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**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Meridian Manor
Other names/site number: 1424 Chapin Street, NW

2. Location

Street & Number: 1424 Chapin Street, NW Not for Publication
City or town: Washington Vicinity
State: District Of Columbia Code: DC County: Code: 001 Zip Code: 20001

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title [Signature] Date Feb 15, 2001

State or Federal agency and bureau

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:)
Signature of the Keeper [Signature] Date of Action 3/29/01

1424 Chapin Street , NW
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	No. Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> Public-Local	<input type="checkbox"/> District		
<input type="checkbox"/> Public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> Site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> Sites
<input type="checkbox"/> Public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> Structure
	<input type="checkbox"/> Object	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> Objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total
Name of related multiple property listing <u>N/A</u>		Number of contributing Resources previously listed in the National Register <u>0</u>	

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
<u>Domestic: Multiple Dwelling</u>	<u>Vacant</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)	Materials (enter categories from instructions)
<u>Colonial Revival</u>	foundation: <u>Concrete and Brick</u>
_____	walls: <u>Brick and Stone (Limestone)</u>
_____	roof: <u>Built-up roof</u>
_____	other: _____
_____	_____

Narrative Description

Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets
Section 7

See continuation sheet

1424 Chapin Street, NW
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

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.

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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Section 8

See continuation sheet

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1926-1927

1929

Significant Dates

1926-27

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Santmyers, George (1926-27)

1424 Chapin Street, NW

Washington, DC

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9. Major Bibliographic References

- See continuation sheet Section 9
- Previous documentation on file (NPS):
- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)
- previously listed in the NR
- 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 add. data:

- State SHPO office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property less than one acre

UTM References: USGS Map

1 /18/ /03/2/3/7/4/9/ /4/3/0/9/7/9/7/
 Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Property is located at 1424 Chapin Street, NW, Washington, DC, which occupies Square 2661, Lot 44.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

Property is situated on Square 2661, Lot 44. The boundary includes the original lot on which the building has historically stood and maintains historic integrity.

See continuation sheet

1424 Chapin Street, NW

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Laura H. Hughes and Simone M. Moffett, Architectural Historians

Organization E.H.T. Tracerics Inc. Date December, 2000

Street & Number 1121 Fifth Street, NW Telephone (202) 393-1199

City or Town Washington State DC Zip code 20001

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Archbishop Rivera y Damas Cooperative Association, Inc., Leroy Washington, President

street & number 1616 Marion Street, NW #3 telephone (202)667-5494

city or town Washington state DC zip code 20001

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. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127, and the Office of the Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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1424 Chapin Street, NW, Washington, District of Columbia

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SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The Meridian Manor Apartment Building is located at 1424 Chapin Street, N.W., in Square 2661, Lot 44. The apartment building extends fifty feet wide on Chapin Street and approximately one hundred and twenty feet deep. Noted apartment architect George T. Santmyers designed the five-story brick apartment building in 1926-1927. As defined by the Multiple Property Document "Apartment Buildings in Washington, D.C. 1880-1945" the Meridian Manor is a conventional-form apartment building of modest scale and presentation, it is designed in the Colonial Revival style. The construction of Meridian Manor at 1424 Chapin Street reflects the residential development adjacent to Washington's 14th Street streetcar line and the increasing popularity and acceptance of apartment living for middle-class tenants. The subsequent request for permission to construct a garage in the building in 1929 attests to the growing importance of the automobile and the mobility of Washington's working class.

SITE

Meridian Manor is located at 1424 Chapin Street in the northwest quadrant of Washington, D.C. The property encompasses the apartment house and a small courtyard/driveway at the rear. Sited on Square 2661, the north side of the building fronts Chapin Street and the south side of the building faces a public alley that intersects the square. Square 2661 is bounded by Chapin Street to the north, 15th Street to the west, 14th Street to the east, and Belmont Street to the south. The south side of the fourteen hundred block of Chapin Street is occupied by six mid-rise apartment buildings and a number of rowhouses.

EXTERIOR

Constructed in 1926-27, Meridian Manor is a five-story plus basement apartment house designed in the Colonial Revival style. The apartment house's floor plan is designed in a 'T' with the main block of the building facing Chapin Street. The building is orientated toward the north and the main block measures 50' west to east along Chapin Street and 40'-10" north to south toward the rear of the 'T'. The leg of the 'T' measures 29'-4" wide and 79'-2" deep and faces the alley at the rear of the building. The seven bays wide building is clad in a dark red brick laid in six-course American bond. The building's five

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story height is divided horizontally with three stone beltcourses and the façade is marked with the symmetrical presentation of the single and double windows.

