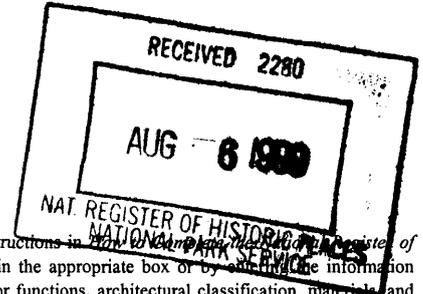


**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

1070



**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 the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by providing 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: Mount Vernon West Historic District
Other names/site number: _____

2. Location

Street & Number: _____ [N/A] Not for Publication
City or town: District of Columbia [N/A] Vicinity
State: Washington Code: DC County: District of Columbia Code: 001 Zip Code: _____

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] SHPO 8/6/99
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 Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. 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:)
[Signature] 9/9/99
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	No. Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private	<input type="checkbox"/> Building(s)	599	106
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public-Local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District		Buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> Public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> Site	0	0
<input type="checkbox"/> Public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> Structure	0	0
	<input type="checkbox"/> Object	0	0
		599	106
			Total

Name of related multiple property listing
N/A

Number of contributing
Resources previously
listed in the National
Register 163

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
DOMESTIC: Single Dwellings	DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling
DOMESTIC: Multiple Dwellings	DOMESTIC: Multiple Dwellings
DOMESTIC: Secondary Structures	DOMESTIC: Secondary Structures
COMMERCE/TRADE: Business	COMMERCE/TRADE: Business
COMMERCE/TRADE: Professional	COMMERCE/TRADE: Professional
COMMERCE/TRADE: Financial Institutions	COMMERCE/TRADE: Financial Institutions
COMMERCE/TRADE: Specialty Stores	COMMERCE/TRADE: Specialty Stores
COMMERCE/TRADE: Warehouses	COMMERCE/TRADE: Warehouses
EDUCATION: Schools	COMMERCE/TRADE: Restaurant
RELIGION: Religious Facility	RELIGION: Religious Facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)	Materials (enter categories from instructions)
Italianate	foundation: Stone; Brick; Concrete Block
Second Empire	walls: Clapboard; Brick; Limestone; Granite
Queen Anne	roof: Flat; Sloped; Gable; Mansard; Hipped
Renaissance Revival	other:
Commercial Style	
Colonial Revival	
Gothic Revival	

Narrative Description

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

See continuation sheet

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.)

[X] 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.

[X] 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.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Community Planning & Development

Social History

Ethnic Heritage: Black

Period of Significance

1833-1932

Significant Dates

1833

1862

1872

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Unknown

Architect/Builder

9. Major Bibliographic References

[] See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

[X] preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)

[X] previously listed in the NR

[] previously determined eligible by the National Register

[X] designated a National Historic Landmark

[] recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

[] recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of add. data:

[X] State SHPO office

[] Other State agency

[] Federal agency

[] Local government

[] University

[X] Other

Specify repository:

_____ EHT Traceries _____

[X] See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property approximately 125 acres

UTM References

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

2 /1 /8 / /3/2/4/1/0/4/ /4/3/0/7/8/6/0/
Zone Easting Northing

3 /1 /8 / /3/2/4/0/6/4/ /4/3/0/7/8/8/0/
Zone Easting Northing

4 /1 /8 / /3/2/4/0/8/0/ /4/3/0/7/9/0/0/
Zone Easting Northing

5 /1 /8 / /3/2/4/0/4/4/ /4/3/0/7/9/2/0/
Zone Easting Northing

6 /1 /8 / /3/2/4/0/6/0/ /4/3/0/7/9/8/5/
Zone Easting Northing

[X] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The Mount Vernon West Historic District begins at the intersection of 9th Street and L Street North, NW. The boundary runs north on 9th Street to N Street, including all the properties fronting the street to the west, and turns east on N Street. Running one block east to 7th Street,

[X] See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the expanded historic district are comprised of a portion of the much larger community that grew around Mount Vernon Square. Drastic physical changes in the latter part of the 20th century have created two distinct neighborhoods, Mount Vernon Square and Mount

[X] See continuation sheet

Mount Vernon West Historic District
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Laura V. Trieschmann, Architectural Historian
Organization EHT Traceries Date July 27, 1999
Street & Number 5420 Western Avenue Telephone (301) 656-5283
City or Town Chevy Chase State Maryland Zip code 20815

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 _____
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 7 Page 1

Early Architecture of the Northern Liberties, 1830-1865

The oldest buildings remaining in the Mount Vernon West historic district date from the second quarter of the 19th century. This construction, overwhelmingly devoted to residential development, is a direct result of the northward migration along the established turnpike of 7th Street. As a rule, these buildings have flat facades with limited decorative details, and are set back from the street to create landscaped front yards. The structures were typically built individually, in pairs or in small groups. While influenced by the Italianate style, most of the earliest houses are quite sparse in their use of ornament, representing a builder's vernacular interpretation of a style. The buildings all stand two stories in height and two bays wide. The roofs vary from continuous side gable over a group of dwellings to the slightly sloped roof that typically covers a single or paired structure. Ornamentation is limited to the cornice, consisting of a slightly overhanging element of wood construction. The cornice, detailed with scrolled brackets, was more commonly found on the buildings with sloping roofs.

