Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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#### SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

# 1 NAME

HISTORIC Bachelor Apartment House

AND/OR COMMON

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## 7 DESCRIPTION

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#### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The following architectural description of the Bachelor Apartment House was prepared by Emily Hotaling Eig and Judith Helman Robinson, architectural historians, of Traceries, Inc.

The Bachelor Apartment House (1905) was designed by the Washington architectural firm of Wood, Donn and Deming and erected by builder John McGregor. It is eclectic in style utilizing several historic elements, notably the French and Jacobean, and is a good example of the firm's distinct interpretation of historic design.

The building is sited on lot 40, square 127, and faces south on H Street between 17th and 18th Streets, N.W. A semi-detached building, 45' wide X 80' deep, it originally stood among many apartments and residential buildings in a mainly residential neighborhood. It is presently joined on the western facade by the Burroughs Building (1952) and is separated by a public alley from the Editor's Building (1950) to the east.

The Bachelor Apartment House is rectangular in plan, 45' wide on the H Street facade and 80' deep. It is a five-story structure with full basement, elevator and a flat roof with access from a penthouse. The building is sited several steps above grade, with basement windows partially above grade. While two original elevations call for a different roof treatment featuring a wooden trellis and lattice roof garden enclosure (1905) and a galvanized iron mansard roof with dormer windows (1904), neither scheme was implemented, and a flat slag and tile roof was substituted just prior to construction. An elaborate hollow sheet metal cornice with dentil molding and a parapet serve to finish the building facade.

The structure sits on a solid concrete foundation and is supported by eight vertical central piers. Brick is the primary wall material and walls and doors are of fireproof construction. Decorative elements are composed of ornamental face brick in a Flemish bond pattern, carved Indiana limestone, granite, galvanized iron and terra-cotta.

The front facade is tripartite in design, with vertical bays juxtaposed on the classical columnar division of base, shank, and entablature. Most prominent to the facade are two triple-fenestrated bay projections of Indiana limestone running vertically in a continuous line and decorated with terra-cotta and wrought iron grilles. The Jacobean element is seen in the strong contrast of color in the quoining motif and in the triple fenestration. Elaborate string courses accentuate the division of the building.

The facade is vigorously conceived in multiple materials. Constructed on a granite footing, the contrasting brick and Indiana limestone form a symmetric first story which incorporates a centrally-laced doorway balanced by two large windows. The main entrance doors of carved wood were originally crowned with a wrought and cast iron marquise in the Beaux Arts tradition. In the center of the arch above the door is an escutcheon with the initial "B" in its center. It was a favorite technique of Wood's to incorporate a building's initial into its design, and the letter "B" is repeated in escutcheons on either side of the row of windows at the fifth level. The windows flanking the doorway are segmentally arched with decorative and prominent keystones. Originally French casement in design, their elaborate mullions were removed late in 1907, only to be completely removed and replaced with large fixed-paned windows in the 1960's.

#### PERIOD. AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW -PREHISTORIC \_\_\_ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC \_\_\_COMMUNITY PLANNING **\_\_\_LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE** \_\_\_RELIGION \_\_\_1400-1499 \_\_ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC \_\_\_CONSERVATION \_\_LAW \_\_SCIENCE \_\_AGRICULTURE \_\_ECONOMICS \_\_LITERATURE \_\_\_SCULPTURE X\_ARCHITECTURE X\_SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN -1600-1699 \_\_EDUCATION \_\_MILITARY \_\_\_1700-1799 \_\_\_ART \_\_\_ENGINEERING \_\_MUSIC \_\_\_\_THEATER \_\_\_COMMERCE \_\_\_\_EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT \_\_\_PHILOSOPHY \_\_\_TRANSPORTATION \_\_<u>x1</u>900- ` \_\_COMMUNICATIONS \_INDUSTRY ---POLITICS/GOVERNMENT \_\_OTHER (SPECIFY) \_\_INVENTION

#### SPECIFIC DATES 1905

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Wood, Donn and Deming

#### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

8 SIGNIFICANCE

The Joint Committee on Landmarks has designated the Bachelor Apartment House a Category II Landmark of Importance which contributes significantly to the cultural heritage and visual beauty of the District of Columbia. It is a unique remnant of the once complex, characteristically, Washingtonian, residential area which existed in the White House--Pennsylvania Avenue, Lafayette Square vicinity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Architecturally its human scale and lively textural diversity contribute significantly to the design ambiance of offset H Street between Pennsylvania Avenue and Lafayette Square. It has been meticulously restored to close to its original appearance and is an outstanding example of a successful adaptive use project undertaken by a private commercial group.

