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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations 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 Mayfair Mansions Apartmnets  
historic name Not Applicable  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location  
street & number 3819 Jay Street, N.E.  not for publication N/A  
city, town Washington  vicinity N/A  
state District of Columbia code DC county N/A code 001 zip code 20019

3. Classification  
Ownership of Property:  private,  public-local,  public-State,  public-Federal  
Category of Property:  building(s),  district,  site,  structure,  object  
Number of Resources within Property:  
Contributing: 17 buildings, 0 sites, 0 structures, 0 objects, Total 17  
Noncontributing: 0 buildings, 0 sites, 0 structures, 0 objects, Total 0  
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification  
As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.  
Carol B. Thompson 9/13/89  
Signature of certifying official Date  
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:  
 entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register.  
 removed from the National Register.  
 other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_  
Jay L. [Signature] 11/1/89  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
Domestic/Multiple Dwelling

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Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
Domestic/Multiple Dwelling

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)Colonial Revival

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Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick  
walls Brick

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roof Slate  
other 

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**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**

Mayfair Mansions Apartments is a garden apartment complex located on the site of former Benning Race Track in the northeast sector of Washington, D.C. The 28 acre parcel lies between Hayes and Jay Street, Kenilworth Terrace and the Anacostia River. Albert I. Cassell, the black architect who designed Mayfair, conceived a park like setting, siting the 17 buildings of the complex on angles about a central common mall space. The buildings occupy only 18 percent of the 28 acres of developed land. The remaining property is given over to the mall, wide courts interspersed amongst the buildings and broad landscaped areas. Children's play areas were also included in the complex's plan. The suburban-like setting of Mayfair Mansions Apartments is in keeping with the progressive development of garden apartments in the city during the post-war period. Newspaper articles contemporary to the completion of Mayfair Mansions Apartments favorably compared the development to McLean Gardens and Naylor Homes, two garden apartment complexes of extraordinary housing quality.

Cassell chose to articulate the three story, rectilinear brick structures through Colonial Revival vocabulary. Each building has approximately six entry ways. Each entry way generally has six apartment units. Most entry ways are five bays wide with a central doorway. The doorways consist of lighted doors braced by side-lights and topped by a variety of stylized pediments - denticulated, broken or rounded. Above the doorways, multi-light windows light the interior central stairway. Wrought iron railings lead up to each door. A balanced fenestration pattern is established throughout the complex. Typical of Colonial Revival treatment, windows are usually arranged in pairs of 6 over 6 double hung sashes or in a tripartite arrangement of a single 6 over 6 braced by two 4 Over 4 double hung sash windows. Each building is further defined by quoined edges and alternating roof types. Two roof treatments may be identified, flat with a raised brick parapet and, more often, a broad gable slate roof. Stylized louvered portal dormers have been placed on the gable roofs above the central bay. Each building usually ends with a gabled unit. The end facades consist of two bays of shuttered windows.

Each building contains 34 to 39, one, two and/or three bedroom apartments. There are 569 units in total consisting of 25 three bedroom units, 399 two bedroom units and 145 one bedroom units.

The individual structures of Mayfair Mansions Apartments have retained their stylistic integrity and remain structurally sound.

**8. Statement of Significance**

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)

Ethnic Heritage - Black

Social History

Period of Significance

1938-1946

Significant Dates

1938

1942

1946

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Cassell, Albert I. - Architect

Michaux, Lightfoot Solomon - Developer

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

Mayfair Mansions Apartments is significant because it is the first privately developed multi-family housing project to be insured by the Federal Housing Administration for occupancy by black tenants. Its significance is further magnified by the fact that it was conceived and designed by a black architect, Albert I. Cassell and developed by two black men for black occupancy at a time when housing in the District of Columbia for blacks was in critically low supply and significantly inferior to housing for whites. By making FHA design and construction standards available to black occupancy, Mayfair Mansions Apartments significantly improved the housing conditions of blacks in the District of Columbia and the Nation by showing that blacks could, in mass, economically support and meet FHA underwriting criteria and standards, hence opening the door for making FHA housing available to blacks nationwide. Mayfair Mansions Apartments became a pioneering model through which the public policy of inferior style and materials for black citizens was eventually abandoned. Although less than fifty years old, the historical importance of Mayfair Mansions Apartments was determined by the National Park Service to be of such significance as to warrant a Determination of Eligibility for individual listing in the National register issued October 14, 1988.