The buildings from this period were typically of wood-frame construction, clad with weatherboard. However, because of the vulnerability of this building material, only 120 wood-frame structures are currently extant in Mount Vernon West (961 properties were recorded overall). Of the 118 resources recorded from this period, the number of wood-frame structures to masonry is equal (58 wood frame and 61 masonry). The greatest concentration of wood-frame buildings were found in Squares 367 and 368, along 9th, 10th, M, and N Streets. Yet, only four examples of wood framing are extant, while 45 masonry structures from this period still exist. The extant structures include the dwellings at 927 M Street (1839-1844, Square 368); 1211 10th Street (1833-1939, Square 368); 1303 12th Street (c. 1850, Square 313); and 1217 11th Street (1864-1869, Square 340).

Dwellings erected in masonry displayed essentially the same form and massing as their wood-frame counterparts. The majority of these structures, constructed of brick, were built in circa 1865 as part of a contiguous row of dwellings found in Square 366. Excellent representations of this type of construction are located at 1410-1418 Columbia Street (c. 1865) and 1413-1421 Columbia Street (c. 1865). The buildings are similarly finished with sloping roofs crowned on

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 7 Page 2

the façade by narrow wooden cornices with brackets and modillions. Set back from the street with a substantially sized front yard, the buildings are two-bay wide with façades of pressed brick.

The buildings denominated as “alley dwellings” were generally two-story brick structures that measured two to three bays wide and two rooms deep. Flat facades with symmetrical fenestration, flat roofs, and corbelled brick cornices were the most prominent aspects of these houses, all of which have direct orientation to the alleys. Second story window openings on the facades generally have brick segmental-arched lintels and brick sills. The side elevations of the end rowhouses in the alleys are often pierced with small window openings, as are the rear elevations. Examples of extant alley dwellings are found in Square 367 on Lots 824 and 827 and on Square 368 on Lots 106-111, Lot 83, and Lots 150-151. The row of alley dwellings on Square 368, Lots 106-111, denoted as 36-46 Blagden Alley South, was constructed in 1885 by builders Haney and Ward for property owner H.D. Boteler. While other individual alley dwellings remain, this is the only grouping to survive as an intact row. All six of the buildings have large modified garage door openings on the ground level and single window openings on the second story. The second story openings have segmentally arched lintels and brick sills, while the cornice line is finished with corbelled bricks.

Victorian Architecture of Mount Vernon: 1866-1900

During the latter part of the 19th century, the construction of residential buildings increased tenfold. Typically constructed in rows, the buildings are overwhelmingly built of brick. Of the 558 documented buildings from this period, including both commercial and domestic, over 520 were constructed of brick, while 39 were constructed of wood framing. Only 457 buildings from this period are extant today.

The availability of mass-produced components from pattern books and hardware supply catalogues allowed local builders to create reasonable facsimiles of the most fashionable architectural styles. Brackets, finials, molded bricks, windows, paneled doors, and cast iron elements, as well as interior stairs and moldings were all ready-made and could be pieced

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 7 Page 3

together by builders in infinite varieties. Stylistically, row buildings from this period were inspired by eclectic, medieval sources, with English Gothic, Queen Anne, Romanesque, and French Second Empire design motifs. Houses tended to be asymmetrical in form – emphasized by the towers, turrets, bay windows and oriels – and constructed in a dark palette of red brick and brownstone with wood and metal trim painted in somber tones. The masonry facades of the pressed brick and stone buildings were never painted, instead relying on their natural colors to give the building character. Masonry joints of the facades were typically tinted to match the color of the brick. Architectural emphasis was placed on the fronts of the building, and sides for corner structures, while rear elevations were considered utilitarian, most often with ancillary eaves that projected off a portion of the back wall.

The Building Projection Act of 1871, allowing for the construction of projecting bays into public space, and the enactment of municipal building codes between 1872-1878, prohibiting frame construction and wood cladding, had a profound affect on the architecture in Washington, D.C. and Mount Vernon West. Houses constructed in this period also began to be larger in size and featured indoor plumbing as required by the building codes. While houses erected prior to 1875 were typically two stories in height, buildings constructed in the late 1870s and 1880s tended to be three stories. By the 1890s, houses in the area were more typically four full stories.

Projecting bays are a prominent and important character-defining feature of the majority of the rowhouses in the neighborhood. Within neighboring communities, the first projecting bays, dating from the early 1870s, were tentative in nature, typically only one story in height, of wood construction, and appeared as if tacked on the existing flat-fronted buildings. In Mount Vernon, the projecting bay arrived as an integral part of the original design; thus the majority of bays are constructed of brick rather than wood. This allowed for the architectural presentation to be more elegant and finished in appearance. The bays initially rose from the English basement to the first story. Excellent examples of the height of the first projecting bays are found in the buildings at 1424-1426 9th Street (c.1888, Square 366) and 920 O Street (1878, Square 367). The two story buildings, each crowned with a mansard roof, are set upon raised foundations. As was the fashion, the canted bays rise only the height of the first story. Thus, the projections are diminutive in size when compared to the overall massing of the buildings they adorn. The brick

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 7 Page 4

facades are ornately detailed with projecting lintels, pedimented architraves, heavy overhanging cornices of wood, and front gable dormers.

The odd side of the 900 block of O Street (Square 366), constructed in 1868-1873, is noteworthy as a block that was developed entirely without bays. Decorative treatment, commonly applied to the projections on surrounding dwellings, is instead transferred to the heavily ornamented roofline and architraves. The unifying overhangs are identically finished with plain friezes below dentil molding, sawn-cut scrolled brackets with foliage, and ogee cornices.

