NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

742

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.

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SEP - 9 2015
Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Davis, Colonel William Robert, House
Other names/site number: 3020 Albemarle Street, NW
Name of related multiple property listing:
NA
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing

2. Location

Street & number: 3020 Albemarle Street, NW
City or town: Washington State: DC County: _____
Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

I hereby certify that this 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:

___**A** ___**B** X **C** ___**D**

DAVID MALONEY / DC SHPO 9/2/2015

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:) _____

for Edson W. Beall 10·23·15

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 [ ]

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s) [X]

District [ ]

Site [ ]

Structure [ ]

Object [ ]

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
DOMESTIC/Single Family Dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
Domestic/Single Family Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)
20th CENTURY REVIVAL/Mediterranean Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
Principal exterior materials of the property: Stucco

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 house at 3020 Albemarle Street, NW, called the Davis House for its original owner, is a three-story, stucco-clad dwelling designed in an avant-garde early 20th century Mediterranean Revival style, with a Modern design sensibility and treatment. The house is located in Forest Hills, Washington, DC, a residential neighborhood between Connecticut Avenue and Rock Creek Park that was primarily developed between the Wars and characterized by its elegant single-family dwellings designed in a variety of 20th-century, architect-designed Revival styles occupying gracious wooded lots and hilly terrain. The house at 3020 Albemarle Street is located on a sizeable, sloped, and wooded pie-shaped lot which fronts on Albemarle Street and has its rear yard oriented towards Audubon Terrace overlooking Soapstone Valley. Built in 1924, the dwelling was one of the first houses to be constructed in the neighborhood. It was designed by prominent Washington architect and landscape designer Horace Whittier Peaslee, Jr. Although characterized by stucco walls and a red tile roof that give the house an overall Mediterranean Revival-style appearance, it is further distinguished by block-like massing, planar wall surfaces, and punched window openings that illustrate an emerging Modern aesthetic.

The house consists of a three-story central pavilion (tower-like element), flanked by slightly lower and recessed side wings. It sits upon a low foundation, has walls of cream colored stucco, and is capped at its central pavilion with a red tile roof, and on the side wings by flat roofs with parapet walls obscuring them. The house faces Albemarle Street and is enclosed by a stucco-clad masonry wall that is not part of the original construction, but aesthetically compatible with it. At the rear, the property slopes from Albemarle Street down toward Soapstone Valley where the Soapstone Valley Trail runs along the edge of the property line. The rear and side elevations

of the house rise out of this wooded terrain and exhibit an austerity of design that recalls the minimalism of emerging European Modernism. The stucco-clad walls have a high solid-to-void ratio, and the windows which are punched into the walls have no ornamentation or trim detailing.

Narrative Description

Exterior

The Davis House is located on the south side of Albemarle Street and faces north. It is divided into three parts consisting of a central, three-story tower projecting in front of lower, two-story side wings. The central tower is capped by a hipped roof, covered with red pantiles, while the side wings have flat roofs behind parapet walls. The central tower features an enclosed loggia-like element at the third story level.

The tower is three bays wide with the entrance located on-center of the first story. The entrance is accessed via a slightly meandering slate path that leads to a concrete stairway with two shallow steps, a dog-leg turn, and then another three risers leading to the front porch. The porch is not covered but is defined by a three-foot high stucco wall that has terra cotta barrel tiles embedded into it for ornamentation. The entry door is set within a round-arched opening, cut into the stucco surface with no trim, and features a Medieval-like solid wood door filling the arched opening and stained a dark color, with a small square window at center. To either side of the front door are tall, narrow, wooden casement windows, similarly punched into the stucco walls with wood sills but no trim detailing. The windows are divided into three horizontal panes. The top of each window is at the same height as the springing of the front door arch. The window to the left of the front door brings light to the kitchen. The one to the right lights the interior stair.

The tall and narrow casement windows, divided horizontally into three panes, are repeated at the second level of the main tower block, symmetrically arranged above the openings on the first story. Above the second story, the third story has an enclosed loggia-like opening, comprised of a bank of four tall and narrow wood windows arranged as a pair on-center with wood stiles separating the windows to either side. Each of the four windows is divided horizontally into four panes. Together the bank of windows extends vertically to directly under the eaves of the roof and spans almost the full width of the central block. This bank of window expresses the fact that the third floor is one large room.

The façade composition of this main block, with its solid wood entry door, its slotted windows to either side and at the next level, and the large window at the top level, imparts the image of a fortified Medieval tower. The two-story wings to either side of the central tower are set back at different dimensions from it. The east wing is well recessed by at least eight feet, while the west wing is just slightly recessed. The wings contain window openings at both the first and second stories and though not identical, are balanced and symmetrical. The windows on the west wing are single casements, while those on the east wing are paired casements. These windows align horizontally with the windows of the main block and like them, are punched into the stucco walls with wood sills but no trim, and divided into horizontally into three panes. Red pantiles forming

a sort of hood molding are embedded in the stucco above the second story windows on the side wings providing the only applied ornamentation.