Mayfair Mansions Apartments is significant because of its association with architect and planner Albert I. Cassell and his co-developer, Elder Lightfoot Solomon Michaux, religious leader and international radio evangelist; two talented black men who struggled to improve the living conditions of blacks in America and who each had only one major housing success during their lifetimes, namely Mayfair Mansions Apartments, which success was significantly dependent upon the efforts and involvement of Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt (Eleanor, wife of one of our greatest presidents), Mr. Roosevelt himself, Harry Butcher, President of Station WJSV in Washington, D.C. who later became General

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Battle, Thomas, S., "Albert I. Cassell and Howard University," unpublished paper presented at the Annual Conference on Washington, D.C. Historic Studies, January, 1976

Borchert, James, Alley Life in Washington: Family, Community, Religion and Folklife in the City, 1850-1970. Urbana, Illinois, University of Illinois Press, 1980

Diner, S.J., Housing Washington's People; Public Policy in Retrospect, Department of Urban Studies, University of the District of Columbia, Washington, D.C. 1983

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 28 Acres

UTM References

A 

1	8	3	3	1	0	0	0	4	3	0	7	9	0	0
Zone	Easting	Northing												

C 

1	8	3	3	1	2	5	0	4	3	0	7	5	0	0
Zone	Easting	Northing												

B 

1	8	3	3	1	1	0	0	4	3	0	7	3	5	0
Zone	Easting	Northing												

D 

1	8	3	3	0	8	0	0	4	3	0	7	7	0	0
Zone	Easting	Northing												

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The subject property occupies all of lot 40 within Square 5057.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire city Lot that has historically been associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Arthur M. Reynolds, Sr.

organization Reynolds & Mundy - Attorneys date July 20, 1989

street & number 1155 15th Street, N.W., Suite 1004 telephone (202) 223-3948

city or town Washington, D.C. state N/A zip code 20005

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Eisenhower's naval aid and biographer after World War II broke out, and later Vice President of CBS, and Mary McLeod Bethune, senior Negro Stateswoman of the time and close friend of President and Mrs. Roosevelt.

Constructed between 1942 and 1946, Mayfair Mansions was the first "deluxe" housing complex for Negroes built in Washington, D.C., and the first and largest one to be federally insured, privately developed and financed by Negro developers.

Both the design and plans for Mayfair Mansions developed from Architect Albert I. Cassell's and Elder Lightfoot S. Michaux's desire to provide proper and appropriate housing for Washington's Negro population during the time of scarce availability of living places because of segregation and disproportionate allocation of housing resources. With the advent of World War II and the influx of more government employees, the condition became exacerbated.

Negro housing in Washington had been an issue for many years. In The Housing of Negroes in Washington, D.C., a report written in 1929, William Henry Jones discussed "the origin and natural history of Negro Housing problems in Washington, D.C." He traced the problem, "probably the most serious problem of all the American Cities" to after the Civil War. There were great increases in the Negro population, who came with the belief that "the seat of emancipation was necessarily a haven for the emancipated."

To fully understand the housing situation of the era, one has to appreciate the existence of racial segregation, including allowable racial covenants and a public policy which encouraged such practices and allowed for even publicly-built housing to differentiate in quality between that for its white citizens and its Negro citizens.

Even the racist policies of the local government in D.C. were tempered compared to those in the adjoining jurisdictions of Maryland and Virginia where public accommodations were racially rationed and enforced as both states adhered to their southern traditions. For many people, the move to Washington offered a respite. A move out of Washington to the evolving suburban cache would have been a step backwards in housing and educational opportunities for most Negro citizens. With the federal govern-

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ment offering the best opportunity for substantive employment, though often greatly under-utilizing their talents, skills, education, and training, the Negro population of the District continued to grow, with a resulting emergence of a large "middle class" population served by its own professionals, educators, merchants and service-providers.

Not all the "immigrants" to Washington were well off. Many seeking greater opportunity left the rural South and sought the perceived advantages of the urban life. As in similar situations around the world, the full opportunities did not reach everyone, and with scarce opportunity, many found themselves living on the fringe of society and in the "alleys" of Washington, a social blight on the nation's capital. Alley living often times did not provide the necessities in a healthy manner. Alley living affected many. But the blacks, because of institutional racism, seemed to be most oppressed by it.