North Elevation (Main Facade)

The decorative features at the main (north) elevation include a three-bay wide stone entrance way, decorative stone panels and an oval cartouche with swags at the cornice level. The main elevation is symmetrical in design with the three-bay wide ornamental entrance way at the center of the first story and a set of two six-over-six double hung sash wood windows and a single six-over-six double hung sash wood window to the decorative stone entrance way's east and west. The window pattern is continued on the second through fifth stories with the center section of the main elevation having a symmetrical vocabulary of six windows across at each story. A stone beltcourse intersects between the first and second stories, the fourth and fifth stories and above the fifth story. The beltcourse between the first and second stories and above the fifth stories are flat stone sections. The beltcourse between the fourth and fifth stories incorporates the window sills at the fifth story and the stone sections have a decorative molding. The two center windows at the second story have a delicate stone window surround and an oval cartouche is located in the center of the north elevation between the third and fourth stories. At the cornice level, stone rosettes, decorative stone panels and an oval cartouche with swags adorn the elevation.

The three-bay wide stone entranceway is designed with three arched openings. The main doorway is located within the center arch and the arch to the east and west are window openings. The stone work has recessed joints and stone panels are located below the sill of the two arched windows. Pair of fluted pilasters with a shell motif capital flanks each opening (four pairs total) and supports the classic entablature. Small rosettes are aligned with the pilaster at the frieze and 'Meridian Manor' is spelled out in metal lettering centered above the doorway. The numbers '1424' are located directly above the door. A damaged concrete walkway and stoop leads to the main entranceway and is flanked by a small yard.

The grade of the street at the north elevation slopes down from west to east. The exposed section of the north elevation wall at the basement level is designed with stone. At the far east end of the north elevation, the basement level is exposed to Chapin Street and a

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concrete walkway leads to the exterior basement door. Two small window openings with stone sills are located to the west of the basement doorway.

West and East Elevations

The west and east elevations of the main block of the 'T' are nearly identical. Each windowless wall is clad in red brick laid in six-course American bond. These elevations abut buildings to the east and west, therefor allowing only a portion of the walls to be exposed.

The east elevation of the leg of the 'T' is eleven bays wide with a projecting chimney located between the sixth and seventh bay. The loss of its mortar joints and the removal of some of the original bricks have damaged the brickwork of the chimney top, visible from the roof. The first through fifth stories have a combination of single and double regularly spaced window openings that is matched by the west elevation of the leg of the 'T'. The window openings have stone sills and all of the windows have undergone a varying degree of deterioration. At the basement level of the east elevation, an access door is located toward the south of the east elevation. An original coal chute door is located to the south of the access door. It has been extensively altered with the introduction of various pipes and vents. The brickwork has been altered with the introduction of graffiti and the word "Parking" has been painted in large white letters at the south end of the east elevation. A concrete walkway leads from the alley to the rear of the main block of the building.

The west elevation of the leg of the 'T' is similar in design as the east elevation with the exception of the introduction of garage parking. A total of thirteen parking spaces were introduced to 1424 Chapin Street. Eleven spaces are located at the basement level and are supported by concrete piers. Seven of the eleven garage doors have been removed and the remaining four have been damaged and covered with graffiti. A concrete driveway leads from the public alley at the south to the individual garage spaces. A fence extends the width of the driveway at the north end.

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South Elevation

The east and west sides of the south elevation of the main block of the building are separated by the leg of the 'T'. Each side of the south elevation has single and double window openings at the first through fifth stories. There is access to the basement level from the east side of the rear elevation. The entrance has been sealed from the exterior, as have the windows at the basement and first stories.

The south elevation of the leg of the 'T' is three bays wide and utilitarian in design. The first through fifth stories have double windows at the end bays with single windows at the center. Two large garage space openings are located at the east end of the ground level and the window openings at the center and end bay have been bricked up. The south elevation is orientated toward the alley that runs from east to west at the rear of the building.

INTERIOR

The interior of 1424 Chapin Street, in keeping with its function as an apartment house, was designed with distinct public and private spaces. As originally designed the apartments in Meridian Manor were one-bedroom units with one efficiency unit located at the basement level. The main lobby, located in the main block of the 'T', is a large open room with a decorative marble staircase leading to the first floor apartments. The apartment is designed with two staircases at the east and west sides of the north end of the main hallway. The staircases are utilitarian in design with pipe banisters and concrete stairs. A single cab elevator is located across the hall from the east staircase. With the exception of the basement and first floor, three apartments are located in the main block of the 'T' and six apartments are located along the main hallway.