A single-bay garage, original to the house, but since converted into additional living area, is built into the intersection of the central tower and the west side wing. A pair of wood garage doors, now consisting of a central door and windows, originally filled the wide, segmental arched opening.

The east elevation of the house is essentially the east elevation of the side wing as the main block projects just proud of this wing. This elevation rises two stories in height and is composed at the first story of a central door leading to the kitchen and two paired casement windows to either side. At the second level, three pairs of casement windows are located directly above.

The west elevation consists of the west elevation of the main block and the west elevation of the side wing which is well recessed from it. The main block is unarticulated save for a door on-center of the wall surface at the upper level that opens onto an iron balcony. This arrangement is located halfway between the second and third stories and is accessed on the interior on the staircase landing between the second and third floors. Above the roofline of this elevation, three clay tile chimneys rise above the west side of the central tower.

The west elevation of the side wing rises three stories, here, as the hill slopes down from the front of the house. The ground story is today defined by a single-story sunroom addition. This addition is set upon a stucco-clad foundation, has a flat roof and banks of windows forming the three side walls, with a door on the south-facing side leading to the rear yard. Above this ground-level sunroom addition, a pair of doors—formerly most likely windows—opens onto the roof of the sunroom from the living room on the interior. A pair of casement windows, corresponding with the second floor of the house, surmounts this door.

The south (rear) elevation, extends the full width of the central block and side wings, and rises three stories from the sloping hillside below. Due to the sloping terrain, the three story rear elevation is still a floor below the tower on the front elevation, providing the interior of the tower with unobstructed views to the valley below. The roof of the rear section of the house is flat, behind a parapet wall, like the roofs of the side wings, and is on the same level with them. A two-story polygonal porch projects off of the rear elevation at its center. At the ground level, the porch is an enclosed room with stucco-clad walls. Paired casement windows and a door are located in the east and west canted side walls, respectively, while a single door occupies the center of the principal south facing wall of the porch. Historically, this projection supported a covered, but open, porch above it with a solid parapet forming a balustrade or railing to the raised porch. Paired wood columns supported the porch roof with exposed rafter ends. Today, the porch has been enclosed by glass between the columns supporting the porch roof, but the paired wood columns are intact as are the exposed rafters. Rows of terra cotta barrel tiles sparingly decorate the balustrade of the porch. From the interior, two pairs of French doors open from the living room onto the enclosed porch.

Above the porch, at the upper level of this rear elevation, three pairs of casement windows are equally spaced across the elevation.

The house is enclosed at the front by a low stuccoed wall capped with red tile that was added during the 1950s and opens at the rear to the sloping hillside that leads to Soapstone Valley. The rear yard is terraced down toward the park with a circular stone patio built into the hillside, planted with mature azaleas, rhododendruns, and wisteria.

Interior

The interior of the house consists of an entrance foyer, living room, dining room and kitchen on the first story, bedrooms on the second story, and the enclosed loggia or "tower room" on the third floor. Although the exterior of the house is symmetrical, the rooms are arranged in an unconventional manner. The house is entered on-center, through the central entry and into a small foyer. The foyer leads directly into the living room, and through the living room to the enclosed porch at the rear of the house. The kitchen and dining room are located along the east side of the house. The dining room is behind the kitchen with a door opening on its interior side wall into the living room, and a window at the rear wall onto the enclosed porch. A winder stair is tucked into the west side of the front of the house, providing access to the second floor bedrooms and tower room. The foyer is on-axis with the door to the living room, which is on axis with the door to the porch, so that immediately upon entering the house there is a view straight through to Soapstone Valley. Peaslee deliberately designed the house with the kitchen on the side, and the living area at the back of the house to enjoy full views and benefit of the park. Similarly, the third-floor tower room dramatically defines the top of the house and is surrounded on three sides by a terrace that affords uninterrupted views of the park.

Integrity

The David House retains high integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The house is located on its original site above the wooded Soapstone Valley and is generally intact to its original period of construction with some minor alterations, but no major additions. The alterations include the addition of a ground-level sunroom on the west side elevation of the house; an enclosure in glass of the second floor of a two-story porch at the south rear elevation of the house; the conversion of a built-in garage to an enclosed room at the lower level of the front elevation; the addition of a wall enclosing the front of the house from the street; some window replacements, though none in the front elevation.

8. Statement of Significance

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

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

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

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

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance
1924

Significant Dates
1924

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

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder
Horace W. Peaslee, Jr.

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 Davis House at 3020 Albemarle Street was constructed in 1924 for Colonel William Robert Davis and his wife Irene Nesbit Davis who commissioned architect Horace Peaslee to design their home in Forest Hills, a residential neighborhood between Connecticut Avenue and Rock Creek Park that was just beginning to be built out with architect-designed single-family dwellings. The Davises built their house, the fourth one in the neighborhood, on a sloped and wooded pie-shaped lot which fronted on Albemarle Street and had its rear oriented towards Audubon Terrace, above the Soapstone Valley and its creek. Shortly after construction of the house, this section of Audubon Terrace road was closed as part of the federal government's purchase of land in the Soapstone Valley (Reservation 402) that was part of a larger program to acquire land in the stream valleys to protect the watershed and natural resources of Rock Creek and to create an extension of Rock Creek Park. Today, the Soapstone Valley Trail runs along the route of the former Audubon Terrace below the house, and then descends via a foot trail along the creek, providing a strikingly scenic trail into the park. The house at 3020 Albemarle Street towers above the trail, impressively rising out of its wooded site.

