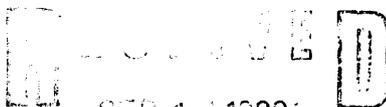


1995



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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

27

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Corcoran Hall
other names/site number The George Washington University Science Labs

2. Location

street & number 721 21st Street, N.W.
city, town Washington
state District of Columbia code DC county District of Columbia code 001 zip code 20052

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: [x] private, [] public-local, [] public-State, [] public-Federal
Category of Property: [x] building(s), [] district, [] site, [] structure, [] object
Number of Resources within Property: Contributing 1, Noncontributing 0, Total 1

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. [] See continuation sheet.
Signature of certifying official: Carol P. Thompson SHPO
Date: 9/16/90
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. [] See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official
Date
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
[x] 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:)
Signature of the Keeper: Patrick Andrews
Date of Action: 4/12/91

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
EDUCATION/College

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
EDUCATION/College

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

Colonial Revival

foundation Stone

walls Brick

Limestone

roof Tin

other Wood

Metal

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Corcoran Hall standing at 725 21st Street, N.W. is a large four-story building designed in the Georgian Revival tradition of the early twentieth century. Conceived as part of Albert Harris' formal campus plan, Corcoran Hall, built in 1924, was the first building constructed for The George Washington University on its Foggy Bottom campus.

This brick building, laid in Flemish bond, has a stone-faced foundation. Its truncated L-shape plan measures approximately 136 feet long and 65 feet deep. The main facade of the building is oriented west on 21st Street with windows arranged symmetrically in the smooth, planar facade. A stone belt course delineates the first and second floors, with a thinner brick belt course between the third and fourth floors. Slightly recessed panels separate the second and third floor windows.

The gable roof of the building has a fairly steep pitch and parapets on the gable ends. A cupola designed in the Georgian Revival style is centered at the crest of the roof.

The central entrance to the building at 21st Street is elaborately treated marking this as the focal point of the main facade. The wide entrance stairway spanning three bays leads to a limestone door surround with Classical motifs, including Ionic pilasters and entablature which carries the stone nameplate for the building. The ornamentation is carried to the second floor window above with a similar limestone surround.

The east elevation of the building faces into the yard of the quadrangle plan, and continues with a more formal treatment. Windows are arranged similarly to the west elevation, and the entrance is elaborately treated as well. The detailing, however, follows Georgian Revival patterns rather than Classical ones, and is more in keeping with the style of the cupola. The door surrounds are of wood. The second floor windows above the two doors are round-headed and much larger in scale than others. These features serve to articulate the interior stairwells.

The truncated ell of the building extends from the south wall facing into the yard with a cross gable roof. A round arched window is centered below the gable at the fourth floor, while segmental-arched panels are substituted for windows at the first floor. The limestone belt course between the first and second floors is repeated on this elevation.

8. Statement of Significance

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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

EDUCATION

Period of Significance

circa 1924-30

Significant Dates

1924

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Architects: Harris, A.L. & Heaton, A.B.

Builder: Wardman, Harry

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Corcoran Hall is representative of the early twentieth-century notions of formalism and order. The Harris Plan for the university, which called for the construction of Corcoran Hall, is typical of the campus designs formulated by colleges and universities across the country in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The careful spatial arrangement of buildings on this cross-axial plan was to provide a clarity of purpose and harmony to the campus setting.

The classical concerns for balance, proportion and scale renewed by the teachings of the Ecole des Beaux Arts are found in Corcoran Hall, and the Georgian Revival manifestation of these principals is characteristic of American institutional design. Corcoran Hall is particularly important for it was the first building constructed for this plan, and thus marked the beginning of the formal campus plan envisioned for the university at its permanent site in Foggy Bottom.