Most of the original finishes hardware and windows remain in the building. There has been extensive damage to these features due to the lack of climate control and vandalism. In the main lobby, the plaster walls have been scored to look like stone. Although covered with numerous layers of paint, the pattern is still visible. The marble floors, marble staircase and decorative cornice still remain in the lobby space. A section of the

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cornice, the two wood casement windows and fanlights and the original doorway are missing or have been severely damaged. The original terrazzo floors and textured walls in the hallways and the original wood floors in the apartments are still intact, although the wood floors are in a state of deterioration in a majority of the apartments. The original trim and molding, ceiling heights, interior apartment doors and double hung wood sash windows are found throughout the building and are in varying degrees of deterioration. In some instances, new wood windows, access doors to the apartments, kitchen appliances and carpeting have been introduced into the apartments. The building is in poor to moderate condition with most of the original materials and finishes found throughout the building in deteriorated condition.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

Meridian Manor is a significant example of the speculative middle class apartment buildings which were constructed in the 1910s and 1920s adjacent to the 14th Street streetcar line in Washington, D.C. The design of Meridian Manor by noted architect George T. Santmyers, and the choice of architectural vocabulary characterizes the architecture and development in this area by developers who attempted to capitalize on the proximity to the streetcar line, and the demand for solid, modestly appointed middle class apartment buildings. Meridian Manor is an important example of George T. Santmyers' early Colonial Revival designs, prior to his emergence and predilection for art moderne and gothic moderne vocabularies. Santmyers' 1926-27 design for the building resulting in a flat, symmetric facade detailed with colonial swags, and an arcaded rusticated stone entry reflects his early design aesthetic prior to moving into his most celebrated apartments in the Art Deco, Art Moderne, and International styles. The prominent building firm Biron & Son were responsible for the construction and development of Meridian Manor.

As an example of the conventional mid-rise apartment form, Meridian Manor is reflective of the acceptance of middle class apartment buildings in Washington during the 1910s and 1920s, and the success of a moderate apartment developed along the upper 14th Street corridor during this period. Apartment design and planning were undergoing important innovations in the late 1910s and early 1920s in response to the pressing need for housing due to the city's rapidly expanding population. Developers saw the need to offer modestly appointed apartments that appealed to Washington's expanding middle-class population. The upper 14th street corridor apartments developed and were promoted as solidly constructed apartments with the convenience of streetcar accessibility to downtown.

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**EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE COLUMBIA HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD AND
THE 14TH STREET STREETCAR LINE RESIDENTIAL CORRIDOR**

The Upper 14th Street or Columbia Heights neighborhood is an architecturally and historically significant residential neighborhood that was developed largely between the 1870s and 1940. One of the largest landholders in this area prior to the Civil War was Columbia College (The George Washington University). The college grounds were described by Columbia College President Samson as consisting of “nearly 47 acres, including a strip of land extending from Boundary Street [now Florida Avenue] along 14th Street road and between 14th and 15th Streets prolonged a distance of about on half mile; including also... a triangular strip used as a Cemetery north of the road [now Columbia Road] passing along the northern boundary of the main property.”¹ At the close of the war, Trustees of the College began to subdivide the southern end of campus into streets and alleys and lease it to developers in preparation of the eventual disposal of the campus property. At this time, Chapin Street was created and the lots fronting Chapin Street could only be used for dwellings and outbuildings for residential uses. The lots fronting on Fourteenth Street could not be occupied by stores for the sale of “spirituous liquors or any other traffic not previously approved by the Board.”² The College would be responsible for the grading of the streets and alleys while the lessee needed to grade to lots on a scale conforming to the new streets.³ This first successful step toward speculative development spurred the college to eventually sell off the property to developers in the 1880s. Columbia College’s move out of the area and the subdividing of its 47 acres, encouraged the development of a new residential and commercial neighborhood. Advertised as “Columbian Heights” by owner and developer, Senator John Sherman of Ohio, the area between Florida Avenue, 11th and 14th Streets, and Park Road was subdivided in 1881-1882.⁴ Consequently, the Columbia Heights area, like many of the adjacent communities, grew as a cohesive residential enclave with both apartment buildings and single family rowhouses lining its predominantly residential streets.