As the period progressed, so did the depth, height, and universal use of projecting bays, sometimes reaching above the roofline with a stylized parapet or tower. In addition to the larger proportions, the canted and round bays were ornamented with brackets, decorative trim, and blind balustrades or panels below the window openings. The use of a similar cornice treatment on the projecting bay and the top of the building united the façade's composition. Yet, the varying rooflines of the projections typically indicated an individual dwelling within a long row, with corbeling, segmental-arches, mansard roofs, conical caps, and stepped parapets. The appearance created by the rows and their projecting bays is very much in keeping with the Victorian notion of the picturesque, as it could be achieved on a small urban rowhouse. The four houses fronting 10th Street in Square 340 were designed by architect B. Stanley Simmons in 1891 and illustrate the overwhelming use of projecting bays, and the variations applied to each.

Well into the 1890s, building design again showed variation with the use of rough-cut stone blocks on the facades, Classical-inspired brick corbelled cornices rather than Italianate-styled wood cornices, and imposing roofs hiding a full story within. One of the best examples of this evolution is found in the Classical Revival style freestanding building at 925 N Street in Square 367. Designed by Thomas Franklin Schneider for A.S. Johnson, the 1891 building is clad with rough-cut stone blocks on the first story and pressed brick on the upper stories. A two-story round bay is capped with a stone balustrade that mimics the ornate detailing on the entablature.

One of the most interesting rows of buildings in Mount Vernon West is the four dwellings at 1602-1608 8th Street in Square 396. Following the fashions of the period, the contiguous brick row has an undulating façade created by projecting canted bays. The individual dwellings are

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 7 Page 5

visually connected by the prominent wooden entablature that projects to the face of the bays, rather than the façade of the main block. The entablature is composed of two ogee moldings marking the wide frieze, foliated brackets, scrolled modillions, and an overhanging cyma reversa cornice. Metal balconies on the second story are visually supported by brackets rising from the lintels over the main entry.

Commercial design did not substantially differ from the residential trends. Commercial buildings, like those found along 7th Street and Massachusetts Avenue, were three and four stories in height. The buildings were divided into two zones; the lower devoted to public shopping space and the upper containing residences, offices, and hotels. The storefronts, the majority of which have been significantly altered to provide wider window openings, were marked by a narrow cornice that was simpler in design compared to the overhanging cornices at the rooflines. The facades were typically flat fronted with heavily ornamented cornices of wood or metal. The ornamentation found on the roof cornice commonly mirrored the detailing over the window openings of the upper stories.

The number of buildings erected exclusively for commercial purposes was surprisingly limited within what are now the boundaries of Mount Vernon West. Many of the commercial establishments supporting the neighborhood were located along 7th Street, P Street, Massachusetts Avenue, and Mount Vernon Square. Overwhelmingly, the commercial buildings were constructed with residential space on the upper stories. An excellent example of the dual use is illustrated at the William H. Zeh dwelling and store at 1314 9th Street (Square 367). The Zeh building, constructed in 1887, is a three-story brick building with a rectangular footprint. While the elevations fronting the alley are devoid of ornamentation, the façade is highly detailed with architectural ornamentation fashionable in the Late Victorian era. Designed by architect E. Esdorf, the building was leased by 1910 to Julius Viedy, Jr., who maintained a grocery store on the first floor while living with his large family on the upper two floors. Viedy painted an advertisement on the primary alley elevation – Julius Viedy, Jr. GROCERIES & PROVISIONS. Wines & Liquors. Cigars & Tobacco.

The Fine Family Groceries at 1000 O Street in Square 339 is another example of the dual residential and commercial use in Mount Vernon West. The three-story corner building, erected

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 7 Page 6

in 1874-1876, is constructed of brick in the Italianate style. The building rises above the adjacent dwellings with an architecturally distinguished entablature of metal. A modillioned cornice and doublewide entry opening mark the first story (subsequently altered). The elongated openings of the second story and the standard openings on the third story are finished with segmentally arched rowlock lintels. The red brick of the lintels is contrasted by the light colored granite crossetting. The metal entablature consists of a wide frieze with ogee molding, modillions, fluted brackets, and a boxed cornice. The stepped parapet above has ogee-molded coping, paneled returns, and is inscribed with the words "FINE FAMILY GROCERIES."

Religious structures constructed during this period included seven religious structures, each prominently sited at the corner lots. The grandest of the churches erected in Mount Vernon were the Church of the Ascension and St. Agnes and Immaculate Conception Church, both dating from the early 1870s. The Church of the Ascension and St. Agnes is located at 1215 Massachusetts Avenue, where it intersects with 12th Street. The imposing church is an excellent example of the late 19th century Gothic Revival style with its lancet-arched openings, pointed spires, and rough-cut stone exterior. Baltimore architects Thomas Dixon and Charles Carson designed the masonry building. Characteristic of the High Victorian Gothic style, the building has a polychromed exterior of Maryland white marble and Ohio sandstone of light pink and orange. At the southeastern corner of the building stands a 90-foot tower surmounted by a 97-foot copper-sheathed spire finished with finials and a Latin-style cross. A large principle arch of pink Missalon stone surrounds the doublewide entry on Massachusetts Avenue. Columns of gray stone support each of the smaller arches, finely carved and graced by corbels. Above the entry are four lancet arched window openings surmounted by a small rose window. Each of the exposed side elevations is pierced by six paired windows with molded mullions, symmetrically marked above by dormers.

