

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received DEC 27 1984

date entered FEB 6 1985

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic

and or common Strivers' Section Historic District

2. Location

street & number See attached map and list of inclusive street addresses ^{NA} not for publication

city, town Washington, ^{NA} vicinity of

state D.C. code 11 county NA code 001

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ^{NA} in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple private owners

street & number

city, town _____ vicinity of _____ state _____

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder of Deeds

street & number 6th and D Streets, N.W.

city, town Washington state D.C.

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Sites has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date June 30, 1983 federal state county local

depository for survey records Historic Preservation Division
D.C. Dept. of Consumer & Regulatory Affairs

city, town Washington state D.C.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
				local history

Specific dates See below **Builder/Architect** See below

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Joint Committee on Landmarks of the National Capital has designated the Strivers' Section Historic District, placed it in Category II of the District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Sites, and recommended it for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places for the following reasons:

1. Located immediately north of the Dupont Circle Historic District and west of the Sixteenth Street Historic District, it shares valuable characteristics with each of these predominantly residential districts but differs from them both in the intensity of its historical associations with the development of an early black middle class in Washington, and in the generally more modest, often vernacular quality of its architecture;
2. From its earliest development in the 1870's to the present, this residential area has been associated with black leaders in business, education, politics, religion, art, architecture, literature, science and government; strongly identified with black pride and accomplishment and with the development of an early black middle class, it has value as part of the development, history and culture of the National Capital;
3. With the exception of a few recently-constructed intrusions, it is an essentially intact, late-nineteenth early-twentieth century residential community that is defined by tradition, development history, building type, topography and its location within the Federal City; it contains excellent examples of the work of well-known Washington architects and several noted developers, including John Henderson and Curtis Hillyer, who made a significant impact on the physical appearance of Washington and whose work influenced the development of architectural styles and building technology in this city;
4. It is composed of a rich variety of building types and contains excellent as well as typical examples of architectural styles popular in this country from 1875–1925, including the Italianate, Second Empire, Richardsonian Romanesque Revival, Tudor Revival and Beaux Arts; its buildings embody the characteristics of these various styles, and the elements of design, detail, materials, building technology and craftsmanship typical of the architecture of the period and it retains its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The Strivers' Section Historic District is an area that developed primarily during the fifty-year period from 1875 to 1925. This generally residential district was focused around the 1700 blocks of T and U Streets, N.W. It includes the area

(See continuation sheets)

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The north side of the 1700 block of T Street^{3/} (Nos. 1733-1747 and 1751-1777) was built in 1905 by John M. Henderson according to the designs of William B. Allard. Curtis J. Hillyer, one of the principal developers of the Dupont Circle area, was Henderson's associate in building 1733-1747 T Street. 1742-1762 T Street on the south side were also designed by Allard and erected by Henderson in 1906. On the north side the beige brick houses form a unified row enlivened by the graceful rhythm of triple-arched, steep-gabled, top stories alternating with pairs of projecting bays capped by pyramids. Each house in this row has its own stone trimmings in designs ranging from leafwork to sailing ships. The rhythm and trim is reflected in the rowhouses on the south side of the street.

Apartment buildings scattered throughout this historic district help define the area as much as the variety of rowhouses found within the district boundaries. Perhaps the most impressive apartment house is the Albemarle at 1830 17th Street, N.W.^{8/} This late work of important local architect/developer, T.F. Schneider, is elegantly executed in the buff brick and limestone popular at the turn-of-the-century as a rejection of the red brick Victorian designs of the nineteenth century. Festoons and ornamental window moldings with cartouches at the centers are part of Schneider's classically inspired design, as is the dignified columned portico with a fleur-de-lis frieze above the first floor.

Developer Harry Wardman, perhaps the individual most responsible for the appearance of pre-World War II Washington, made several contributions to this historic district. The large building at the southwest corner of 17th and Willard Streets, N.W., was built by Wardman and originally called Willard Courts, the pair of exceptionally handsome, if curiously sited, brick apartment buildings at 1918 and 1930 18th Street, N.W., at the corner of 18th and Florida Avenue, N.W., were designed by Albert Beers for Harry Wardman. The Kirkman^{9/} and the Belgrade are but one example of the successful Beers-Wardman partnership which includes the Northumberland and Wardman Row, both city and National Register listed landmarks.

Other apartment buildings in the district range from the impressive, Tudor Revival Harrowgate^{10/} and Windermere, 1833 and 1825 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W., to the small, fancifully-detailed St. Clair^{11/} at 1717 T Street, N.W. Also found within the Striver's Section Historic District are less distinctively designed apartment houses whose scale and limited ornament still contribute to the architectural character of the area. 1926 and 1930 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W., are examples of such buildings.

The commercial strip serving this predominantly-residential area is generally confined to Florida Avenue, N.W., and is mainly one-story, early-twentieth century commercial structures.

One of the most interesting buildings in the historic district is the fire house at 1624 U Street, N.W.^{7/} Built in 1893, its fat-cheeked gargoyle supporting a broad oriel window has made the facade a neighborhood institution.