¹ Kayser, Elmer Louis. *Bricks Without Straw: The Evolution of George Washington University*, pg. 121.

² *Ibid.*, pg. 129.

³ *Ibid.*, pg. 129.

⁴ Williams, Paul K. *Columbia Heights Neighborhood: A Short History*, pg. 2.

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The Columbia Heights neighborhood is particularly dominated by apartment buildings that were constructed in the late 19th century and the early 20th century in response to transportation trends and streetcar line development. With 14th Street acting as the spine of the district, the neighborhood is located just north of the traditional boundaries of the Federal City. The development of the neighborhood followed the streetcar lines, which ran on both 11th and 14th Streets, as early as 1862. The 14th Street streetcar line extended between Florida Avenue, two blocks south of Chapin Street, downtown, Georgetown, and the Navy Yard. In the twentieth century, the streetcar line was extended northward along 14th Street. The close proximity of the 14th Street streetcar line provided a strong impetus for high-density residential development north of Florida Avenue. Designed in 1926-1927 by noted apartment architect George T. Santmyers, Meridian Manor's features include self-contained apartment units and a modest sized lobby. A conventional-form apartment building of modest scale and presentation, Meridian Manor is designed in the Colonial Revival style. Santmyers' unpretentious Colonial Revival design precisely reflects the middle class residents who occupied the apartments in the building. In contrast, the luxury apartments constructed during the same time period were designed with extravagant features that were not found in the Meridian Manor or other middle class apartment buildings. These features included larger and more ornate lobby spaces, open porches or solariums, extensive paneling in the individual apartment spaces, outer kitchen doors for the removal of trash, and public dining rooms. The new streetcar technology opened the Federal City and its outlying areas to residential development, making it more convenient than ever to commute downtown to work and shop. The streetcar line gave middle class residents efficient and reliable transportation throughout the city. Interestingly, apartment buildings abound in the Columbia Heights area, with approximately 86 apartment buildings pre-dating 1945 located between Columbia Road, 15th and 11th Streets, and Florida Avenue, N.W..

THE APARTMENT BUILDING AS A WASHINGTON INSTITUTION

Apartment buildings were constructed with great speed and in great numbers during the 1920s in Washington, D.C. The city's population increased tremendously in the years prior to the war, and the population remained much higher after the war had concluded. The federal work force tripled in numbers between 1916 and 1918. By the turn of the century, developers had succeeded in

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creating a new type of building, one which was offered at moderate rents and yet provided at least some of the desirable amenities formerly associated only with the more elite luxury buildings.

By the first decade of the new century, apartment buildings seemed to be sprouting like weeds through out the District. Between 1900 and 1909, 439 apartment buildings constructed and spread over all four quadrants: 363 in Northwest, 45 in Northeast, 11 in Southwest and 20 in Southeast. This was more than four times the number built in the 1890s. The decade from 1910 through 1919 was almost as high in spite of the building halt caused by World War I. During that decade 316 apartment buildings were constructed with 287 in Northwest, 17 in Northeast, 3 in Southwest, and 9 in Southeast. The 1920s more than doubled the figure to 705; 594 in Northwest, 66 in Northeast, 8 in Southwest, and 37 in Southeast. By 1930, an estimated 50% of Washingtonians resided in apartment buildings.

World War I dramatically decreased the amount of housing constructed in the city of Washington during the war (while 40 apartment buildings had been constructed in 1917, only six were constructed in 1918, 36 in 1919, 16 in 1920, 29 in 1921). The war effort consumed most of the civilian industrial capacity. As a result, there was a severe shortage of building materials. Meanwhile, the population in Washington, D.C. continued its dramatic increase, multiplying on top of a federal work force that tripled between 1916 and 1918.⁵ Consequently, there was a large demand for housing when civilian construction resumed in the early 1920s. Architects, builders, and developers rushed to fill the void and the decade of the 1920s experienced a burgeoning of both apartment buildings and single-family housing.

In the decade after the end of World War I, from 1919 to the Stock Market Crash of 1929, 741 apartment buildings were constructed in the city, a growth paralleling the dramatic increase in single-family house construction. Competition among apartment building developers was fierce. Not only were developers scrambling to provide enough housing for the new federal workers, but they also attempted to build more attractive apartment buildings by offering the latest technological advances as well as novel interior designs and other schemes which would appeal and attract residents to their particular apartment development. Meridian Manor's close proximity to the 14th Street streetcar line to the east and Meridian Hill

⁵ Goode, James. Best Addresses, p. 173.