Corcoran Hall is associated with an important stage in the development of The George Washington University, an institution which has made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of the city's history (Criteria A). The structure embodies distinctive characteristics of an architectural style and building type significant to the appearance and development of Washington, D.C. (Criteria C). Additionally, Corcoran Hall represents the work of architects and a builder who have significantly contributed to the city's built environment (Criteria C). The building possesses sufficient integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The significance of the building has been recognized by its listing as a Historic Landmark of the District of Columbia.

The George Washington University, by virtue of its academic standing and its physical presence, stands as a significant institution in the District of

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

"A.B. Heaton Dies, Noted Architect," The Washington Post, Obituary, December 7, 1951.

Application for Permit to Build, District of Columbia, No. 7206 (December 3, 1923). Located in Microfilm Room of the National Archives, Record Group 66, Washington, D.C.

Application to the D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board for Designation of the George Washington University Campus Historic District. Prepared for the Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A by Emily Eig, Traceries, Inc., Washington, D.C., December 12, 1984.

See continuation sheet

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 0.3 acre

UTM References

A 18 22510 4307360
 Zone Easting Northing

C _____

B _____
 Zone Easting Northing

D _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

In Square 102, portion of Lot 46 (former Lot 43), with frontage of 136 feet along 21st Street, N.W., by depth of 101.92 feet, as indicated on the supplemental map.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire lot that has been associated historically with the building.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne H. Adams/ Architectural Historian

organization Wilkes, Artis, Hedrick & Lane date September, 1989

street & number 1666 K Street, N.W. telephone 202-457-7800

city or town Washington state D.C. zip code 20006

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Washington, D.C.

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Corcoran Hall presently serves as academic classrooms and laboratories for the physics and chemistry departments of the school. A central hall runs the full width of the building, with classrooms to the front (west) and back (east). A stairhall is located at the center of the east elevation. Much of the building's interior has been altered over the years, with little of the original fabric surviving. Some original construction is found at the north end of the building, including an early sliding fire door at the second floor. Most of the interior finishes, however, are modern.

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Columbia. The history and development of the school, from its beginnings in the early nineteenth century to its current status as a major urban university, is inextricably linked to the history and development of Washington. Corcoran Hall is especially noteworthy as part of the history and development of the university.

The genesis of the Harris Plan and the subsequent construction of Corcoran Hall did not occur until the university had undergone over a century of transformation.

The George Washington University began in 1821, as the Columbian College under a charter granted by President Monroe. The small school was located near Florida Avenue and Sixteenth Street in northwest Washington. By 1870, it had grown to include a medical school and law school. At the urging of William Corcoran, a noted philanthropist and Columbian College trustee, the school was renamed the Columbian University in 1873, and shortly thereafter it relocated to the city's financial district on H Street, between 13th and 15th streets, N.W.

It was not until 1905 that the university adopted the name of our nation's first president. In 1904, the George Washington Memorial Foundation chose Columbian University to fulfill the first president's dreams for a national university, and the following year the school was renamed The George Washington University.

Operating now as a national university, the school grew ambitious and began its search for a location which would allow for a spacious, self-contained campus environment. The reality of the cost for such a plan, however, almost destroyed the university. In 1912, faced with serious financial troubles, the university was forced to reorganize and relocated to inexpensive rental property at 2023 G Street, N.W. From this modest new beginning, the school took hold in the Foggy Bottom neighborhood and developed into a leading university.

The history of The George Washington University can be traced through four major periods of development: the Needham years, the Harris Plan, the Marvin era, and the Elliott years.

Charles Needham was president of the university from 1902 through 1912, and was instrumental in transforming the school into a national university. His optimism and visions for the school outpaced financial realities, however, and his quest for a formal campus setting ultimately crippled the school.

