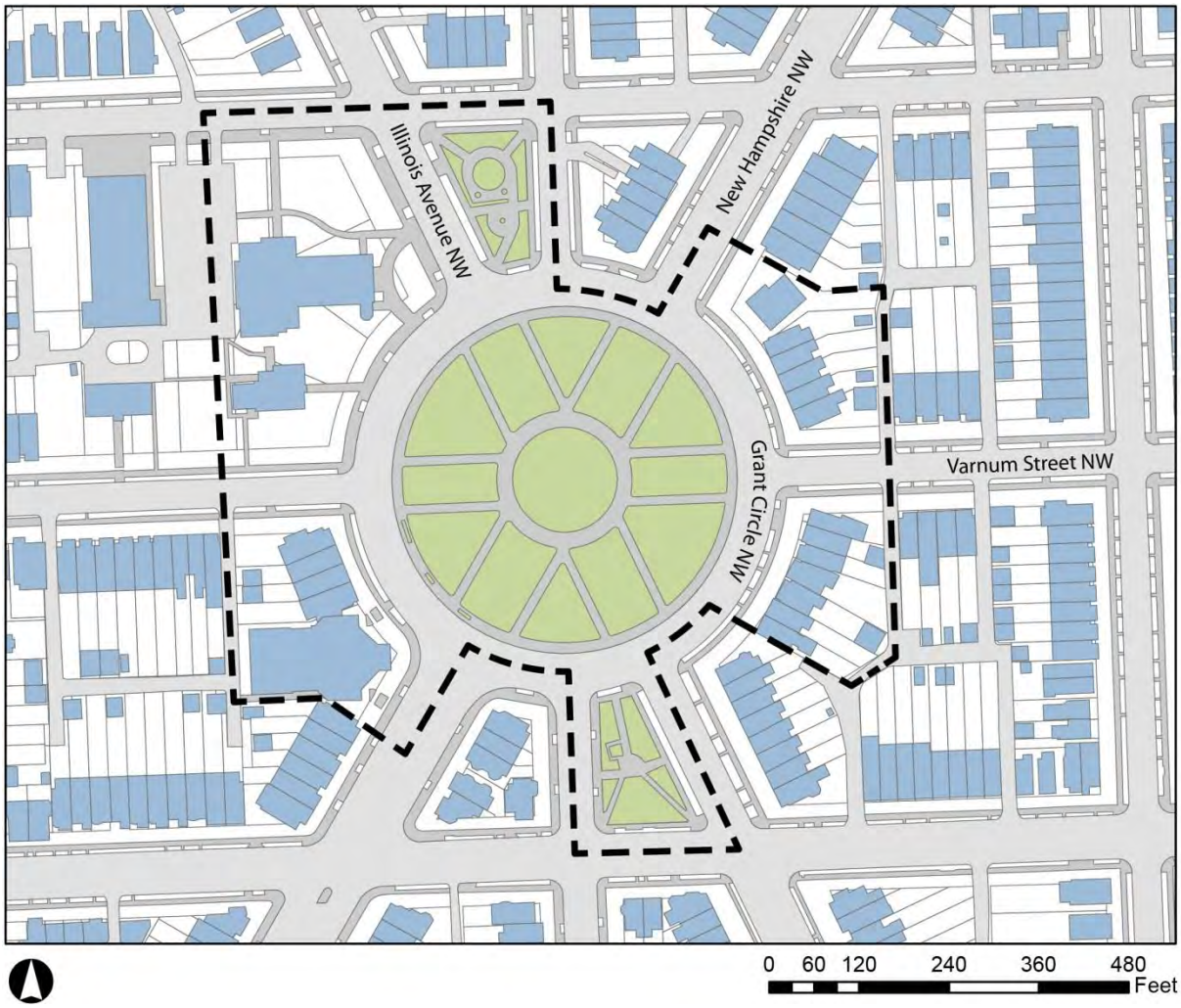
View facing northwest showing Grant Circle and the Cedar of Lebanon in center
24 of 26