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Park to the west provided an additional attraction for potential residents. Meridian Manor was one of forty-one middle class apartment buildings constructed during the 1920s along the 14th Street streetcar line corridor.

Meridian Manor is a good example of the large numbers of conventional-type, mid-rise, middle class apartments that were constructed throughout Washington in the 1910s and 1920s. During these decades interest of the middle-class in apartment living surged as individuals and families competed to rent moderate-priced apartments in buildings such as Meridian Manor. Meridian Manor, as originally designed, was a conventional mid-rise apartment building with thirty-two apartment units and a passenger elevator. The development of the conventional mid-rise apartment augmented the potential for solving the problems inherent to quickly housing a rapidly expanding population in the District. The introduction of the mid-rise apartment was possible with the emergence of the passenger elevator, allowing for the construction of taller buildings. It permitted a more efficient use of land in locations served by public transportation and changed the course of domestic trends for the increasing number of middle class residents in the District. The new class of apartment buildings was self-sufficient in character. The hotel-type personal services were gradually dropped from the design program and apartment units were equipped for housekeeping, gas ranges, sinks, electric lights, electric bells, and house telephones. Once the idea of an apartment building as a respectable and functional place to live was accepted, several factors further encouraged their development throughout the city: 1) the rapid growth of the street railway system; 2) the new popularity of the automobile; 3) the revision of the building codes to ensure safer more healthy living environments and 4) the passage of zoning regulations requiring the "gathering" of buildings and accessory services.

**NEW DEVELOPMENT ACCELERATES THE IMPACT OF WASHINGTON'S PUBLIC
TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM**

Public transportation lines spurred the development of apartment house corridors. In 1862, Congress chartered the first streetcar railway lines. The completion of three routes, six months later, changed the way Washington worked, lived, and played. These routes included a streetcar line on 14th Street, expanding the city's residential core to Boundary (Florida Avenue) Street. By

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1864, when Congress approved the extension of the 14th and 7th Street lines north past the city boundaries, it was clear that both streets were significant thoroughfares connecting Washington's northern-most developing communities with the downtown core.⁶ When, in 1897, the 14th Street line was extended to Park Road, it became the longest north-south line, and residential construction increased along its route. Although the earliest apartment buildings were located primarily close to lower Connecticut Avenue, extending through the heart of the "downtown" residential area, the opening of the streetcar lines attracted investors eager to capitalize on less expensive land. By 1902, Capital Traction ran 23 trains along 14th Street between Park Road and the B & O Depot. Streetcar service was improved in 1906-1907 with the extension of the 14th Street line north from Park Road to Colorado Avenue. The extension of the 14th Street streetcar line stretched the capital's boundaries northward to Park Road and Colorado Avenue, promoting substantial neighborhood development as it progressed. The influence of the streetcar line offers a prime illustration of the growth patterns in the Columbia Heights neighborhood in the 20th century. The 14th Street streetcar line offered newly established residential areas north of Florida Avenue access to the commercial corridor and downtown core. By the end of the World War I, 150 apartment buildings were on 14th Street or between the 13th-15th Streets corridor. By the second quarter of the 20th century, the adjacent neighborhood was established as a residential community with supporting institutions such as schools, gasoline stations, telephone equipment houses, churches, and stores.

The growing popularity of the automobile affected the apartment building almost as much as public transportation. By the late 1920s, the future of the car was secured and the possibility for apartment locations became almost limitless. The car opened up possibilities for the location of new apartment buildings in far the reaches of the city, and beyond. Public transportation was no longer a requirement for the federal worker. Further, the apartment building forms changed to accommodate the automobile. First, driveways and porte-cocheres were incorporated into the designs of new buildings. Soon garages (attached and not) were seen. Although the Highlands offered a basement garage when it opened in 1905, this was most unusual and it was not until the 1920s when zoning regulations mandated garages in larger buildings that they were regularly instituted into building design. Following this trend, in 1929, the owners of Meridian Manor

⁶ King, Leroy O. Jr. 100 Years of Capital Traction: The Story of Streetcars in the Nation's Capital. Pg. 5.

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requested permission to establish a garage with thirteen spaces in the basement of 1424 Chapin Street.⁷ The construction of garage spaces at Meridian Manor provided a limited amount of secured parking, but the apartment's close proximity to the 14th Street streetcar line did not make owning an automobile a necessity for the residents.