Upon assuming the presidency in 1902, Needham set out to elevate the university to national standing. Universities around the country were

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designing, redesigning and relocating their campuses to meet the challenges of a new twentieth-century aesthetic, and Needham was determined to make his university a part of this movement. By 1904, the school had been selected as the university to fulfill George Washington's dream for a major academic center in the District of Columbia, and Needham developed plans to correspond to this new function. A site was selected at Van Ness Park, and an architectural competition was held for the new campus design. Percy Ash, the school's professor of architecture, invited six architectural firms to submit plans proposing a general scheme for the site and specific designs for a memorial building. With the help of Charles Mikimo, Chairman of the Park Commission, and Bernard Green, Superintendent of the Library of Congress, Ash selected George B. Post and Son of New York for their classically inspired design based on the teachings of the Ecole des Beaux Arts. The five-acre site, however, proved too small for the needs of the university and a new search was launched for a more appropriate location.

This change, however, which would require an additional \$2,500,000, caused several of the earlier funding pledges for the Van Ness site to be voided and likewise marked the beginning of the school's financial crises. Bank notes became due on the Van Ness property, refinancing demanded more capital, and operating funds were used to cover the mounting debts. Compounded by the economic panic of 1907, the school found itself unable to pay its professors and on the verge of bankruptcy.

Drastic measures were needed to save the university from financial ruin and in 1908 Needham was swiftly replaced by Admiral Charles Herbert Stockton. After a long distinguished naval career, Stockton was called upon to exercise his strict discipline on the failing school. Costs were cut, realistic goals identified, and finally relocation achieved. In 1912, the school moved to its present Foggy Bottom location and purchased its first building at that site, the former St. Rose's Industrial School.

This step marked the beginning of a new era for the school. With its financial situation now stabilized, and adequate space secured, the school could now concentrate on developing an appropriate campus. Through the influence of newly elected trustee, Maxwell Woodhull, a neighbor to the school, the Board of Trustees was encouraged to expand its campus at the Foggy Bottom location. The once-fashionable neighborhood was in transition, and the lowering real estate prices gave the school the opportunity to acquire the property needed for a formal campus plan.

Between 1910 and 1920, and under the leadership of Stockton, his successor William Collier, and Woodhull, the university gradually acquired numerous lots

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in the south portion of Square 102, the city block bounded by 20th, 21st, G and H streets, N.W. In 1921, Woodhull bequeathed his house at the corner of 21st and G Street to the school, further establishing the university's stronghold in that block.

After World War I enrollment increased at the university, placing further space demands on the school. Washington developer and university trustee Harry Wardman encouraged the Board to purchase a building at 14th & K Streets for the Law School, but after some deliberation, the Board reaffirmed its commitment to Square 102, and acquired the building strictly for investment purposes. It was now official: The George Washington University would permanently develop its campus at Square 102 in the Foggy Bottom neighborhood of Washington.

Howard Lincoln Hodgkins became president pro tempore in 1921, and immediately set out to develop the formal campus that had been the dream of the school for so many years. In 1922, Hodgkins proposed the purchase of 2014 H Street, the renovation of the G Street buildings, and finally the development of Square 102 into a formal campus. The plans were presented by Albert Harris, a professor of architecture at the university and the District of Columbia's newly-appointed Municipal Architect.

William Mather Lewis was elected as the permanent president of the university in 1923, and under his direction the Harris Plan was begun. By 1926, two of the eight proposed buildings of the Harris Plan, were completed. Corcoran Hall, begun in 1923, was located at the western edge of Square 102 and Stockton Hall, completed in 1926, was located across the quadrangle at the eastern terminus of the cross-axial plan.

As the campus was finally taking shape, problems arose concerning the future of the medical school. Talk of mergers with other area health programs not only cast doubts on continuation of the medical and nursing schools, but also halted progress on the development of the other branches of the school. It was not until 1927 that the issue was resolved and that plans for the quadrangle could be resumed.

That same year, however, a new president was appointed to the university. President Cloyd Heck Marvin rejected the principles of the Harris Plan and set out to develop a new image for the university. Marvin approached the university in a completely different manner than his predecessors, bringing a new direction and philosophy to the school. One of his primary objectives was to enhance the image of the university by improving its physical environment and expanding the campus. The Harris Plan was rejected, and Marvin embarked on a new campaign which stressed his belief in functional architecture. Between 1928 and 1934, the school acquired nineteen additional properties in the areas

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National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
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surrounding Square 102, and several new buildings were erected that set a new style for the school grounds.