With the influx of people, there was little housing available and the situation grew worse until the squalor in which many of the "colored" residents of the nation's capital lived led to the passing of the 1934 District of Columbia Alley Dwelling Act. Earlier legislation had been passed in 1914, but to no end effect. Though Mayfair Mansions was not a direct response to the alley dwelling problem, it was indicative that of the 20,000 substandard housing units, more than three-fourths were occupied by Negroes. Riddled with social and health problems, the alleys offered little escape because of scarce housing for Negroes in general.

With the Alley Dwelling Act of 1934 and the National Housing Act of 1934, the nation established a public housing policy. The National Housing Policy created the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). With its mandate to create new housing opportunities, the FHA still was representative of the period. FHA encouraged "redlining" and racial covenants as a way of securing their investments by maintaining "neighborhood character."

With the New Deal, Washington, D.C., continued to attract large numbers of Negroes to live and work. The Negro community of the 1930s was a well-established and educated one with the influence of Howard University and other institutions. Still seeing the "seat of emancipation as a haven for the emancipated," efforts were continuously sought to redress segregation and

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discrimination as the public policy. With this militancy came independence and desire for self-sufficiency.

The National Housing Act set forth to address the larger housing issue through FHA. With its program designed to create rental housing, FHA insured mortgages for large-scale projects. The use of the FHA insurance provision required certain building standards to be met and effected a rent control for the life of the mortgage.

For the first three years, the FHA "large project" program was mainly experimental. Section 207 provided for assistance to government-owned housing and to private developments which were "formed for the purpose of providing housing for persons of low income."

By the end of 1937, there were twenty-one projects completed, including the first FHA-insured rental project, Colonial Village in Arlington, Virginia. Falkland in Silver Spring, Maryland, followed, and the Brentwood Village, with 440 units, was the first FHA rental project in Washington, D.C. The program proved successful, and by 1948, FHA had nearly two thousand projects, the total increased by the wartime housing efforts and returning Veterans Act. Fourteen new projects were started in 1937.

All of the earlier projects were for white occupancy. FHA was not on the leading edge of providing integrated housing, nor were the financial markets ready to assist large-scale housing projects for minorities.

It was not until 1947 that FHA appointed five racial relations advisors. Their objective was ". . .to help determine the need for minority group housing or the areas which they operate and the availability of suitable land; to stimulate the interest of builders and lenders in the production of such housing; to encourage self-help among minority groups through greater participation by their own financial institutions and builders in financing and building housing . . .'

According to the 14th Annual Report of the Federal Housing Administration, the favorable experience of the building industry in recent years in the development of many projects for sale or rent to minority groups has directed attention to the wide and

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profitable field that exists for investment of this nature. "Long term capital finds particularly interesting the possibilities available in the building and operation of large rental projects such as Day Village in Baltimore, Suburban Gardens and Mayfair Mansions in Washington . . ."

Mayfair Mansions represented the first local effort to capitalize on these opportunities. According to the late Rayford Logan, its conception was back in 1938, when Albert I. Cassell, architect, used his personal funds to take an option on the site of the Benning Racetrack near the banks of the Anacostia River in Northeast Washington, D.C. Mayfair Mansions became Cassell's second personally-financed effort, and the only completed one, "providing work and wider economic housing opportunities for Negroes."

Mayfair Mansions evolved from a flood plain to a deluxe housing project as a testament to the collective and collaborative skills of the Washington Negro community of the time. Deeply concerned about the housing crisis at the time, the Federation of Civic Associations worked closely with the National Capital Housing Authority and its director, John Ihlder. Ihlder, who was a strong advocate for public housing and countered the arguments of the construction and real estate industries, nevertheless accepted segregated housing as a practice and fact in his agency programs.

By 1945, Dr. Herbert Marshall and Dean, later Judge W. H. Hastie formed a committee to challenge the existing housing policies. The Senate Burton Hearings offered them the chance to air their concerns and protest against the lack of housing, the "number playing" statistics of the existing housing, and the use of eminent domain to eliminate the limited number of existing public housing developments for Negroes.

The Committee on Housing in Metropolitan Washington cited conditions going back to the enactment of the Alley Dwelling Act of 1934. These conditions served as catalyst for Cassell to take his planning and development skills and undertake the Mayfair Mansions project.

The site being originally a flood plain, Cassell had to implement an engineering study to see if the land could be reclaimed. He then designed a drainage system to allow the full



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development of the site. Cassell had earlier designed the underground utility system for Howard University, allowing the full development of that site.

Using this planning and architectural skills, Cassell designed the project and sought financing. Unable to secure the available financing, Cassell joined with Elder Michaux to apply the political pressure necessary to complete the project.