View of Reservation 312A, facing northwest
25 of 26

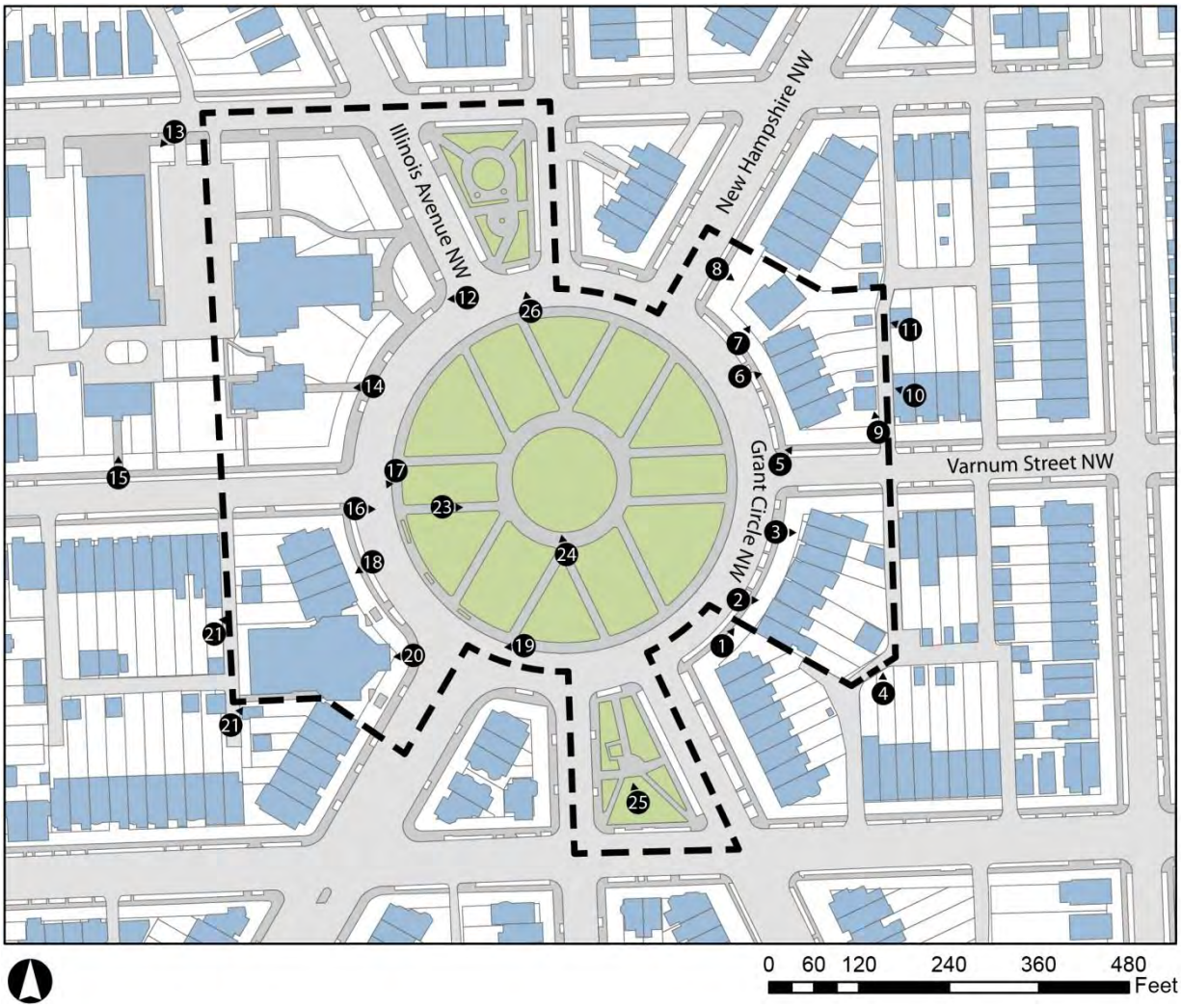
Reservation 312I from Grant Circle, facing northwest
26 of 26



USGS Map, Washington West, 2014



Map of Grant Circle Historic District showing National Register boundaries



Key to Photographs

Renee
Bowser

15 GRANT CIR.
15 GRANT CIR.

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DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
GOVERNMENT

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