The Bachelor Apartment House is one of the last apartment buildings remaining in what was once a unique residential neighborhood of luxurious single-family homes, apartment buildings, hotels and social clubs which developed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the Lafayette Square area convenient to the White House, the State, War and Navy building, the Treasury building, and other government and private offices. It is related in historical association and architectural ambiance to the Metropolitan Club and a group of nineteenth century residences which still stand on the south side of the 1700 block of H Street. Its balanced, varied facade makes interesting use of materials and detail, enlivening the texture and reinforcing the visual continuity of off-set H Street between Pennsylvania Avenue and Lafayette Square. The building design presents an interesting solution to a specialized program, achieving an elegant and intimate residential quality in a commercial multi-unit structure. It is the work of Wood, Donn and Deming, a prominent early twentieth century Washington architectural firm whose work includes the Union Trust Company, St. Patrick's Church and other individually designated Landmarks of the National Capital. Architecturally the Bachelor Apartment House is largely unchanged.

The following history and statement of significance of the Bachelor Apartment was prepared by Emily Hotaling Eig and Judith Helman Robinson, architectural historians of Traceries, Inc.

The Bachelor Apartment House is an excellent example of a special residential lifestyle which, in this city, began to appear in the 1890's--that of the luxury apartment building in a downtown location. The Bachelor Apartment House originally stood among many residential rowhouses and small apartments in the elegant neighborhood around H and K Streets, N.W., inhabited by Washington's upper class. These luxury apartment buildings were a new type of lifestyle for Washington residents. This apartment building and its

(Continued on Form No. 10-300a)

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The central portion of the building comprises three stories and is dominated by the dual projecting bays of Indiana limestone with quoined borders. Twin windows at the center support the columnar effect of the flanking bays.

The final element of the tripartite composition incorporates the top and fifth story and serves as a sort of entablature to the facade. It consists of a row of six windows of simple design taking on the effect of a clerestory, topped by a heavy cornice with dentil molding. This cornice is constructed of galvanized iron resembling stone trim.

The exterior symmetry belies a flowing organization of interior space, common to the Beaux Arts tradition. The interior scheme consists of five floors and a basement. On the ground floor, exterior wooden doors lead to a vestibule, the most notable feature of which is a striking green, gold and ivory mosiac tile floor. Elegant wrought iron and plate glass doors with the initial "B" repeated on either door lead from the vestibule to a richly ornamented Beaux Arts cast plaster lobby, with heavy dentil molding which survives intact. This hallway with paneled walls with marble insets is crowned with a beautiful ceiling in deep relief. Its design is composed of a wheat sheaf pattern accented by two sculpted faces surrounding a chandelier.

Doorways leading from the second interior lobby are enclosed by heavy reveals cast in plaster with a large tobacco leaf motif. Centrally located in this lobby are cast iron fireproof stairs with marble stretchers winding upwards. The railing of wrought iron is of a repeating elongated oval design and is marked by an elegant wrought iron newel post. This post continues the tobacco leaf motif in a flowing organic display.

The floor plan of the building is organized around the corridor and stairwell in a "T" shape, with a large light well, typical of Wood's lighting schemes, centrally placed on the west wall opening onto the stairwell. The 25 apartment units, five units per floor, varied slightly in size and plan, and were arranged in an asymmetric scheme, flowing around the corridor and making maximum functional use of space in a gracious design.

Within it (The Bachelor) is admirably planned and almost brilliantly adapted for its purpose, but its chief value lies in the fact that it meets adequately the requirements of local conditions. <u>Architectural Record</u>, April 1906, pp. 257-258.

Each apartment consisted of a living room, bed chamber and bath, Most were entered through a small receiving hall off of the main corridor. The four upper floors of apartments were similar in plan while the entrance floor appears to be slightly different in arrangement. Placement of the living rooms assured that the gas fireplaces, with mantels of varying design and green or red glazed brick, and the bay

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windows were prominent features. It was possible for all except one living room per floor to have a bay window since there were two bays on the front of the building, two on the side and one on the back. It was the intent of the architect that the occupants be bachelors or single persons, and no kitchens were included in the plan. The centrally located elevator served all floors and a dumb waiter was adjacent to it. The basement was fully developed for superintendent's quarters, mechanical and storage rooms.