The Immaculate Conception Catholic Church at 1315 8th Street (Square 423) was constructed in 1870-1874. The imposing Gothic Revival style building is one story in height with a square tower dating from 1904. In contrast to the polychromatic coloring of the Church of the Ascension and St. Agnes, Immaculate Conception Catholic Church is a dark red brick structure, trimmed with red stone. The rectangular form is augmented on the side elevations by relieving buttresses that rise 60 feet from the base of the building. As the buttresses engage within the

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 7 **Page** 7

roofline, pointed finials rise above the flat parapet of the building. Symmetrically placed between the buttresses are narrow lancet arched window openings with stained glass. The main entry, fronting on N Street, is set within lancet arched surrounds. Large rosette windows of stained glass surmount the doublewide doors.

The contemporary Hamline Methodist Church at 1500-1508 9th Street was constructed in 1873. Now the home of the Shiloh Baptist Church, the imposing two-story brick building was designed in the Romanesque Revival at the corner of 9th and P Streets. The building, rising forty feet to the eaves, has a square corner tower standing fifty feet. The dark red brick structure is pierced by expansive semi-circular arched window openings filled with stained glass. It was extensively renovated following a fire in 1924, thus, the building was enlarged to cover all of Lot 171 between 9th Street and the alley dividing Square 365.

Early 20th Century Architecture of Mount Vernon West: 1900-1945

Rowhouse construction was primarily limited to the 19th century, as most of the area had been considerably infilled by the turn of the 20th century. Some of the few remaining vacant lots in residential blocks were developed with modest apartment buildings in the early 20th century to meet the residential shifts taking place. The first of the apartments was the Henrietta at 1241 10th Street, constructed in 1900 to the design of B. Stanley Simmons. Other early examples of apartment buildings are the Carlisle at 1213 N Street (pre-1902) and the Plymouth at 1236 11th Street (1903), the Royalton at 918 M Street (1903, demolished), and the Homestead at 1314-1318 11th Street (1904, demolished). The brick and stone apartment buildings each displayed the fashionable styles of the period, incorporating projecting bays, overhanging cornices, and molded lintels. The Henrietta, for example, stands five stories in height with projecting end bays. This classically inspired building is divided into zones with a base, shaft, and capital. The first story has crenellated granite surrounds, scrolled keystones, a flat arched entry opening with concave impostes, and roundels applied below the stringcourse. The three upper stories are minimally detailed in contrast to the semi-circular arched openings and entablature of the upper zone. The highest level of detail is found on this upper zone, consisting of three full stories

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 7 **Page** 8

ornamented with keystones, projecting ogee cornice with scrolled surrounds on the round dormer openings, dentil molding, modillions, and overhanging ogee-molded eaves.

The national change in architectural tastes away from the eclecticism of the Victorian period toward the classical was visible in Mount Vernon in the early 20th century, particularly in the design of apartment buildings and freestanding single-family dwellings. One of the best examples of the digression from the traditional to the contemporary fashions is seen in the once flat-fronted dwelling at 1217 10th Street. Constructed in the 1850s of brick, the single-family dwelling stands three stories in height on an English basement. Examination of the façade and exposed side elevation indicates the building was extensively embellished with Classical Revival style detailing. Alterations include a one-story canted bay, dentil molding, scrolled modillions with fluting, reeded cornerboards with oversized ogee molding and dentil molding, projecting window hoods with roundels and plaster masks, swags, and plaques carved with classical scenes. The curvilinear parapet placed atop the entablature is metal, and physically too small for the accompanying detailing below. To give the effect of a piano nobile, a wrought-iron balcony was placed below a second story window opening and the original main entry opening on the first story was rehabilitated to serve as a fixed window divided by muntins.

After the turn of the 20th century, the construction of larger commercial buildings, warehouses, and industrial structures began in earnest with the erection of over sixty such facilities. Primarily constructed as infill development, the buildings were all constructed of brick with flat roofs. As the majority of the structures fronted 7th and 8th Streets and on corner lots along 9th and 10th Streets, the facades were often detailed with many of the same architectural elements displayed on the residential buildings. The Seventh Street Savings Bank at the southeast corner of 7th and N Streets in Square 423 stands as one of the most prominent illustrations of early 20th century commercial buildings in Mount Vernon West. Constructed in 1912-1913 as a combination bank, store, and apartment building, the Seventh Street Bank is designed in the Classical Revival style by the architectural firm of Rich and Fitzsimons. The structure originally consisted of two parts: the principal, two-story bank building still on the site and a two-story commercial wing that no longer stands. The commercial aspect of the building facing 7th Street consisted of two separate commercial spaces. The four individual apartments – two over the bank and one over each store – were rented independently, though in several cases the merchants lived above their respective

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 7 Page 9

stores. The 7th Street elevation is divided into three bays by double-story brick pilasters that span the full two-story height. The first story features three large, semi-circular arched openings, including a central entry and flanking windows, all articulated with brick voussoirs and limestone keystones. The second story, separated from the first by three raised brick panels, features paired windows in each of the three bays. Immediately above the second story windows are the building's notable frieze, visually supported by the double-story brick pilasters and their limestone caps. The frieze is constructed of terra cotta panels and offers the bank's name inscribed into its surface: "SEVENTH STREET SAVINGS BANK." Buttressing either end of the frieze on cornerblocks above the building's end piers are stylized roundels. Egg-and-dart molding encloses the top of the frieze, while two layers of continuous foliated molding form the lower edge. Above the frieze is a wide, overhanging cornice with its heavy modillions and ogee-shaped profile.