In May 1941, Paul T. Stone, the first contractor for Mayfair Mansions, wrote to Elder Lightfoot S. Michaux of his "effort to provide adequate and modern housing in the District of Columbia for successful and self-sustaining Negroes." "My experience in this effort with over thirty large insurance companies leads me to believe that no large insurance company in America would make a mortgage on such a Negro housing Project . . . They seem not to realize that the situation of Negroes in Washington, D.C., is different from that anywhere in the country, and as such, justified consideration by any reason of their steady employment . . . basic incomes are larger . . ."

With Elder Michaux's intervention, Mayfair Mansions became the first local FHA-insured project for Negroes. This was only after a great deal of effort, including a personal appeal to Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt and to her demonstrated interest in housing issues.

Mrs. Roosevelt followed the lead of Mrs. Ellen Wilson, the first wife of Woodrow Wilson, in being concerned about housing conditions, nationally and in Washington, D.C. Drawing together other interested women, Mrs. Roosevelt and Mrs. Wilson visited slum dwelling areas as well as new projects; and they lobbied their respective husbands and the cabinet members to address the housing conditions.

Mrs. Roosevelt invited her friends who were interested in housing and welfare issues to the White House. She reviewed new projects that were brought to her attention and acted as an intermediary, relaying messages to and from her husband. Mrs. Roosevelt accepted the honorary chairmanship of the Washington Committee on Housing. The committee had been formed by John Ihlder, who was a frequent guest at the White House and later

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headed up the National Capital Housing Authority and became a major advocate for housing improvement.

Mrs. Roosevelt was interested in the work and programs of Elder Michaux, often appearing on stage with him and at his various celebrations.

In Metropolitan Washington, D.C., from "1940 to 1942, FHA completed 5602 apartment units for whites and no units built for Negroes." Mayfair Mansions became the first such housing and when completed was compared to Naylor Gardens and McLean Gardens. With rents of \$62.50 and \$85.50 per month, Mayfair attracted a cross section of residents, including "doctors, university professors, lawyers, school teachers, social workers and businessmen." When it opened, there was a reported waiting list of 5,000 persons.

The successful completion of Mayfair Mansions is attributable to the skills and stature of its principal collaborators, Albert I. Cassell and Elder Lightfoot S. Michaux. Through adverse political policy and financial disaster, the two were able to maneuver the project to a successful completion. Elder Michaux and Albert Cassell eventually dissolved their business partnership with Michaux, through the Gospel Spreading Church, taking full control of the project until very recently. From its inception, Mayfair Mansions represented the fulfillment of this self-help vision for both gentlemen.

Elder Lightfoot Solomon Michaux was a local black minister who was an international radio evangelist. "In the late '30s Michaux began his popular Washington broadcasts over station WJSV . . ." "I coined a slogan," he recalls. "W for willing, J for Jesus, S for Suffer and V for Victory. We made a broadcast to England and used the slogan, and that's where 'V for Victory' started.

One of the friends Michaux made early in his radio career was Harry Butcher, who was president of station WJSV in Washington and who later became General Eisenhower's wartime naval aide and biographer after World War II broke out. Cmdr. Butcher also became a Director in Mayfair Gardens, Inc., Vice-President of the Columbia Broadcasting System and a White House intimate. George Allen, a former Commissioner of the District of

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Columbia, was also a member of Elder Michaux's Board of Directors for Mayfair Gardens.

According to Mrs. Marion Butler, Secretary to the Gospel Spreading Church, and many of its members, Mrs. Roosevelt and Elder Michaux were very good friends and her assistance was invaluable in obtaining FHA approval of the loan commitment for Mayfair Mansions Apartments. "Mrs. Roosevelt was credited by Washington observers with using her influence with the President to exempt a portion of the Elder's 1000-acre site on the James River near Jamestown, Virginia, from threatened condemnation by the Federal Government for the Colonial Parkway." This was a site which Elder Michaux had acquired in 1936 to build a National Memorial to the Progress of the Colored Race in America. This site, based on research, is in close proximity to the spot where the first slaves were landed in America.

Lightfoot Solomon Michaux was born on November 7, 1884, in Buckroe, Virginia, into a family of mixed racial heritage. Born into a family with merchant interests, Lightfoot targeted his energy toward entrepreneurship, something which was to follow him throughout his ministry.