The Bachelor Apartment House is being skillfully adapted from its original purpose to that of an exclusive, semi-private office building. With the exception of the mission iron and glass marquise, principal doors and flanking casement window sash, the facade survives in its original form and finish. The doors, jambs and window sash are being accurately remilled and finished in the original style. The marguise is being represented by a canvas canopy which approximates in form the original architectural device. All mantlepieces, fireplaces, ornamental plaster cornices, wrought iron hand rails and white marble stairs survive and are being restored in situ as a part of the restoration process. Doors and moldings have been remilled where necessary, although most of the molding is intact. Lighting fixtures from another Wood-designed building of the period have been installed in the central stairwell. Few partitions have been removed or changed, but bathrooms have been removed from most suites. Central air-conditioning has been added. The original steam heating system in extant and retains an early furnace. In the basement, a library, copy room, and lunchroom for employees have been placed within existing partitions. The present elevator was installed in the original shaft in 1977.

The building remained an apartment house through the early 1940's then gradually became occupied as offices without any physical alterations. In 1962, the National Federation of Federal Employees purchased the building for its new headquarters. At this time some partitions were changed to accommodate its official use as office space. The present restoration is being undertaken by its new occupants, Glassie, Pewett, Beebe and Shanks, Attorneys at Law. CONTINUATION SHEET

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unique purpose as a bachelor residence may possibly have been an early manifestation of a necessary accommodation for Washington's more transient population of federallyemployed officials and military elite. At the time of the Bachelor's construction (1905), the <u>Washington Elite List</u> includes 79 residents of the 1700 block of H Street, living in these apartments as well as in private homes.

In the 2 to 3 block radius around the Bachelor, <u>Baist's Real Estate Atlas</u> lists 17 such apartment buildings; however today all have been demolished but the Bachelor, the Benedick (which was originally also bachelor apartments, and is now the National Hotel), and the Rauscher Apartments (whose ground floor has been gutted by Metro construction). The evidence of a downtown luxury apartment lifestyle and of a downtown neighborhood unified in its residential purpose have all but been destroyed, leaving these few remaining examples surrounded by a large and growing 1970's commercial downtown.

Surrounded by the federal city and the Connecticut Avenue commerical section, the Bachelor provides a distinct contrast to the modern flat facades of neighboring buildings. Its charming ornamental design can be seen clearly from Pennsylvania Avenue, looking across a small park formed by the intersection of 18th, 19th and H Streets, and brings back a sense of the old residential character of this part of the city. It retains its 1905 facade largely intact and much of its interior. When restoration activities are completed the building will appear in its original design except for a missing iron and glass marquise.

The Washington firm of Wood, Donn and Deming, responsible for its design, was composed of Waddy Wood, Edward Donn, Jr., and William I. Deming. They practiced as a firm from 1902 to 1912. During their years together, they produced many private homes as well as public institutions in the city of Washington, including the Providence Hospital,\* the Transportation Building,\* the Mrs. Philip Sheridan residence, the Emma Fitzhugh residence, the Carnegie Institute Geophysical Laboratories, St. Patrick's Parochial School and Parish House, the Union Trust Bank Building at 15th and H Streets, rowhouses on 19th and T Streets and Harvard and 13th Streets, the Cordova Apartments and the Nolando Apartments.\*

\* indicates buildings which are no longer standing.

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Buildings by the firm or its members selected by the Joint Committee on Landmarks of the National Capital are the Union Trust Bank Building, the Woodrow Wilson House, the Capital Traction Company Union Station, the Emma Fitizhugh House, and St. Patrick's Parochial School and Parish House. Buildings which have been included in the Historic American Building Survey include the Alice P. Barney Studio House, the Capital Traction Company Union Station and the Woodrow Wilson House. The Wilson House, designed by Waddy Wood, has also been included on the National Register of Historic Places.

The firm's work was highly regarded by contemporary critics and received attention in national architectural journals.