The emergence of the automobile markedly affected 20th century development and revitalization efforts along 7th and 8th Streets, M and N Streets, and Massachusetts Avenue. Auto showrooms, repair shops, and garages began to appear along these major thoroughfares in the 1920s and 1930s. A significant number of brick garages for private uses were constructed at the rear of individual lots accessible by the alleys. The private auto-related structures typically had a sloping roof and stood one- to two-stories in height. The two-bay wide buildings had segmentally arched openings wide enough to allow for a single automobile to enter. No stylistic ornamentation was typically applied to the designs of the private garages, except for the occasional corbelled brick cornice to identify a relationship with the adjacent main dwelling.

Examples of the shift from horse-drawn transportation to the automobile include the three public garages and auto repair shops erected in the early part of the 1920s at the center of Blagden Alley. The brick and concrete block garages replaced late 19th century livery stables and alley dwellings. An extant example of the change is the United States Storage Company Garage at Blagden Alley North, constructed in 1921 to the architectural designs of J.T. Malvin. Constructed of concrete and cinder block, the one-story garage had a rectangular plan, flat roof, and no stylistic detailing.

In 1922, the bronze sculpture memorializing English orator and statesman Edmund Burke (1729-

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 7 **Page** 10

1797) was placed in the triangular Reservation 68. The 8-foot-high portrait, a copy of the original located in Bristol, England, was presented to the American people by Sir Charles Wakefield, former Lord Mayor of London, on behalf of the Sulgrave Institute. The bronze memorial was sculpted by J. Harvard Thomas on a granite pedestal designed by architect Horace W. Peaslee. In 1933, the Samuel Gompers Memorial, designed by sculptor Robert I. Aitken, was placed in the adjacent Reservation 69. Gompers (1850-1924) was the English-born founder and president of the American Federation of Labor. The bronze sculpture depicts a seated Gompers, with six allegorical figures in the background representing the American labor movement. In this sculptural group, the seated female on the left symbolized the protection of the home, while the seated male on the right symbolized the overthrow of industrial exploitation by education. The two standing women represent justice; the left female holds a fasces (the Roman symbol of power and justice). The two principal background figures, two standing men with clasped hands, denote unity and cooperation of the labor movement. Emblems of labor, such as a 1930 steam locomotive engine, are arranged among the Neo-classical figures. Excerpts from the writings of Gompers appear on the granite base.¹

By the 1930s, the Mount Vernon West community was fully developed, with over 805 resources. It was comprised of ornamental late 19th century residential rowhouses and early 20th century commercial buildings and apartments. Predominately constructed of brick in a variety of colors, the architecture of the neighborhood continued to be stylistically compatible, despite the varying periods of development, architects, and property owners. While some significant buildings were lost during the 1968 riots and the subsequent urban redevelopment, many of the area's landmarks survive intact and continue to characterize the physical development of the community flanking 7th Street. Mid- to late 20th century construction includes a 1957 grocery store, two-story brick and limestone Chinese church, a one-story brick car wash, and numerous masonry apartment buildings. This construction has been minimal, thus of the 710 extant properties within the Mount Vernon West boundaries, 61 buildings were erected after 1932.

¹ James M. Goode, *The Outdoor Sculpture of Washington, D.C.: A Comprehensive Historical Guide*, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1974), pp. 276-277.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 1

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Mount Vernon West Historic District amends the Blagden Alley/Naylor Court National Register Historic District, designated in 1990. The expansion of the Blagden Alley/Naylor Court Historic District, supported by detailed documentation and intensive survey work, incorporates commercial buildings, rowhouses, and alley dwellings along transportation routes vital to the development of Washington, D.C. The history, both social and architectural, of the amended district is analogous and maintains sufficient integrity to warrant expansion of the Blagden Alley/Naylor Court Historic District under the name Mount Vernon West Historic District. The proposed district maintains the designated historic district's period of significance of 1833 to 1932 and the areas of significance (architecture and community planning/development). The Blagden Alley/Naylor Court Historic District included 159 properties, five of which were determined to be non-contributing. The amended boundary includes 705 properties, 599 of which contribute to the significance of the Mount Vernon West Historic District.

The Mount Vernon West Historic District is significant as a mid- to late 19th century commercial and residential neighborhood located within the historic boundaries of the District of Columbia's Federal City. Developed in part during the second quarter of the 19th century, the community was initially known as the Northern Liberties, having attained its name from the Northern Liberty Market, constructed in the 1840s on L'Enfant's Reservation 8. With the relocation of the market, and the creation of a landscaped park in the reservation, the neighborhood was unofficially titled "Mount Vernon." The developing neighborhood's rapid growth was in response to the city's increasing demand for housing following the Civil War, the extensive programs to modernize the city in the 1870s, and the expansion of the national capital's economy and population. Seventh Street, chartered as a turnpike in 1810 by an act of Congress, became the spine of the neighborhood, as well as a primary transportation artery into the center of the city. When the turnpike was macadamized in the early 1870s, commercial development migrated along 7th Street, northward across Massachusetts Avenue to the north. The laying of streetcar rails along the north/south corridors of 4th, 7th, 9th, and 11th Streets and along New York Avenue further augmented development in the Mount Vernon community. The new streetcar

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 2

technology opened up the outer reaches of the Federal City for residential development, making it more convenient to commute downtown to work and shop. Consequently, the Mount Vernon area, like many of its surrounding neighborhoods, grew as a cohesive residential neighborhood with nearly all of the rowhouses constructed by speculative builders and real estate developers. Much of the area's mid- to late 19th century brick architecture remains intact along the residential streets that radiate from the transportation corridors and commercial strips from which the Mount Vernon neighborhood evolved.