ORIGINAL CONSTRUCTION AND ALTERATIONS

Meridian Manor, 1424 Chapin Street, N.W.

The District of Columbia issued a permit to build to S.M. Biron & Son on December 13, 1926 (D.C. Permit to Build #6519) to construct an apartment building at 1424 Chapin Street, N.W..

The permit lists George Santmyers as the architect and S.M. Biron & Son as the builder. The building was to be constructed of brick with limestone a flat slag roof. The five-story building was to be 50 x 120 feet on a lot measuring 50 x 150 feet. The building was to serviced by a single, passenger elevator. The estimated cost of construction for the apartment was \$90,000.

D.S. Biron applied for a permit to build a garage in the basement of Meridian Manor in May, 1929 (D.C. Permit #123971). The new garage was to be accessed from the alley at the rear of the site and provide parking spaces for thirteen automobiles. The estimated cost of construction for the garage was not listed on the permit.

ARCHITECT AND BUILDER: GEORGE T. SANTMYERS AND S.M.BIRON & SONS

George Santmyers, Jr. (1889-1960) practiced architecture in Washington, D.C. for over 40 years. He remains one of the city's most prolific and important architects of the twentieth century. While Santmyers is credited with the design of banks, commercial buildings, public garages and a multitude of private residences, the majority of his work consists of apartment buildings--over 400.

⁷D.C. Permit #123971, May 25, 1929.

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Santmyers was born in Front Royal, Virginia and spent his early years in Baltimore, Maryland. He moved to Washington as a teenager, completed high school, and began several years of training in the offices of some of the city's leading architects. By his early twenties, he opened his own architectural office. His earliest known commissions in the city date from 1910 for a group of rowhouses. Still designing and heading his office in 1960, he completed his last apartment building design at the age of 72 just six months before his death.

The sheer number of apartment commissions executed by Santmyers is astounding. Santmyers devoted his enormous skills and energy to produce notably designed buildings with efficient plans. He worked in a variety of styles, using more traditional, classically inspired architecture in his early buildings; entering a transitional phase based on classical precedents with a panache of twentieth century modern architecture; and culminating in work designed in full-blown expressions of the Art Deco, Art Moderne, and International styles.

His early apartment buildings from the 1920s were typically Colonial Revival in style. The Colonial Revival style provided a formal vocabulary based on architectural elements associated with the American Georgian and Federal periods. The apartments were usually symmetric in composition, with ordered fenestration, large multi-light, double-hung windows, a centrally located doorway complete with prominent portico or architrave, and classical detailing. The Meridian Manor (1926) apartments at 1424 Chapin Street, N.W., is a classic Colonial Revival style Santmyers' apartment building. The flat, symmetric facade is detailed with colonial swags, and an arcaded rusticated stone entry.

Today, Santmyers is most celebrated for his Art Deco, Art Moderne, and International Style apartment buildings from the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. During these decades, Santmyers' predilection for the Art Deco movement was given free reign on the overwhelming number of apartment buildings he was commissioned to design. Santmyers' buff-brick, linear massed buildings were found throughout the city.

The Meridian Manor was owned and constructed by S.M. Biron & Sons. Little information has been identified about Samuel M. Biron. and his various family members. Information from the

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D.C. Apartment Building Survey does indicate that S.M. Biron & Sons and George T. Santmyers collaborated on another apartment development on Georgia Avenue between 1924-1925. These two modest brick apartments at 4510 and 4520 Georgia Avenue are 2 stories in height with Colonial Revival details.

Biron first appears in *Boyd's City Directory* in 1901 selling dry goods at 418 L St. N.W. He last appears in *Boyd's* in 1934 at the long-time family residence and business address, 1218 9th Street, N.W. No business is listed after his name but one resident of the house is listed as a building contractor and two as operating Adams News Depot. In 1935, Samuel M. Biron is not listed, the building contractor is in the liquor business at 622 9th Street, N.W. and the operators of Adams News Depot are instead in business as the National Candy and Tobacco Company.

Throughout his career Biron undertook a number a business ventures including: dry goods, rugs, clothier, broker, and installment goods (probably furniture). One year two family members are listed as collectors for S.M. Biron. In 1924 and 1926 Samuel has no listing after his name and David S. Biron is listed as "manager." In 1929, David is listed as a contractor and, in 1932, both Samuel and David are listed as "salesmen." They were not listed in the business section under either "builder" or "contractor."