After marrying Mary Eliza Pauline, Elder Michaux soon adopted her religious fervor, and in 1917 received the call to preach. Thinking at first that religion and business were antithetical, and concerned with his own business ethics, Michaux soon found Biblical justification for the mix of business and religion, and carried on from there. Ordained into the Church of Christ, Elder Michaux became very successful in the Newport News, Virginia, area.

Early on, Michaux became a charismatic and sometimes controversial leader, and in 1922 split from the Church of Christ Holiness to form his own Church of God. With the likes of Daddy Grace and Father Divine, Elder Michaux gained a large "flock" of worshipers who looked to him for guidance.

Michaux flaunted many laws and traditions which opposed Negroes in the South of the 1920s. The church's influence extended to Baltimore with the migration of some members. Elder Michaux followed them, setting up tent meetings, and again flaunted tradition, even attracting Ku Klux Klan (KKK) members as

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worshipers. Back in Virginia, these same actions found him charged and convicted for holding integrated baptisms. Seeking a new ground for his ministry, Michaux decided to move to Washington, D.C., in 1928.

Once in Washington, Michaux developed a following among the poorer "migrants" to the city. First speaking in a tent, he established a storefront church on U Street, N.W. A permanent edifice was built on Georgia Avenue, N.W., and a later building stands on the site today. Michaux established a national headquarters on R Street, N.W. He later determined that an even more effective ministry would be the new technology of radio. Becoming one of the first radio evangelists and certainly the first major Negro one, Elder Michaux became a social and political force in Washington.

Denouncing the evil of racing, Michaux lobbied against Congress passing a bill to legalize horseracing, which would take place at the old Benning Racetrack. When it was all over, the legislation failed, and two of the prime supporters became partners in the Mayfair Gardens project.

The charismatic Michaux became known as "Happy Am I Evangelist." Often flamboyant, Michaux persuaded many white notables to become honorary deacons in his church, and these connections were to be used later in his business enterprises, especially Mayfair Mansions. They included Clark Griffith, owner of the Washington Senator baseball team; District Commissioner George E. Allen; "Steve" Early, personal secretary to FDR; and the then-General Dwight D. Eisenhower.

From his "radio pulpit," Michaux reached a reported two million people each Saturday evening. At his peak, he received over 1000 pieces of mail each day and had 15 secretaries to handle the load. His broadcast services attracted many, many notables including foreign dignitaries and the curious. Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt attended on occasion and Mrs. Mamie Eisenhower is said to have listened to his program on radio and was touched by Elder Michaux because "he always had something good to say on any subject." The theme song for the program, "Happy Am I" became widely known and was performed by the Marine Band. Even Hollywood took note of the tune with a rendition by Eddie Cantor

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purporting to be original. However, once the similarities were pointed out, Cantor dropped the tune from his repertoire.

Because many of Michaux's followers were poor, they often were the beneficiaries of substandard housing conditions. Establishing the Good Neighbor League, Michaux sought housing, food, and employment for his flock. This was during the depression when Michaux preached against President Hoover as evil, and claimed credit for his defeat.

Near Seventh and T Streets, N.W., Washington, D.C., Michaux established the "Happy Am I Cafe," which served over 250,000 free meals. Evicted families were housed in church-provided buildings. Money came from around the country as the result of Michaux's newspaper and radio programs.

Elder Michaux also solicited assistance for this cause from Mary McLeod Bethune. In writing to Mrs. Bethune he explained that the building of Mayfair Mansions was the "finest and only opportunity Negroes had in any administration to establish and prove their ability to build and occupy and pay for a project costing \$3,160,000 and insured by the Federal Government." Mrs. Bethune was a mutual friend of Elder Michaux and Eleanor Roosevelt.

Through the various political interventions, Mayfair Mansions Apartments was completed in 1946. Elder Michaux died October 20, 1968.

Albert I. Cassell was born in Towson, Maryland, in 1895. His early education was in Baltimore. He became the second "colored graduate" of Cornell's School of Architecture in 1919. After a brief stint with a private practitioner, Cassell joined the faculty of Tuskegee Institute, where he teamed with William Hazel and saw the design of several buildings, though not specifically identified. In 1921, Cassell and Hazel set out for Howard University to teach at the fledgling School of Architecture. As the campus planner, Cassell sought the Jeffersonian Model for Howard University.

Albert I. Cassell, the architect of Mayfair Mansions, has emerged as a "man of vision" and a "master builder." His visionary attributes were able to develop the Howard University

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School of Applied Science into the College of Engineering and Architecture, the first fully-accredited school of architecture in a black university. His vision also took the university campus from an architectural melange to one of "order, dignity, beauty, and facility."