The Mount Vernon West Historic District is also significant for its illustration of Washington's urban history, specifically the residential patterns of the working and middle classes. As Washington became increasingly racially segregated, the Mount Vernon neighborhood was striated with white residents living primarily in dwellings facing onto the public streets, while African Americans lived within the alleyways. The numerous alleys, labyrinths lined with dwellings, stables, and commercial structures, were visually separated from the everyday life found on the surrounding public streets. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, legislation and the humanitarian efforts of social organizations and individuals improved the welfare of the alley inhabitants, eventually eradicating alley dwellings altogether. This prompted northward migration to the nearby U Street neighborhood, which was emerging as the center of Washington's African American community. Consequently, the Mount Vernon neighborhood evolved into a predominately white and middle class neighborhood by the second quarter of the 20th century.

Today, the Mount Vernon neighborhood is defined by its many original mid- to late 19th century buildings, including residential and commercial structures fronting on both public streets and alleyways. This building stock includes limited examples of the wood-frame houses that pre-date the Civil War, representing the long history of residential occupation in the neighborhood. The middle-class dwellings oriented to the public streets illustrate a variety of building types and the changing fashions in architectural design with vernacular interpretations of the late 19th and early 20th century revival styles. The resources are typically brick rowhouses flanked by two- and three-story commercial buildings, churches, and multi-story apartment buildings. Within the interiors of the squares, the extant alleys feature a mix of utilitarian residential, commercial, and

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 3

auxiliary buildings such as stables and garages. The alleys demonstrate the spatial configurations of Washington, D.C. in the middle part of the 19th century, and the social reforms to eliminate alleys from urban design plans throughout the United States in the early 20th century.

The Mount Vernon West Historic District meets National Register criteria A and C, and is significant under the themes of architecture and community planning/development with the period of significance extending from 1833 to 1932. The area making up the Mount Vernon West neighborhood consists of 705 historic properties, the majority of which are residential resources. Of the 705 properties, 599 contribute to the historic district, while 106 are non-contributing.

Within the boundaries of the historic district are the 154 resources contributing to the Blagden Alley/Naylor Court Historic District (designated to the National Register in 1990), the Plymouth Apartments at 1236 11th Street (listed in the National Register in 1986), and the Church of the Ascension and St. Agnes at 1215 Massachusetts Avenue (listed in the National Register in 1984). Listed in the DC Inventory of Historic Places only are the Immaculate Conception Church at 1315 8th Street and the Morrison and Clark Houses at 1013-1015 L Street (listed in 1968 and 1972, respectively). The homes of Senator Blanche Kelso Bruce at 909 M Street and Carter G. Woodson at 1538 9th Street were both recognized as National Historic Landmarks in 1975 and 1976, respectively.

Although platted as part of the Federal City in 1790, the Mount Vernon area saw little development in the period between 1790 and 1820. During this time, there was little turnover of property, and most of the real estate holdings were large and generally unimproved. In fact, when the federal government arrived in 1800, only 109 “permanent” structures (brick or stone) stood in all of Washington to house the 500 families already residing there and the additional 300 civilian members of the government. The commissioners reported 372 dwellings as “habitable,” but as a cabinet officer noted, “most of them [are] small miserable huts.”¹ The commercial sector

¹ James Sterling Young, *The Washington Community, 1800-1828*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1966), p. 22.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 **Page** 4

consisted of a few warehouses, wharves, and an abandoned hotel.²

The completion of 7th Street by 1822 laid the foundation for commercial development and residential growth north of Massachusetts Avenue at 9th Street. The second phase of development, extending from the Civil War period to the turn of the 20th century, involved the re-subdivision of the large squares into smaller lots, the sale of these lots, the improvement of the area's infrastructure, and the emergence of a residential community burgeoning around commercial and transportation corridors. The final phase of development, from 1900 to 1932, saw the decline of alley dwellings and construction of apartment buildings, gas stations, automobile garages, stores, laundries, and warehouses along the principal commuter routes of 7th Street, 9th Street, 11th Street, Massachusetts Avenue, and New York Avenue.

The Mount Vernon West neighborhood retains some of its original early 19th century residential and commercial buildings, and many of its late 19th and early 20th century buildings. The greatest development phase for the area occurred in the last four decades of the 19th century, with the majority of the resources designed and erected by local builders and architects for speculative developers. Primarily dwellings, the buildings comprise an intact and cohesive collection of brick, flat and bay-fronted rowhouses executed in a variety of styles and expressions. The form, massing, and siting of these buildings was shaped by municipal building codes first enacted in 1871 and the mass production of building elements available to the speculative builder. This community is also significant for its intact alley dwellings and commercial resources. The alley buildings are primarily composed of two-story, flat-fronted residential structures. The commercial buildings generally front 7th Street, 9th Street, and Massachusetts Avenue, and stand two to three stories in height with storefronts on the first floor. These mercantile buildings range in date from the middle part of the 19th century to the early 20th century, documenting the existence of the significant transportation system that serviced the community as it grew northward. Collectively, the architecture of Mount Vernon West has achieved significance as an embodiment of a distinctive period with artistic value of ornamentation, style, and form.

² Young, pp. 22-23.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 5

Early History of the Mount Vernon Area: 1790-1830

Prior to the organization of the City of Washington, the entire territory that became the Federal City was part of some thirty tracts of land, known in their entirety since 1715 as Rock Creek Hundred. Rock Creek Hundred was originally part of Charles County and, later, Prince George's County, Maryland. Most of the settlers of the territory were farmers who raised tobacco, wheat, corn, and cattle. Other individuals, including merchants, bricklayers, and carpenters, who worked and lived in Georgetown or the larger municipality of Montgomery County, Maryland, began in the mid-18th century to purchase land in the area as a speculative venture. In 1791, when the site of the new nation's capital was officially designated, nearly half of the original proprietors who deeded their land in trust for the new city were merchants and businessmen anticipating benefiting from the birth of the city.