The property meets National Register Criterion C at the local level of significance as a notable work of master architect Horace Whittier Peaslee, Jr., whose architecture and landscape work and civic activism in the realm of urban planning, historic preservation, and architectural design review significantly shaped the urban development and design of the District of Columbia. The house also meets Criterion C as it is a distinctive 20th-century Revival-style house that possesses high artistic value.

It was built at a time when the Soapstone Valley would soon become a part of the Rock Creek Park system and, as such, its design was a very conscious effort to both take advantage of and relate to the proximate natural and public landscape. Conceived well into Peaslee's career as an architect, but early in his years in private practice, the house is unique among Peaslee's work, and is a sophisticated amalgam of the Mediterranean Revival style and emerging Modernism. The house illustrates Peaslee's experimentation with contemporary approaches to design and his creativity as a designer, and the sensitivity that he placed on his buildings and their landscape.

The Period of Significance is limited to 1924, the year the house was constructed.

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

Architecture

Horace Peaslee, Jr.
The house at 3020 Albemarle Street, NW is significant in the area of architecture as it represents the work of master architect and landscape designer Horace Whittier Peaslee, Jr. Between 1911 and 1959, Peaslee practiced architecture in Washington, D.C., building a national reputation as an accomplished landscape architect, architect of public and private buildings of all types, and as a dedicated activist for architectural design and practice in the Nation's Capital. Born in 1884 in Malden Bridge, New York, Peaslee attended high school in Chatham, New York and later took classes at Cooper Union in New York City. He entered Cornell University in 1906 and graduated with a bachelor's degree in architecture and a minor in landscape architecture in 1910. The following academic year, 1911-1912, Peaslee completed a resident fellowship at Cornell. While at school, Peaslee won several awards, including a first place medal from the Beaux Arts Society. While a fellow at Cornell, he won a design competition for the Chatham, New York Town Hall which was later built and his designs appeared in the July 1913 issue of *The American Architect*.

In 1911, Peaslee moved to Washington and took a position as a landscape designer with the U.S. Office of Public Buildings and Grounds where he designed the landscape for Meridian Hill Park, and later, as an architect for where he designed park structures, including the Potomac Park Bathhouse and Field House (circa 1919-1920). In 1914, with a group of officials from his office and the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA), Peaslee traveled to Europe to study garden and park design. In 1917, he took charge of the design and construction of Meridian Hill Park, located between 15th and 16th Streets and V Street and Euclid Streets. Inspired by the Italian Renaissance gardens, the urban park was completed over the course of three decades. During World War I, Peaslee joined the Army as a Captain in the Engineer's Corps, where he taught and

designed some of the temporary office buildings erected on The Mall in Washington, D.C. and officers' quarters at Camp Humphreys (now Fort Belvoir) in Virginia. Fourteen years after the war ended, he was an associate architect for the DC World War I Memorial.

In addition to his public service career and involvement with Public Buildings and Grounds, around 1918 Peaslee established a private architectural practice in Washington, D.C. and became active in a variety of professional and civic affairs. His private commissions were diverse, ranging from residences for wealthy and well-known clients including aviation pioneer Henry Berliner (2829 Tilden Street NW, 1922) and construction tycoon Charles H. Tompkins (3001 Garrison Street NW, 1928), to private schools (first Maret School building at 2118 Kalorama Road NW, 1923) and automobile filling stations (Columbia Oil Company Filling Station, 200 (204) Massachusetts Avenue NE, 1924). In 1931, Peaslee designed a series of eleven, sizable, Colonial Revival-style brick houses for the developer of Foxhall Village (Harry Boss; Boss & Phelps construction); the enclave in the 1700 and 1800 blocks of Hoban Road NW (off Reservoir Road) was dubbed "Colony Hill." Several contemporary design publications featured Colony Hill, including *House Beautiful* (December 1933), *American Architect* (July 1934), and *Architectural Forum* (September 1934).

Horace Peaslee was influential among his peers and actively advocated to promote architecture in Washington, D.C., and the preservation of Washington, D.C.'s natural, historic and architectural heritage. As a member and officer of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), Peaslee served four terms as second vice-president of the national organization and as president of the Washington, D.C. Chapter of the AIA. In the 1920s and 1930s, Peaslee organized and led many committees, including the AIA Committee on the National Capital and the Committee on the Cooperation with the Fine Arts Commission. He was a founding member of the Committee of 100 on the Federal City, and he led successful legislative campaigns that led to the establishment of the D.C. City Planning Commission and the adoption of the Shipstead-Luce Act, which gave the Commission of Fine Arts authority to review the design of private buildings near federal sites in the District. He also championed legislation that authorized the construction of the George Washington Memorial Parkway and led a campaign that defeated a proposal to harness the Potomac River for power generation that would have destroyed Great Falls.