They (Wood, Donn and Deming) have developed the pictorial, they have demonstrated the value of color and texture, they have put old materials to some good new uses and have met, in a measure at least, the needs and requirements of a particular place and time. Their buildings are not all faultless, but they are sincere, they do not grimace nor chatter, but are simple, dignified and of fair proportions. <u>Architectural Record</u>. April 1906, p. 258.

Their buildings have been recognized for their individual style and particular vocabulary.

At no time has Mr. Wood followed a traditional style. His buildings are not gothic or renaissance, Venetian or French, English, or Central American, but they show familiarity with the past as well as vision for the future.

Sunday Star, September 15, 1940

While the design of the building is touched by the feeling of the Beaux Arts in its elaborate ornamentation, deep relief, and interior plans, it is not strictly of this style. It is rather an eclectic arrangement of various historic elements, including the French and Jacobean, within a classical tripartite scheme. There is a heaviness that can be partially attributed to the Victorian. As architectural historians continue study of the Beaux Arts, it is clear that the simple use of historic elements does not qualify a building to be of the Beaux Arts style. Many architects, like this firm, developed styles based not on the strict theoretical principles of the Beaux Arts but rather used visual inspiration from traditional designs for their work.

A modulated facade and strong use of ornamentation can be seen in a significant number of the firm's buildings. This building is a good example of the firm's penchant for strong contrast in materials, colors and textures. As well, it shows their ability to approach an unusual architectural problem, such as a bachelor apartment building, in

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an innovative way, while retaining the elegance so desired by the early twentieth century residents. Not only was their design skill of a high quality, but they were known for their technological skills and innovative use of material.

Following is bibliographical material on the firm's three principles:

Waddy Butler Wood (1869-1944) is now known to be one of Washington's most prolific architects. Self-educated, his first major commission was for the Capital Traction Company Union Station (1895). Joining with Donn and Deming in 1902, Wood was responsible for conceiving and selling the firm's designs. The firm designed in a style distinct to itself rather than any of its members. Its work was not limited to any one type of structure and it was known to have designed residences, schools, hospitals, churches, apartments, libraries and office buildings.

After amicably dissolving the firm in 1912, Wood turned his attention to large public governmental structures, taking on commissions for private residences only under special circumstances. A few of his designs include inaugural stands for Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt, the city's PEPCO building, the C & P Telephone building, the Brookings Institute\*, All States Hotel, Southern Railway Building, and completed his career with the design of the Department of the Interior Building for the U.S. government. He donated substantial amounts of design time to the U.S. war effort for overhead costs alone and was responsible for planning buildings for 11 different war agencies.

A juror in several important architectural competitions, as well as Advisory Architect for the Baltimore War Memorial and Federal Reserve Board Competition at Richmond, he was, as well, a member of many civic groups and the subject of numerous articles in national architectural journals. He was elected a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 1916 and became a President of the local Washington Chapter of the AIA.

Edward Donn, Jr. (1868-1953) was a pioneer in restoration architecture and was responsible for the reconstruction of Wakefield, said to be George Washington's birthplace; the apothecary and George Washington schoolhouse at Fredericksburg, Virginia; Kenmore, the home of Washington's sister, Betty Lewis; and Woodlawn Plantation. After graduation from M.I.T. and prior to joining Wood and Deming in practice, he began his career in government by serving as chief designer for the Chief Architect's office of the Treasury Building. In 1912 he and Deming formed a new firm until 1923 when they separated into individual practices.

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A native Washingtonian, he was the author of <u>Monumental Works of the Georgian Period</u>. He was a Fellow of the AIA, a member of the Washington Society of Fine Arts and a President of the Board of Examiners and Registrars of Architects of the District of Columbia.

William I. Deming (1871-1939), the firm's engineer, and a graduate of Columbian College, was regarded as an authority on colonial architecture. He assisted in the restoration of Gadsby's Tavern and Woodlawn. Prior to joining Wood and Donn he practices structural engineering, and was the major force behind the firm's progressive approach to technology. In 1924 he opened his own firm and was the architect for several laboratories of the National Bureau of Standards,\* the Administration Building at Ft. Belvoir, Virginia, and the Washington Post annex. He was a member of the AIA, served as a director of the Allied Architects of Washington and was a charter member of the Arts Club.

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Columbia Historical Society

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INTERVIEWS WITH:

Matthew Mosca, National Trust for Historic Preservation Perry Fisher, Columbia Historical Society David Van Zanten, Art Department, University of Pennsylvania