At this time, the area that would become the Mount Vernon neighborhood was part of a tract of land known as *Port Royal* which originally encompassed 500 acres patented by John Peerce in 1687. With the subdivision of the vast tract by 1791, Joseph Coombs, Jr., purchased the eastern third that included the Mount Vernon area. Clarification of the title, however, did not occur until 1794, after which Coombs was forced to convey ownership to William Bayly. By January 1796, Dominick Lynch and Comfort Sands of New York City owned the Mount Vernon area.³

Pierre L'Enfant's 1791 plan for the new Federal City included the future Mount Vernon neighborhood, with Reservation 8 and its intersecting diagonal avenues and broad vistas as the focal point. Reservation 8 was created at 7th and 9th Streets where Massachusetts and New York Avenues intersected at K Street. The rectangular square was eventually bisected by 8th Street, thus creating two smaller squares. More commonly known today as Mount Vernon Square, Reservation 8 was not one of the seventeen government reservations designated for public buildings. Rather, the square was one of the original fifteen public squares to "be divided among the several states in the Union for each of them to improve."⁴ L'Enfant proposed that the center

³ Priscilla W. McNeil, "Rock Creek Hundred: Land Conveyed for the Federal City." *Washington History*, Vol. 3, No. 1, Spring/Summer 1991, p. 50.

⁴ Alison K. Hoagland, "The Carnegie Library: The City Beautiful Comes to Mt. Vernon Square," *Washington*

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 6

of each square “will admit the Statues, Columns, obelisks, or any other ornaments, such as the different States may choose to erect....”⁵ L’Enfant’s plan for the fifteen “State” squares was never implemented; although the federal government had purchased 2.78 acres of land to be designated as Reservation 8 from Lynch and Sands.

Despite the city’s attempts to encourage development by subdividing and platting land, few properties were improved. The city’s development lagged, the product of seeming disinterest and the lack of serious commitment by Congress. Factors that discouraged early development in the Mount Vernon neighborhood specifically included the lack of reliable roads and the area’s distance from the central residential core, then located south of Massachusetts Avenue.

Further study of L’Enfant’s plan for the nation’s capital indicates a primary concern with the positions of streets and public spaces, as the creation of Reservation 8 suggests. In 1791, George Washington issued the first regulations to govern how the streets and squares were to be laid out and subsequently improved. Of the eight original building regulations, only one, number six, addressed alleys, however indirect the assertion:

Sixth: The way into the squares being designed in a special manner for the common use and convenience of the occupiers of the respective squares...the property in the same is reserved to the public, so that there may be an immediate interference on any abuse of the use thereof by any individual, to the nuisance or obstruction of others. The proprietors of the lots adjoining the entrance into the squares, on arching over the entrance, and fixing gates in the manner the commissioners shall approve, shall be entitled to divide the space over the arching, and build it up with the range of that line of the square.⁶

History, volume 2, number 2, Fall/Winter 1990-1991. (Washington, D.C.: The Historical Society of Washington, D.C., 1990), p. 80.

⁵ Hoagland, p. 80.

⁶ J.L. Sibley Jennings, Jr., “Artistry as Design: L’Enfant’s Extraordinary City,” *The Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress*, Volume 36, No, 3, pp. 225-278.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 7

While it remains unclear if George Washington actually was referring to alleys, Regulation No. 3 specifically mentions alleys as public thoroughfares in 1795:

1. That every owner of the soil, master workman, or other person employed in erecting dwelling houses, kitchens, stables, or other buildings, within the City of Washington, who shall lay the materials prepared or collected for such buildings, or shall knowingly suffer them to be laid or disposed or, so that such materials shall, in any wise, obstruct or impede the free passage of waggons, carts, drays, or other carriages in the squares, avenues, streets, or alleys of the said city, or in any of them, shall forfeit the sum of twenty dollars, for every such offense.⁷

As noted in the “Original Survey of Squares” (1793-1796), a total of 487 squares in the City of Washington were subdivided to include alleyways. The most prevalent alley configuration was the H-shaped alley. This arrangement was used in the design of 176 squares, of which Square 368 in Mount Vernon West is an excellent illustration. Within the overall context of the Mount Vernon area, the majority of the squares with alleys had an H-shaped design, including Squares 367, 368, 369, 447, and 449, to name a few. The H-shaped alley configuration persisted over time, and was used in 223 out of the 381 squares that included alleys by the middle part of the 19th century.

In the early 19th century, settlement occurred primarily in the area of Georgetown, Capitol Hill, the Navy Yard, the White House, and F Street, N.W. In 1809, *An Act to Prevent Swine from Going At Large* was passed. This act designated Massachusetts Avenue as the northern boundary of the urban city, beyond which pigs were allowed to roam.⁸ Located north of Massachusetts Avenue, the Mount Vernon neighborhood was still outside the limits of the developed city. By the 1830s, the area was known as the “Northern Liberties,” a label commonly given to regions beyond the limits of the city.⁹ Bounded approximately by 3rd, 15th,

⁷ District of Columbia Building Regulations, No. 3, City of Washington, July 20, 1795.

⁸ Sue Kohler, “Massachusetts Avenue,” in *The Grand American Avenue 1850-1920*, eds. Jan Cigliano and Sarah Bradford Landau (San Francisco: Pomegranate Artbooks, 1994), p. 178.