Following the collapse of the Knickerbocker Theater roof in January 1922, Peaslee spearheaded a campaign to establish a design commission to review private construction throughout the city. In 1922, the Washington D.C. Chapter of the AIA authorized Peaslee to establish a committee to pursue his goal. He worked closely with members of the chapter and with the District's Engineer Commissioner, who had charge of establishing laws related to building construction. Late in 1922, Peaslee's Architects Advisory Committee (AAC), made up of volunteer architects drawn from the membership of the Washington Chapter, began to review all applications for building permits. The committee was made up of three architects who volunteered for three week stints. Acting as a jury, the AAC rated each application and provided comments to the applicants and their architects. Peaslee and the AAC promoted their endeavors extensively both within the city and outside. As a result, the AAC became a model for similar design review bodies established in cities throughout the nation. It operated until 1932; its demise can be attributed to both the positive effects of the D.C. architects registration law that went into effect in 1925 and the passage of the 1930 Shipstead-Luce Act, which extended the CFA's design review to more private buildings.

In 1925, Horace Peaslee and other prominent members of the D.C. Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) formed the Allied Architects of Washington, D.C., Inc., a loose confederation of prominent local architects who banded together to pursue large public and semi-public commissions in the city. Modeled on a similar architectural group started in Los Angeles in 1919, the Allied Architects worked collaboratively, sometimes holding internal design competitions and then selecting and combining the best elements of the winning designs. The group's bylaws provided for one-fourth of the corporation's net proceeds to be spent on efforts to advance architecture in the District of Columbia and to educate the public about good design.

The Allied Architect's most prominent commission was the design for the Longsworth House Office Building (first design submitted 1925; completed 1933). Other designs and studies pursued by the group included the never-built National Stadium on East Capitol Street; the D.C. Municipal Center; designs for a downtown Naval Hospital; the Naval Academy Memorial Gates; a D.C. National Guard Armory proposal; design and planning studies of Georgetown; alleys in D.C.; and a study for the beautification of East Capitol Street. The Allied Architects disbanded in 1949. The known members of Allied Architects were: Horace Peaslee, Louis Justement, Gilbert LaCoste Rodier, Frank Upman, Nathan C. Wyeth, Percy C. Adams, Robert F. Beresford, Fred H. Brooke, Ward Brown, Appleton P. Clark, William Deming, Jules Henri deSibour, Edward W. Donn, Jr., William Douden, W.H. Irwin Fleming, Benjamin C. Flournoy, Charles Gregg, Arthur B. Heaton, Arved L. Kundzin, Luther M. Leisenring, O.Harvey Miller, Victor Mindeleff, Thomas A. Mullett, Fred V. Murphy, Fred B. Pyle, George N. Ray, Fred J. Ritter, Delos H. Smith, Alex H. Sonneman, Francis P. Sullivan, Maj. George O. Totten, Leonidas P. Wheat, Jr., and Lt. Col. George C. Will [member information from C. Ford Peatross, ed., Capital Drawings: Architectural Designs for Washington, D.C., from the Library of Congress (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), pp. 36-38 and fn 39].

Peaslee was also known for his restoration work of historic buildings. He worked on his first major restoration with noted historian and architect Fiske Kimball on the Dumbarton House at 2715 Q Street, NW (1928) followed by the restoration of Belle Grove Plantation in Middletown, Virginia (c.1929). Peaslee went on to work on a number of other high profile restoration and preservation projects, including the reconstruction of the Maryland State House in St. Mary's City (1934); the renovation of The Maples at 619 D Street, SE (1936); the restoration of Christ Church at 620 G Street, SE (1954-1955) and the Bowie-Sevier House at 3124 Q Street, NW (1957); the renovation of St. John's Parish House on Lafayette Square (1954-1955) and the Cosmos Club at 2121 Massachusetts Avenue, NW (1954-1955). Peaslee actively salvaged architectural elements of demolished buildings and incorporated them into his new designs. In 1927, he reused elements of the John Hay and Henry Adams houses (built in 1884) that were demolished that year for the construction of the Hay-Adams Hotel on Lafayette Square. The new house built for Dr. Calhoun Sterling at 2618 31st Street, NW incorporated the H.H. Richardson-designed arches from the former house of Henry Adams; and for the nearby house at 3014 Woodland Drive, NW for Carl D, Ruth he used the original front door and surrounds from the former John Hay house. Peaslee also reported using salvaged elements in the house he designed in 1925 for Col. Clarence O. Sherrill at 2440 Kalorama Road, NW. Near the end of his life, Peaslee waged an unsuccessful campaign to preserve the east front of the U.S. Capitol when the 1958 extension was planned; he succeeded in salvaging the portico's columns which were eventually re-erected as garden sculpture in the U.S. National Arboretum.