Conclusion

In conclusion, the 1926 Meridian Manor apartment building is an important example of noted apartment architect George Santmyers' modest, Colonial Revival designed apartment buildings. The unpretentious design by Santmyers characterizes his initial more traditional apartment house commissions as his career shifted to the utilization of more expressive and full-blown moderne architectural vocabularies. Meridian Manor, in conjunction with other apartment buildings along the 14th Street streetcar line formed an impressive corridor of modestly appointed apartment buildings that had enormous appeal to Washington's expanding federal and middle income workforce during the first decades of the twentieth century.

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All photographs are:

Meridian Manor
1424 Chapin Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

All photographs were taken by EHT Tracerics, Inc.

All photographs were taken in December, 2000.

All negatives will be stored at the D.C. Historic Preservation Division (DC SHPO)

Photograph 1 of 5:

View of main elevation,
Looking southwest

Photograph 2 of 5:

View of main elevation,
Looking southeast

Photograph 3 of 5:

Detail of decorative window surround, main elevation
Looking south

Photograph 4 of 5:

View of main entrance,
Looking south

Photograph 5 of 5:

View of west elevation of 'T' and garage spaces,
Looking northwest

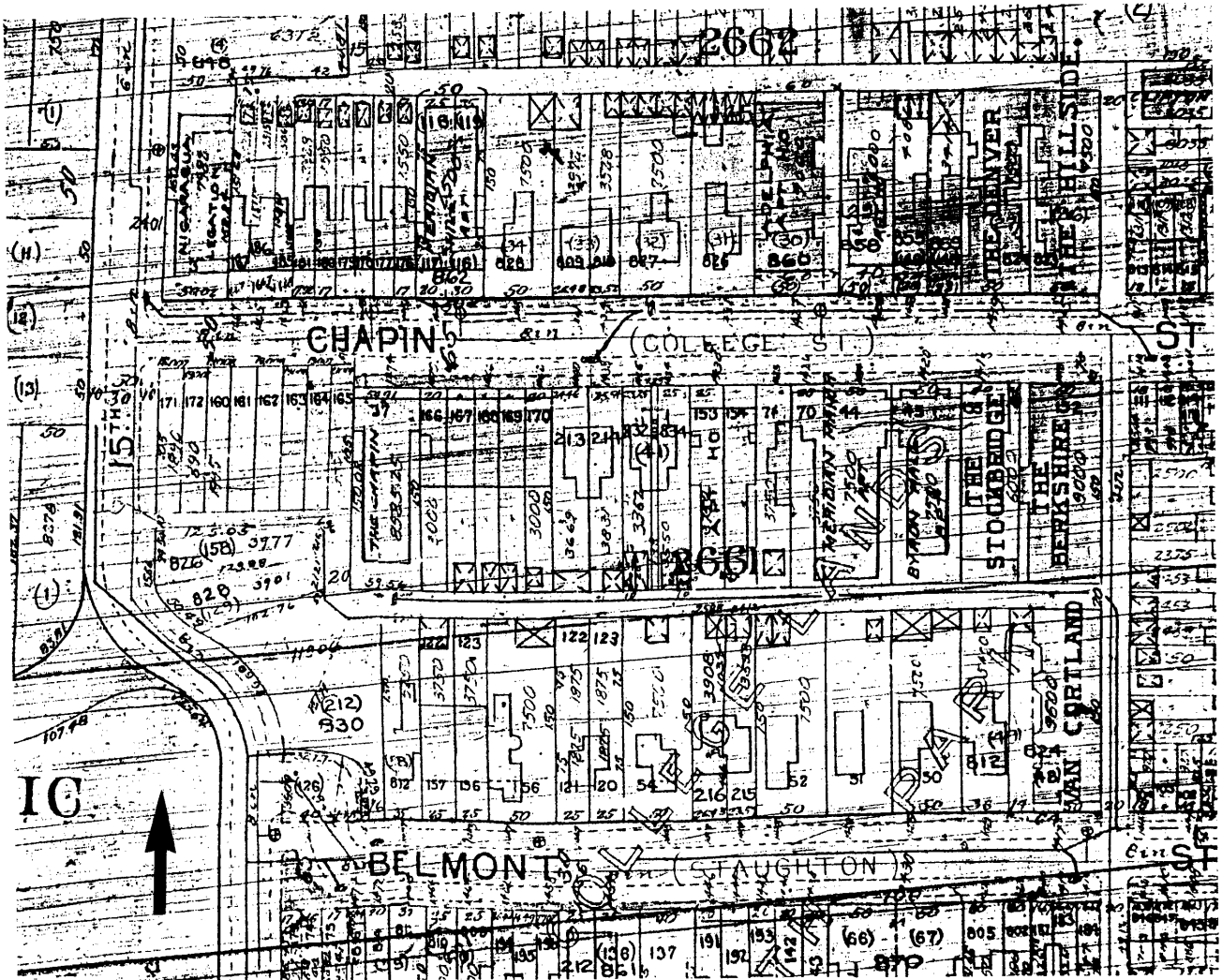
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Meridian Manor
1424 Chapin Street, N.W.
Square 2661, lot 44