In recent decades, the campus continued to grow under the leadership of President Lloyd H. Elliott. During his presidency from 1965 to 1988, Elliott strengthened the school's position among institutions of higher learning by expanding the school's research capabilities and academic programs. He orchestrated the construction of an additional 3.7 million square feet of space for the campus, including a medical school, student center, athletic center, academic building and support facilities. Additionally, he focussed new activity on Square 102 in realization of the Harris Plan for a formal campus. The Jacob Burns Law Library, designed by Mills, Petticord and Mills, was constructed in 1970, and the Law School complex, designed by Keyes, Condon and Florance, was completed in 1984. These new buildings respect the texture and feeling of the earlier Harris and Heaton designs.

Both Harris and Heaton were distinguished Washington architects, and were directly associated with The George Washington University. Harris served as a faculty member for the School of Architecture and Heaton was for many years an associate architect for the university. Their most notable works, however, are found outside the university.

Harris trained in Chicago with architect Henry Cobb before joining the firm of Hornblower and Marshall in Washington, D.C. Together with other members of the firm, Harris designed the National Museum, now the Museum of Natural History, and the Customs House in Baltimore. Additionally, he was the architect for the Army and Navy Club (1911) at the northeast corner of 17th and I Streets, N.W., and the Lothrop Mansion (1911) on Connecticut Avenue at Columbia Road, N.W. During his tenure at The George Washington University, Harris concurrently served as Municipal Architect for the District of Columbia. Under his direction, the Municipal Architect's office undertook a five-year building project for public schools in the District which included the construction of McKinley High School, and McFarland, Langley, and Stuart Junior High Schools. His coordination of plans for a new Municipal Center, however, was considered his greatest achievement. In his capacity as Municipal Architect, Harris made a lasting impact on institutional architecture in Washington, D.C.

Heaton, who collaborated with Harris on the design of Corcoran and Stockton Halls, was perhaps the more talented of the two architects. A native of Washington, D.C., Heaton was educated in local public schools. He studied at the Sorbonne in Paris and later trained professionally with the local firms of Marsh and Peter, and Paul J. Pelz.

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During his 53 years of practice, Heaton displayed a great penchant for the Colonial Revival style. His admiration of and appreciation of the works of Thomas Jefferson, and his interest in the restoration of Williamsburg was often reflected in the designs he chose for his buildings. Corcoran and Stockton Halls, with references to the Georgian Revival style, illustrate Heaton's tendencies.

Heaton was active in the professional architectural community. He became a member of the AIA in 1901, and served as president of the Local Chapter in 1935. He was one of the founders and presidents of the Washington Building Congress, a group of architects and contractors organized to promote the welfare of the building industry. He was also responsible for the "Renovize Washington" movement, an effort to employ city builders to restore and repair houses in Washington. His buildings are known for their craftsmanship and attention to detail.

Heaton was a prolific architect. Some of his more noteworthy buildings include the now demolished Y.W.C.A. at 17th and K Streets, N.W., the Methodist Home for the Aged, the John Dickson Home, and branch offices for the Washington Loan and Trust Co. Perhaps his most famous work is the Capital Garage (1926) at 1320 New York Avenue, N.W. (demolished 1974), reputed to be the largest and most elaborate of its type in the United States. In a bold departure from his Colonial-influenced designs, the Capital Garage embraces the principals of the art modern style. Its sculptured relief panels depicting automobiles details provided interesting ornamentation for the building and have been preserved by the Smithsonian Institution.

Harry Wardman, whose company constructed both Corcoran and Stockton Halls, also contributed to the significance of these buildings through his influential role in the development and architectural heritage of the District of Columbia. Wardman is considered the most important builder/developer in Washington during the early decades of the twentieth-century. His buildings at one time provided housing for over ten percent of the city's population. His buildings were characterized by their solid construction, fine craftsmanship and attention to detail. These features are found in Corcoran and Stockton Halls.