Throughout his career, Horace Peaslee continued his dual practice of architecture and landscape architecture. He was associate architect for the District of Columbia World War I Memorial dedicated on November 11, 1931. He designed the Mortuary Chapel for Fort Lincoln Cemetery in Brentwood, Maryland (1929) and became architect and landscape designer for its formal development in 1931. In 1954, he completed the design and construction of the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial grounds (commonly called the Iowa Jima Memorial) in Arlington, Virginia. Between 1954 and 1955, he completed the landscape designs for President Eisenhower's estate near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

In the application for Fellow in the AIA in 1935, five of his colleagues stated that "Mr. Peaslee's work in the field of design is generally recognized as an extremely distinctive combination of originality and scholarly character which renders it particularly attractive both to the professionally trained eye and to the layman."[1]

Peaslee died of a heart attack on May 18, 1959, a few days after receiving a design award from the Washington Board of Trade for his work on the Episcopal Church Home at 1515 32nd Street, NW. (1957). Obituaries appeared in the local newspapers, *The New York Times*, and elsewhere. In addition, upon his death, both the American Institute of Architects and the Commission on Fine Arts issued resolutions praising Peaslee's contributions to architectural practice and the beautification of the Nation's Capital.

The house at 3020 Albemarle Street illustrates Peaslee's experimentation with contemporary approaches to design and his creativity as a designer. This Modern aesthetic of unornamented wall surfaces, punched window openings and geometric massing at 3020 Albemarle Street shows up in Peaslee's later work, most overtly in the Moorings Apartment building (1927), and in the Sherrill House in Kalorama (1925), but also in his Colonial Revival-style designs of the 1930s and 1940s. A close examination of these Colonial Revival-style buildings reveals strong geometries, reduced ornamentation and pared down details that align them more closely with the same Modern aesthetics that inspired his design of 3020 Albemarle Street.

Peaslee's design of 3020 Albemarle Street also illustrates the sensitivity that he placed on buildings and their landscapes, and in particular on how he organized the interior arrangement of space to take advantage of views and access to the outdoors. As if describing the Albemarle Street house in an April 1924 *Washington Post* editorial called "Reclamation of Backyard Urged for Beauty's Sake," Pealsee recommends moving the kitchen to the front or side of the house and having the living and dining rooms opening upon the rear and garden side of the house "and proceed to the development of the most fascinating part of domestic architecture—the overlapping of indoors and out."[2] In the same article, Peaslee also notes, "Any site along a valley means a chance to have walls, overlooks, terraces," all of which he incorporated at 3020 Albemarle Street.

[1] The American Institute of Architects, Form of Proposal for Fellowship, February 1935.
[2] Horace Peaslee, "Reclamation of Backyard Urged for Beauty's Sake," *The Washington Post*, April 28, 1924, p. 9.

The Owners

The house was built for Colonel William Robert Davis (1871-1934) and his wife Irene Nesbit Davis (1881-1960) at a cost of $14,500. They are buried in Arlington National Cemetery. Davis entered military service a year after receiving his medical degree from Vanderbilt University in 1898. He was also a graduate of the Army Medical School and School for Flight Surgeons. He served his country in three wars: Spanish American, Philippine, and World War I. He was a career Army officer with the Medical Corps and worked in the Office of the Chief Surgeon of the Army before his retirement in 1927. He became a charter member of the Forest Hills Citizens Association (1929) and is representative of the socio-demographics of the first residents in Forest Hills—established upper-class professionals, including military officers, doctors, lawyers, scientists associated with the nearby National Bureau of Standards and the like. Most of the houses in Forest Hills were architect-designed and owner-commissioned. Many of Washington's most notable architects, like Horace Peaslee, were members of the same social circles as their clients and likely knew one another, or knew of one another before entering into a client-architect relationship.

In 1931, the Davises put their house on the market. The house, highlighted in a newspaper sales advertisement, claimed it as one designed by "Mr. Horace Peaslee."

> *"The room in the tower—Just one of many fascinating features of this Modified Spanish type home designed by Mr. Horace Peaslee and built for owner by day labor. The property has a frontage of approximately 170 feet and is bounded on the south and west by Rock Creek Park. Framed in a setting of oaks, beach, tulips, hickory, dogwood and beautiful shrubbery and flowers, its suggestion is one of restful seclusion, pleasing to most aesthetic tastes. A wide, cool, covered porch at rear overlooks the charming wooded area of the park. The interior roomy, yet compact, is done in a most unusual manner with its batten doors and old fireplace. Three batsh, oil burning furnace, electrical refrigeration, built-in garage, add materially as modern comfort to the atmosphere of the old."*

Since its sale in 1931, there have been a series of occupants over the years, the most recent being Andrew Schach (1913-2007) and his wife Elizabeth G. Schach (1924-2014) and now their two sons. The house, owned by the Schach family for sixty years, is now on the market.