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While the historic district is essentially intact, it is not totally free from intrusions and non-contributing buildings. The most noted intrusion is a contemporary high-rise apartment building at 1825 T Street, N.W. ^{14/}, whose scale and design is not sympathetic to the area. Scattered examples of 1960's and 1970's rowhouses, particularly on 18th and T Streets ^{13/}, and in the 1700 block of U Street, N.W. ^{15/}, are stylistically not akin to the period houses in the area. They do, however, maintain a proper scale and use of materials. The largest concentration of vacant land is at the southeast corner of 18th and T Streets, N.W. ^{12/}

The Striver's Section Historic District represents the residential architectural heritage of Washington from about 1875 to 1925. Small-scale rowhouses and apartment buildings stand side-by-side with larger-scale rowhouses and grand apartment buildings. Architects like T.F. Schneider, Albert Beers, Nicholas T. Haller, and William B. Allard, as well as noted developers Harry Wardman, John M. Henderson, and Curtis J. Hillyer, all contributed to the rich fabric of this district. Together they created a collection of building types and styles that remain a significant element in Washington's architectural heritage.

*Numbers scattered through this text refer to photographs accompanying this nomination form.

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generally bounded by Florida Avenue, N.W. (old Boundary Street), and the Dupont Circle and Sixteenth Street Historic Districts. The Strivers' Section Historic District is distinct from its surrounding areas. This historic district is more intensely associated with the development of an early black middle class in the District of Columbia, and its buildings, while often of excellent design, are generally more modest in conception and execution than those found in adjacent areas.

The name of the district, "Strivers' Section," derives from the area's longstanding association with leading individuals and institutions in Washington's black community. The recognition of a special enclave of black leaders in the area encompassed by the historic district goes back more than 50 years, when William Henry Jones, writing in the The Housing of Negroes in Washington, of 1929, described the community situated within the boundaries of Sixteenth and Eighteenth, U and R Streets as "Strivers' Section" or the "community of Negro aristocracy."

The rows of houses built in 1902-1904, that line the 1700 blocks of U Street, are particularly remembered by older residents of the neighborhood as Strivers' Row, a place where blacks were able to move into the newly finished townhouses with a sense of pride and achievement over the quality of their homes and their neighborhood. Strivers' Row has been described as "perhaps the most significant symbol of the assertion of black Washingtonians" around the turn of the century. As one black resident of more than 60 years in the Dupont Circle area put it: "Strivers' Row gave everybody a chance to buy into the respectability of Dupont Circle. That block along U Street meant we had arrived." That same block of U Street is the residential western base of the black cultural and commercial corridor of U Street, a major shopping and theatre boulevard for middle class blacks in the early 20th century, which has been characterized as the "colored Connecticut Avenue" of that period.

Since the earliest developments in the 1870's, the area has been associated with black leaders in business, education, politics, religion, art, architecture, literature, science and government. The most important of these figures was Frederick Douglass, runaway slave, abolitionist, orator, writer, civil servant, diplomat and perhaps the outstanding American Negro of the 19th century, often called the Father of the Civil Rights movement. Douglass almost certainly built the southern three buildings of a five-house, Second Empire style row at 2000-2008 Seventeenth Street in 1875-1876. Douglass owned two of these -- 2000 and 2002 -- until his death in 1895. His son, Lewis H. Douglass, who inherited the houses from his father, lived at 2002 from 1877 until his death in 1908. One of his houses belonged to the Douglass heirs until 1965.

This historic district was also home to other noted blacks. James E. Storum, the educator and entrepreneur who founded the Capital Savings Bank, the first banking institution in Washington owned and operated by blacks, lived at 2004 17th Street, N.W. Calvin Brent, the late-nineteenth century architect who designed Mt. Jezreal Baptist Church on Capitol Hill, the house at 1704 V Street, N.W., and who was associated with the design of St. Luke's Episcopal Church on nearby 15th Street, N.W., lived on V Street, N.W., in the district. James C. Dancy, editor, realtor, and D.C. Recorder of Deeds from 1904-10, also lived in the area. This tradition of community and neighborhood leadership continues today.

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Architecturally, the Strivers' Section Historic District is characterized by late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century rowhouses and a variety of apartment houses. A small commercial strip has evolved along Florida Avenue, N.W. to serve the residences of the area. An institutional building in the form of the handsome fire house at 1624 U Street, N.W., adds to the character of the area.

Most of the rowhouses are relatively simple, rhythmically repeating, speculative structures. These speculative houses range in scale from the two-story houses of the south side of the 1700 block of T Street, N.W., and grander, more imposing houses like those on the 1700 block of U Street, N.W. Also scattered throughout the district are occasional expressions of the grander, more elegant architecture of the period.

Apartment houses, mainly constructed during the first quarter of the twentieth century, appear throughout the district. They play a major role in defining the character of the area. By the early twentieth century, apartment house living had become a socially-acceptable living arrangement. As the city's population grew, so did the number and type of apartment dwellings. Within the Strivers' Section Historic District, examples from the luxurious to the mundane may be found. The ornate Albemarle and the Windermere offer a contrast in architectural expressions. Smaller scale and less architecturally-distinctive apartment buildings can be found throughout the district.

This historic district represents an historically important and architecturally rich period in the development of the Nation's capital. It was the home of the city's early black middle class. Social, political, and religious leaders made their homes in the area and what is now the Strivers' Section Historic District developed strong associations with the history of this city's black population. The buildings in the historic district were designed by many of the city's important architects. Developers of residential property made names for themselves with their rows of houses in this area. Noted developer Harry Wardman built a number of his early apartment buildings within the boundaries of this district. The Strivers' Section Historic District remains remarkably intact, both architecturally and for its historical associations, and the area continues to make a significant contribution to the District of Columbia.