Corcoran Hall was named in honor of William Corcoran, one of the earliest and greatest benefactors of the school. At its dedication on October 28, 1924, the building was heralded as a "constructive step in the development of a

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far-seeing plan;"¹ Corcoran Hall marked the beginning of the school's realization of its formal campus plan.

¹"Corcoran Hall Dedicated," Evening Star, 29 October 1924.

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Corcoran Hall
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Application to the Joint Committee on Landmarks of the National Capital for Designation of Corcoran Hall as a Historic Landmark. Submitted by The George Washington University & Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A, April, 1987.

Application to the Joint Committee on Landmarks of the National Capital for Designation of the Wardman Park Annex and Arcade as a Historic Landmark. Submitted by Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3C, Washington, D.C., August 3, 1978.

Baist's Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Washington, D.C., Vol. 1, plan 9, Philadelphia: G.W. Baist, 1965.

"The Campus Plan for the Year 1985 Through the Year 2000", The George Washington University, Office of the President, April 30, 1986.

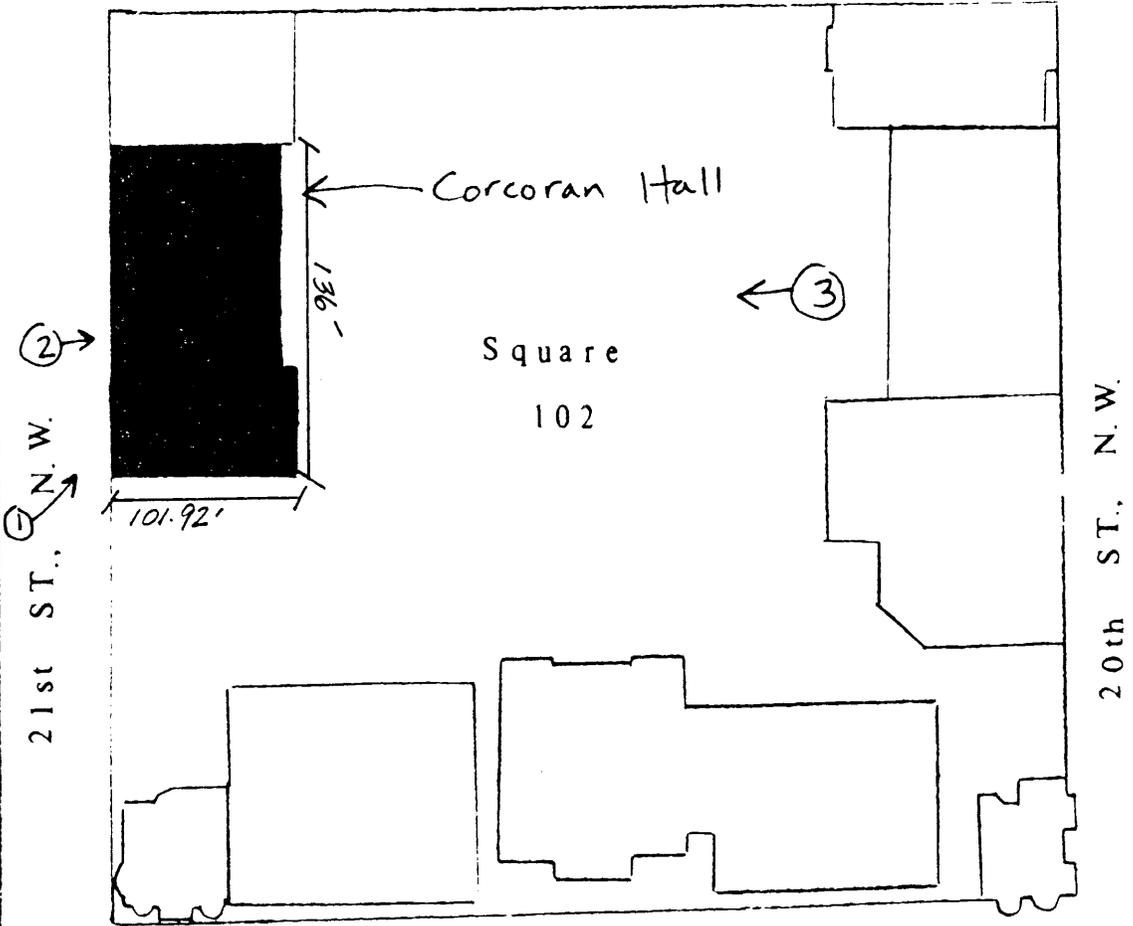
Goode, James M., Capital Losses, Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1979.