The Commission

In the absence of any known correspondence between the architect and the client, the inspiration for the design of 3020 Albemarle Street remains conjectural. It is possible that Colonel Davis and his wife had, during their overseas travel, seen buildings that appealed to them, or that they sought inspiration from architectural magazines or periodicals, or that they deferred entirely to Horace Peaslee whose work they knew and admired. In any case, it is known that Peaslee had traveled in Europe just prior to World War I and that he was aware of contemporary architectural thought. In fact, Peaslee's design for the Albemarle Street house reflects ideas about modernism that are characteristic of an earlier era, when Progressive ideals influenced many professions including architecture. New theories of efficiency, scientific management, and modern innovation were accompanied by new approaches to design as well. Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie Style and the Craftsman movement promoted by Gustav Stickley, Elbert Hubbard and others are notable

examples of these new trends in architecture. Peaslee's series of articles on park planning, design, and construction also lies squarely within this Progressive context, as they discuss "best practices" in park buildings in a rigorous, almost scientific way. It should be no surprise that he also experimented with new architectural ideas that reflected a simpler and more "rational" approach to design. As for particular inspiration, Peaslee may well have known the work of Viennese architect Adolf Loos. Loos' Moller House of 1910, the year in which Peaslee graduated from the Cornell School of Architecture, is closely related in its simplicity to the rear and side elevations of the house at 3020 Albemarle Street.

Peaslee in Forest Hills

Between the years 1922 and 1948, Peaslee designed eleven houses in Forest Hills, all executed in revival designs. The majority of these houses are Georgian or Colonial Revival designs built of either stone or brick. A few were executed in the Tudor Revival mode. All exhibit the expertise and skill of a master designer. Few have been altered in any substantial way. All are extant. The house at 3020 Albemarle Street stands out for its unique design and character.

The house was conceived and built during the early-20th century Eclectic Period, a period in which suburban houses were being designed in a variety of revivalist styles, often constructed in authentic materials, and often exhibiting superior craftsmanship. While 3020 Albemarle Street is similarly eclectic, it represents a dramatic break with convention. The most popular styles for single-family residences were Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, or Mediterranean Revival. The houses were often literal interpretations of a particular style. The house at 3020 Albemarle Street, while exhibiting Mediterranean influence is not a literal interpretation. The planar wall surfaces, limited use of ornamentation and the building's geometries exhibit a simplicity in design that reflects European influence and also presages the Modernist Movement, which became popular in America a half-dozen years later.

Early Site History and Soapstone Valley

The site upon which 3020 Albemarle Street stands was once part of the land grant Azadia, first surveyed in 1726. During the 19th century and early 20th centuries, the land was part of the Pierce Shoemaker estate and included a carriage road that later became Audubon Terrace. Following passage of the Permanent Highway Act in 1893, and the ensuing completion of maps showing the road system beyond the original city limits, the residential area that would become Forest Hills began to be ready for development. In 1907, a William Hinds purchased the lot of land upon which the house now stands, and in 1909, Audubon Terrace, beginning near Connecticut Avenue and extending to 29th Street, NW was opened as a public road. That same year, Fred B. Rhodes bought three lots adjacent to Hinds, upon which he built two homes, 3006 Albemarle Street in 1910 and 3000 Albemarle Street in 1920. William Hinds held onto his land without developing it until 1923, when he sold it to Leon B. Brubaker who then sold it to Maddux Marshall & Company. The real estate firm subdivided the land into three lots, selling Lot 1 to Colonel and Mrs. William R. Davis and Lot 2 to General Mason Patrick in 1923. The Rhodes, Davis and Patrick families were the first homeowners on Albemarle Street between 29th Street and Audubon Terrace. Others soon followed: Five in the 1920s; three in 1930 and 1940 respectively, with the remaining constructed between 1950 and 2003, for a total of 26 houses.

Between 1927 and the 1930s, the land comprising the Soapstone Valley including that area below 3020 Albemarle Street was purchased by the federal government for its expansion of Rock

Creek Park, just as Audubon Terrace was later condemned and converted into a pedestrian foot trail. The land purchase was part of the federal government's effort to add tributary parks to Rock Creek Park to both preserve Rock Creek's watershed and the park's natural scenery, as well as to provide scenic access routes into the park.

While the purchase of the stream valleys began in the 19th century, the impact of urbanization on the environmental quality of Rock Creek Park in the 1920s hastened additional land purchases. Officials began to fear that development in the Rock Creek Valley watershed would reduce the creek to a trickle, so the acquisition of parkland became a major objective, and national and local organizations like the American Planning and Civic Association lobbied for legislation to create a park commission with regional planning powers. Following the April 1926 Act of Congress that established National Capital Park and Planning Commission, several parcels of land were acquired in Soapstone Valley from 1927 into the 1930s. Then, in 1930, Congress passed the Shipstead-Luce Act, and act that gave the Commission of Fine Arts the authority to review designs of private construction abutting specified areas of the National Capital, including Rock Creek Park. As Chairman of the AIA's Committee on the National Capital, Horace Peaslee played a critical role in having Rock Creek Park included in the legislation, and in lobbying for passage of the Act. Having designed 3020 Albemarle Street on its site overlooking Soapstone Valley, Peaslee was familiar with the importance of such landscapes, and lent his expertise to help protect the public views to private buildings overlooking Rock Creek Park and its valleys.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:
__X__ State Historic Preservation Office
____ Other State agency
____ Federal agency
____ Local government
____ University
____ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10 Geographical Data

Acreage of Property __.4 acre_____

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: 38.947594 Longitude: -77.063515

2. Latitude: Longitude:

3. Latitude: Longitude:

4. Latitude: Longitude:

Or
UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

1. Zone: Easting: Northing:

2. Zone: Easting: Northing:

3. Zone: Easting: Northing:

4. Zone: Easting : Northing:

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

The Davis House at 3020 Albemarle Street, NW occupies Lot 1 in Square 2042 in the Forest Hills neighborhood in Washington, D.C.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The property has been associated with this square and lot since its construction in 1924.