Establishing a twenty-year plan, Cassell set the acquisition and construction program which enhanced Howard's academic reputation as well. While at Howard, and before leaving in a president, Cassell was responsible for ten major buildings and engineering facilities.

While at Howard, Cassell led a team of the greatest number of Negro architects of the time. Included among them were such notables as Lois Fry, Sr., Hilyard Robin, and Ralph Vaughn, who forms the nucleus of the profession for their race for many years, and provided leadership in the field, including fighting the mainstream for proper recognition.

Cassell's finest building is said to be the Founders Library at Howard University. Though the rift left him unable to stay to see the completion, Founders Library became the most identifiable building on campus, and as such, a hallmark to black education across the nation and around the world. Albert Cassell did not rest on his laurels at Howard University, or cease his visionary pursuits.

After Howard, Cassell went on to Morgan State University where he designed five buildings. He also designed the Prince Hall Masonic Temple on U Street, N.W., Margaret Washington Vocational School, James Creek Dwellings, and an addition to St. Luke's Episcopal Church, all in Washington, D.C. He had public commissions elsewhere in the U.S., including Baltimore, Maryland, and Richmond and Alexandria, Virginia. He also had many private commissions.

Cassell's vision extended beyond the academic setting. He sought to increase the economic opportunities for Negroes. In 1933 his first effort, he purchased 380 acres of land on the Chesapeake Bay to develop a "new town" for Negroes. This predated the Greenbelt experiment, and Cassell felt that through his friendship and relationship with the Secretary of the

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Interior, Harold Ickes, he could complete his dream. Even Ickes could not overcome the political and social opposition of the Southern Maryland mentality to a progressive all-Negro city. Cassell remained undaunted, and continued to push the project until his death on November 30, 1969.

Not to limit himself, Cassell also sought to improve the economic conditions in Washington. In 1938, he optioned land at the Benning Racetrack site for a housing development for Negroes. He subsequently joined with Elder Michaux to form Mayfair Gardens, Inc. With Michaux's political access and Cassell's architectural, engineering, and planning skills, they were able to move the project through a labyrinthine process to secure the financing. Even when the project was later foreclosed, it was a testament to Cassell's skills and integrity that it was resurrected and finally completed in 1946. Cassell even made personal loans to guarantee its completion and to insure 100 percent Negro ownership. The foreclosure was due to cost overruns caused by the wartime conditions in Washington and not due to any mismanagement by the sponsors.

Mayfair Mansions, upon completion, evoked the best of garden apartment house designs and received an award from the Committee on Municipal Art of the Washington Board of Trade. ". . . with the citation: 'In Acknowledgement of the Benefits of Such Supreme architecture in the City of Washington, D.C.'. . ." Mayfair Mansions evidenced Cassell's ability to provide "social architecture." Just as at Howard where he applied his skills to shape the educational process for black students, so at Mayfair he was able to shape the living experience for hundreds of families and thousands of people. According to Rayford Logan, noted historian, "Cassell should be honored also for demonstrating the values of interracial cooperation in his various enterprises, the possibilities of the good life in privately constructed housing and for setting an example for negroes in professions from which they have been largely excluded."

Cassell always managed to reinforce the basic contemporary values for his architectural constituents. As a garden apartment complex, Mayfair evoked for its residents a vernacular lifestyle which compared favorably with the living conditions of the white middle class of the time. Supported by the FHA standards,

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Cassell was able to disabuse the public policy of lesser style, and quality materials for citizens of color. That made Mayfair Mansions architecturally significant at the time, and its lasting value supports the judgment and skills of Cassell.

The completed Mayfair Mansions was the foremost and largest of Cassell's work in residential housing. As an architect, planner, and educator, Albert I. Cassell turned visions into reality, using all the skills of his trade and art. Said Kelly Miller, noted black sociologist, "[He] exemplifies the highest expression of the Negro in the domain of the applied sciences involving both utility and beauty."

As a garden apartment house complex, Mayfair Mansions is of exceptional local significance and of national significance under applicable National Register criteria:

- A. . . . associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history:

As stated by the Historic Preservation Review Board of the District of Columbia in its Decision Letter dated May 24, 1989, Case No. 89-6, wherein said Board nominated the subject property to the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites:

"It (Mayfair Mansions Apartments) represents a significant achievement in the local housing patterns of Black Washingtonians in post-war years and represents the first such projects for Blacks to receive FHA support."



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