Gottfried, Herbert and Jan Jennings, American Vernacular Design, 1870-1940, New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1985.

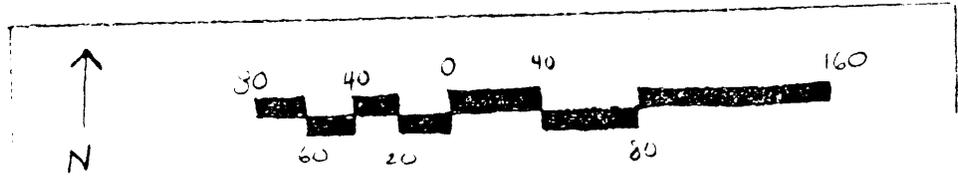
Kayser, Elmer Louis, Bricks Without Straw, New York: Appeltion-Century-Crofts/Meredith Corp., 1970.

Staff Report, Application for Designation As An Historic Landmark, Wardman Row, Designation Case No. 89-2, D.C. Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, Washington, D.C. (undated).

H ST., N.W.



G ST., N.W.



Ⓝ → Numbers Keyed to photographs

Corcoran Hall
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Washington, D.C.

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Photo
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1. Corcoran Hall
The George Washington University
Washington, D.C.
Anne H. Adams, photographer
November, 1986
Wilkes, Artis, Hedrick & Lane (location of negative)
1666 K Street, N.W., #1100
Washington, D.C. 20006
View of main facade on 21st Street, looking northeast
View No. 1

2. Corcoran Hall
The George Washington University
Washington, D.C.
Anne H. Adams, photographer
November, 1986
Wilkes, Artis, Hedrick & Lane (location of negative)
1666 K Street, N.W., #1100
Washington, D.C. 20006
Detail of main entry on 21st Street, looking east
View No. 2

3. Corcoran Hall
The George Washington University
Washington, D.C.
Anne H. Adams, photographer
November, 1986
Wilkes, Artis, Hedrick & Lane (location of negative)
1666 K Street, N.W., #1100
Washington, D.C. 20006
View of rear facade, looking west across University Yard
View No. 3

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Section number Inventor Page 2

4. Corcoran Hall
The George Washington University
Washington, D.C.
Mary Carolyn Brown, photographer
December, 1990
Wilkes, Artis, Hedrick & Lane (location of negative)
1666 K Street, N.W., #1100
Washington, D.C. 20006
2nd floor hallway, looking north
View No. 4

5. Corcoran Hall
The George Washington University
Washington, D.C.
Mary Carolyn Brown, photographer
December, 1990
Wilkes, Artis, Hedrick & Lane (location of negative)
1666 K Street, N.W., #1100
Washington, D.C. 20006
Detail of fire door, 2nd floor hall
View No. 5

6. Corcoran Hall
The George Washington University
Washington, D.C.
Mary Carolyn Brown, photographer
December, 1990
Wilkes, Artis, Hedrick & Lane (location of negative)
1666 K Street, N.W., #1100
Washington, D.C. 20006
Laboratory Classroom, 2nd floor
View No. 6