---

11 Form Prepared By

name/title: _Barbara D. Bates _
organization: _Forest Hills Neighborhood Alliance
street & number: 3001 Veazey Terrace, NW, #1314
city or town: Washington state: _DC__
zip code: _20008
e-mail __bbates9@juno.com
telephone: 202-244-2090
date: May 11, 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.)

Photographs

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

Photo Log

Name of Property: 3020 Albemarle Street, NW

City or Vicinity: Washington

County: State: DC

Photographer: Barbara D. Bates

Date Photographed: April 2, 2015 (Views from outside of house); April 3, 2015 (View from inside house); May 7, 2015 (View of front gate and views inside house)

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

View looking south from Albemarle Street
1 of 12

View looking south showing north elevation through front gate
2 of 12

View looking southeast showing north elevation including integrated garage
3 of 12

View looking southeast looking skyward showing center tower pavilion
4 of 12

View looking south at garage with altered opening
5 of 12

View looking northeast showing west and south elevations from Soapstone Valley trail
6 of 12
View looking east from Soapstone Valley trail showing west elevation
7 of 12

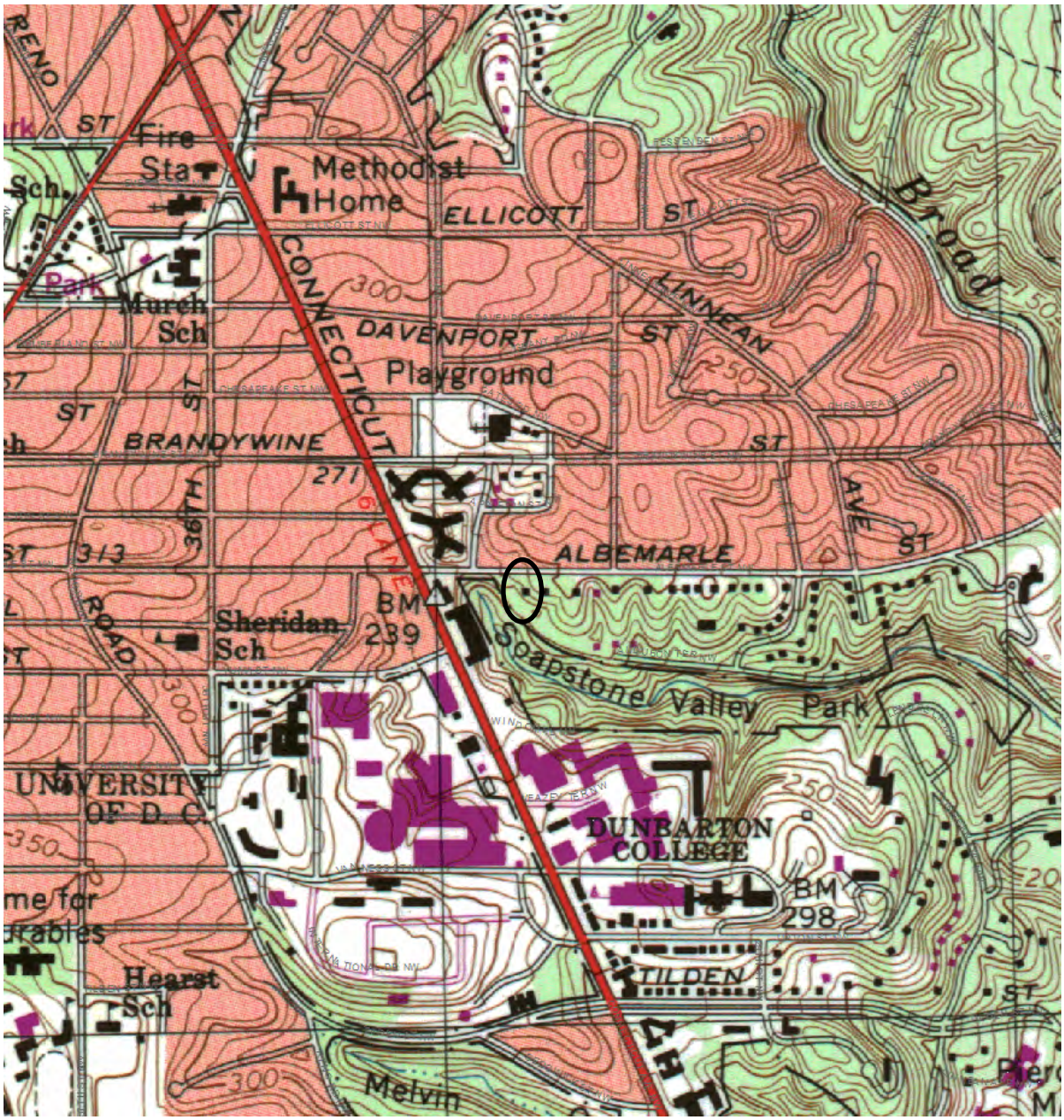
View looking northeast showing south elevation with enclosed porch
8 of 12