1931, Hopkins & Baist Map

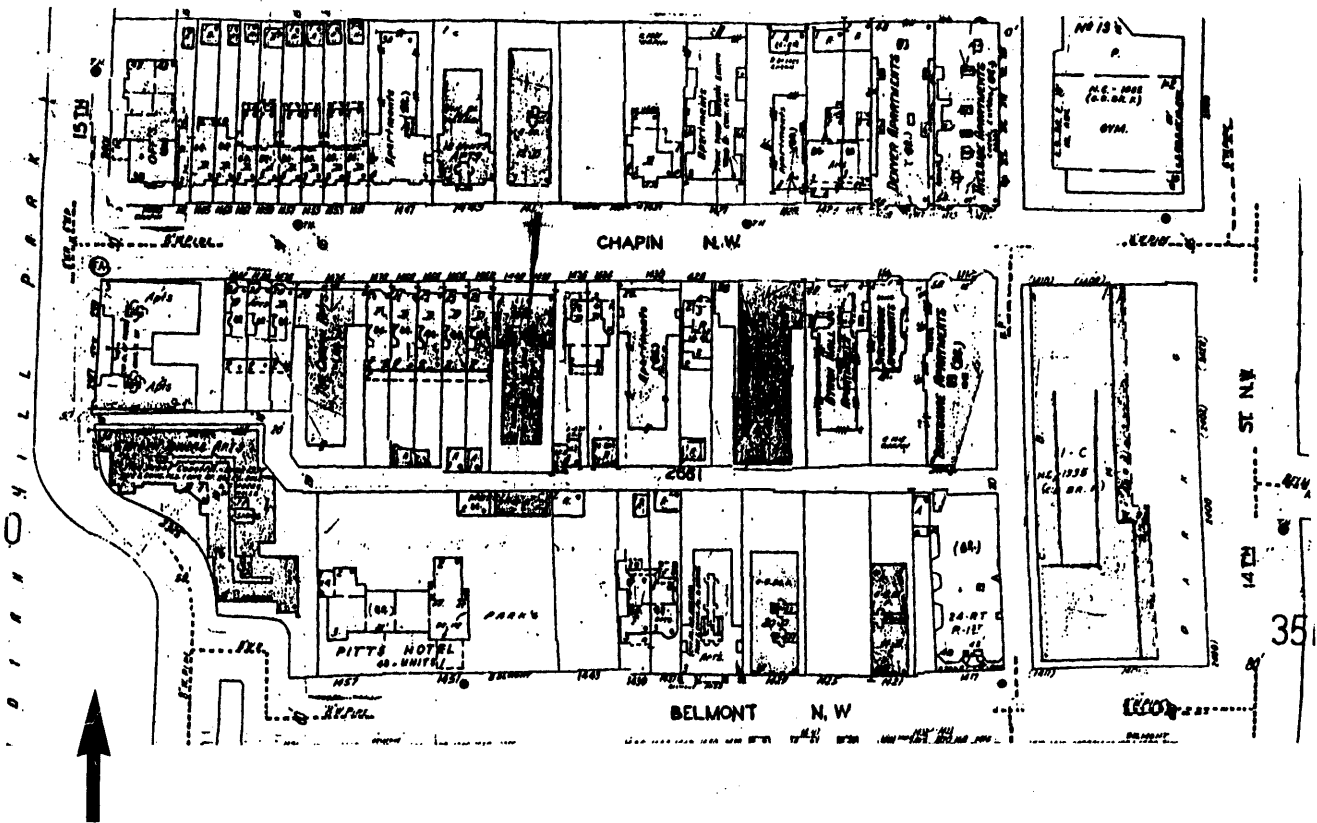
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1999 Sanborn Map