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

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC: David White House

AND/OR COMMON: 1459 Girard Street, NW.

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 1459 Girard Street, NW. __NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN: Washington __ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:

STATE: District of Columbia CODE: 11 COUNTY: CODE:

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
__DISTRICT	__PUBLIC	X OCCUPIED	__AGRICULTURE	__MUSEUM
X BUILDING(S)	X PRIVATE	__UNOCCUPIED	__COMMERCIAL	__PARK
__STRUCTURE	__BOTH	__WORK IN PROGRESS	__EDUCATIONAL	X PRIVATE RESIDENCE
__SITE	**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**	**ACCESSIBLE**	__ENTERTAINMENT	__RELIGIOUS
__OBJECT	__IN PROCESS	__YES: RESTRICTED	__GOVERNMENT	__SCIENTIFIC
	__BEING CONSIDERED	__YES: UNRESTRICTED	__INDUSTRIAL	__TRANSPORTATION
		X NO	__MILITARY	__OTHER.

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME: Charles E. Mitchell, Inner City Restoration, Incorporated

STREET & NUMBER: 1413 K Street, NW.

CITY, TOWN: Washington __ VICINITY OF STATE: D.C.

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: District of Columbia Recorder of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER: 6th and D Streets, NW.

CITY, TOWN: Washington STATE: D.C.

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE: None

DATE:

__FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
_EXCELLENT	_DETERIORATED	x_UNALTERED	x_ORIGINAL SITE
_GOOD	_RUINS	_ALTERED	_MOVED DATE_____
x_FAIR (unrestored)	_UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

1459 Girard Street, NW., Washington, D.C., is a simple three story brick row house of no particular architectural distinction or importance. The date of construction and builder are unknown. The front elevation is characterized by a semicircular bay that extends to all three stories and that is capped by a slate shingled turret. The house has both front and rear entrances and there is one chimney.

During his long career in Washington from 1886 to 1935, David White, who was married but who had no children, often moved. He lived at 1459 Girard Street from approximately 1910 to 1925. This fifteen year period was as long as he lived in any one location.

1459 Girard Street is in fair condition. Like other buildings in the immediate area, it is in need of proper maintenance. Nevertheless the basic structural integrity is intact. No significant alterations or changes have been made to the exterior. The house is today a single family residence as it was when White lived there. With the exception of the addition of some inexpensive partioning, the basic interior side hall floor plan is intact.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	X SCIENCE
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE
__1600-1699	__ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	__MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
__1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER
X 1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION
X 1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)
		__INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES circa 1910-1925 BUILDER/ARCHITECT unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

David White was born July 1, 1862, on his father's farm in Palmyra Township, Wayne County, New York. He received his elementary and secondary education in local schools. White's interest in geology began when he was a sophomore in high school. His teacher, a Dutch immigrant named Daniel Van Cruyningham, worked on the White farm during the summer vacation. During the summer on the farm and again in the classroom Van Cruyningham recognized young David's ability and stimulated his interest in science in general and geology in particular. In 1882 he was instrumental in helping White win a scholarship to Cornell. At Cornell White majored in geology with a special interest in paleobotany and he graduated with honors in 1886.

Upon graduation from Cornell White did not go on to graduate school but elected instead to seek employment with the United States Geological Survey (USGS) as a paleobotanic draftsman. In 1886 White moved to Washington, D.C. The city became his home for the rest of his life. Between 1886 and 1910 White devoted his energies to research in paleobotany. He published some of his most important papers during this period. After 1910, as his reputation grew, White received important promotions with accompanying managerial responsibilities. In 1910 he was placed in charge of all USGS activities in the eastern coal fields and in 1912 the Survey promoted him to the position of chief goelogist. White served as the Geological Survey's chief geologist until 1922, when he gave up the post to return to research. Although no longer chief geologist his administrative duties remained heavy and by this time he was involved with other organizations. He served as curator of paleobotany at the United States National Museum from 1903 to 1935 and from 1924 to 1927 he was chairman of the division of geology and geography of the National Research Council. He was also active in the National Academy of Sciences as a committeeman and an officer. White spent his entire career associated with the USGS working almost to the day of his death at age 75 on February 7, 1935.

(Continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Edward W. Berry, "David White," Dictionary of American Biography, 21, (New York, 1944).
A Hunter Dupree, Science in the Federal Government (Cambridge, 1957).
Charles Schuchert, "Biographical Memoir of David White, 1862-1935," National Academy of Sciences Biographical Memoirs, 17, (Washington, 1937).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A	18	323625	4310265
B			
C			
D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
James Sheire, Historian

ORGANIZATION
Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE
July 1975

STREET & NUMBER
1100 L Street NW.

TELEPHONE
202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN
Washington

STATE
D.C. 20240

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL X STATE ____ LOCAL ____

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST: DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

David White's position in the history of science in the United States is derived from his contributions to geology. Charles Schuchert, the distinguished Yale paleontologist, wrote of White, "David White came to the United States Geological Survey in 1886 as a draughtsman; he left it in 1935 as America's foremost authority on Paleozoic stratigraphy based on fossil plants, as her leading expert on the origin and evolution of those two plant products, peat and coal, and as the author of a theory of oil distribution that is basic to the petroleum industry."[1]

White's research in paleobotany began while he was in college and remained his central scientific interest throughout his life. Between 1890 and 1935 he published some 200 reports, memoirs, and papers devoted to the subject. He is best remembered for two interrelated contributions to geology. During the 1890's White recognized that the importance of fossils lay not just in their description but also in their interpretation. As his special area of interest as an employee of the USGS White selected the relationship between paleobotany and the formation of coal. With other geologists White knew that coal beds consisted of debris plants. White, however, perceived that the principal factor in the formation of coal was not the types of plants but rather coal resulted from biochemical and geodynamic processes in which the debris plants lost hydrogen and oxygen. He formulated a classification of coals in which the degree of deoxygenation served as a index of coal formation. In 1915 White posited the "carbon ratio" hypothesis or theory which Edward W. Berry, a noted paleontologist, claimed, "...won him a high place in the history of science."[2] White's carbon ration theory determined the rank of coal. Equally important the carbon ratio theory, which reached its final formulation in a paper titled "Metamorphism of Organic Sediments and Derived Oils," that White finished only days before his death in 1935, established a "dead line" beyond which liquid and gaseous hydrocarbons will not be found. White's carbon ratio theory thus became of immense importance to the petroleum industry in determining the distribution of oil.

---

[1]Charles Schuchert, "Biographical Memoir of David White, 1862-1935," National Academy of Sciences Biographical Memoirs, 17, (Washington, 1937), p. 189.

[2]Edward W. Berry, "David White," Dictionary of American Biography, 21, (New York, 1944), p. 702.

(Continued)

In addition to the carbon ratio theory White also corrected the understanding of the horizons of the Appalachian coal fields. He is also remembered as a methodological innovator. Whereas previously paleontologists and paleobotanists relied on data collected by hired field men, White conducted his own field work. By doing his own field work he improved the quality and precision of his data which he later analysized and interpreted in the office.

In his contributions to paleobotany and geology in general David White illustrated the importance of the government scientist in the early 1900's. With the universities, the foundations, and the industrial research laboratories, the Federal Government emerged as one of the estates of science in America. As science became more complex and sophisticated, bureaus like the Department of Agriculture, the United States Geological Survey, the Smithsonian, and the National Bureau of Standards developed substantial research capabilities. Although government research was essentially practically oriented and meant to serve segments of the American economic community, White's work in paleobotany is a good example of scientific research sponsored by the Federal Government benefiting an industry in the private sector of the American economy and at the same time contributing to knowledge of the earth. As Berry wrote of White, "Offers in the commercial field never tempted him; he preferred to devote himself to research that would be of general service rather than profit financially by employing his talent in behalf of special interests."[3]

David White received numerous honors. Professional societies such as the National Academy of Sciences elected him to membership. He was awarded several prestigious medals among them the Thompson Medal (1931) and the Walcott Medal (1934).

---

[3]Ibid., p. 703.