View looking north showing south elevation with enclosed porch
9 of 12

View looking north of principal entry door from interior
10 of 12

Interior view looking northeast of tower room
11 of 12

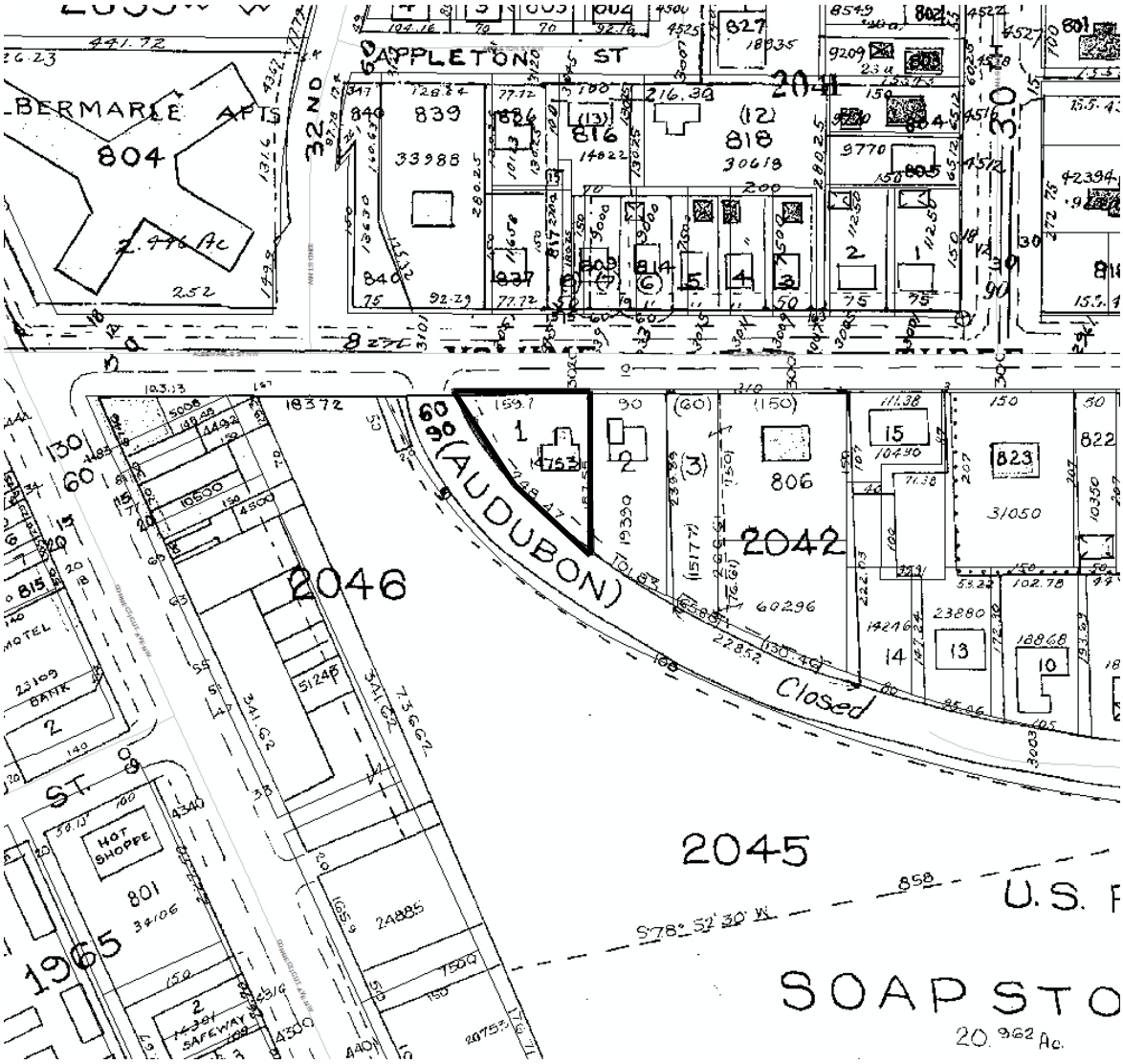
Interior view looking at ceiling of tower room
12 of 12



USGS Quad Washington West showing 3020 Albemarle Street, NW

Site Plan of 3020 Albemarle Street showing National Register boundary
D.C. Office of Planning, GIS Map, 2014

Key to Photographs



Historic Map showing site of 3020 Albemarle Street
(G.M. Baist Map, 1965)

Historic Photo of 3020 Albemarle Street, NW, ca. 1954

Photo of Horace Whittier Peaslee, Jr., no date
(Courtesy of Jean Peaslee, daughter-in-law of Horace Peaslee, 2015)

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.