⁹ The term “Northern Liberties” was used in similar communities in Philadelphia and Savannah, to name just two.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 8

G, and O Streets, the Northern Liberties area of Washington, D.C. experienced virtually no development initially, save a few scattered wood-frame dwellings surrounded by vast squares of open land.

With many streets little more than cow trails, development in the nation's capital was significantly hampered in the first quarter of the 19th century. Houses were so few and far between that the inhabitants found it necessary to identify their place of residence in directories not by house number or street, but by the nearest public building – “a few paces from the Capitol,” “near the president's house,” “west of the War Office,” and “opposite the Treasury.” As late as 1817, a cabinet officer gave his address to the *Congressional Directory* as “high ground north of Pennsylvania Avenue.”¹⁰

Growth in the Northern Liberties, however, was spurred by the creation of the 7th Street Turnpike. Chartered by Congress in 1810, the turnpike ran northward from Center Market on Pennsylvania Avenue to the District line, where it traveled west to Rockville, Maryland. Seventh Street, laid between 1818 and 1822, became the spine of the Northern Liberties, as well as a primary transportation artery into the center of the city. Development, primarily of a commercial nature, commenced at the southern end of 7th Street, and gradually spread northward toward Massachusetts Avenue.

Subdivision and Residential Improvements: 1830-1870

With the growing population of the city to the south of the Northern Liberties, migration northward was inevitable. To support the established residential and commercial areas, as well as future development to the north, the Northern Liberties Fire Company constructed a firehouse on the western portion of the as yet undeveloped Mount Vernon Square. The firehouse was

James M. Goode, *Capital Losses*, (Washington, D.C.: The Smithsonian Institute, 1979), pp. 264-265; and Donald E. Jackson, “L’Enfant’s Washington: An Architect’s View,” *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, Volume 50 (Washington, D.C.: Columbia Historical Society, 1980), p. 410.

¹⁰ Young, pp. 42-43.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 9

erected in October 1840 between 8th and 9th Streets. President James K. Polk authorized the erection of the Northern Liberty Market in March 1846 on the eastern half of the square. The market became a focal point as development moved north of Massachusetts Avenue, assisting in the establishment of a commercial community and residential neighborhood. In fact, subsequent market structures erected in the area followed the commercial and residential development northward along 7th Street, culminating in the construction of the O Street Market in 1881.

The focal point of the Mount Vernon West neighborhood in the second quarter of the 19th century was Squares 367 and 368, bisected by Naylor Alley and Blagden Alley, respectively. Originally subdivided to include both public streets and alley access, the large squares were eventually subdivided into smaller and smaller parcels, some with no access to the public streets except through the alleyways. Square 367 illustrates this subdivision trend, having been platted originally with an H-shaped alley. The square was replatted by 1839 to provide 58 lots, 48 of which faced the street and 10 of which were located in the middle of the square. The square was then bisected east to west by a 20-foot alley behind the lots facing onto N Street. Two 30-foot wide alleys ran north to O Street, and were intersected by a 15-foot alley that ran east-west behind the property facing O Street. This new configuration created lots facing solely onto the alley.

Before 1833, no improvements were assessed in the Mount Vernon West area, although most of the land was in private ownership. The first improvements appeared between 1833 and 1840 within Squares 367 and 368. Of the buildings constructed during the initial development phase, only three are extant – the wood-frame rowhouses at 927 M Street and 1211 10th Street in Square 368 and the brick John Nourse House at 107 Massachusetts Avenue in Square 315.

A report prepared by U.S. Army General Montgomery C. Meigs in 1853 attests to the area's character prior to the Civil War, as well as the impact 7th Street had on development. An important designer in creating several of the city's post-Civil War architectural monuments, Meigs served with the Engineer Corps of United States Army. His report was prepared in preparation for a new municipal water system, which Congress funded with the largest outlay of funds for a single project since appropriations had been provided for the construction of the

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 10

Capitol. Meigs was appointed chief engineer for the new water system, preparing a detailed report in 1853 on the development of the nation's capital and its future needs. His report documents that approximately seven of the 24 squares comprising Mount Vernon West were substantially improved. Fronting Massachusetts Avenue and/or bounded by 9th and 10th Streets, Squares 315, 341, 367, 368, and 369 collectively contained 139 houses and two stores. Square 368, between 9th, 10th, M and N Street, had the greatest concentration of residential growth, the majority of which were white middle class citizens. Square 315, fronting Massachusetts Avenue, provided the only commercial establishments in Mount Vernon West. Yet, based on Meigs' report, development of the entire Mount Vernon area primarily faced 7th Street, with the greatest concentration of physical improvements centered around Reservation 8 and the Northern Liberty Market.¹¹ Construction typically consisted of modest two-story wood-frame rowhouses with continuous side gable roofs and flat facades. These vernacular buildings exhibited little applied ornament or detailing on their two-bay wide facades.

In 1859, the majority of the assessed improvements in the Mount Vernon West neighborhood were wood-frame buildings valued below \$500. Assessments over \$1000 primarily included masonry structures. Of the 68 buildings documented from this period, 51 were constructed of wood framing, while only 17 were masonry. The earliest brick dwellings included those at 917-919 M Street (1839-1844), 1107 Massachusetts Avenue (ca. 1840), 931-943 M Street (1844-1859), and 1225-1227 10th Street (1854-1859). The most notable wood-frame buildings from this period included the row of wood-frame dwellings at 926-932 N Street in Square 368. The row, now demolished, was constructed in the middle part of the 19th century by Thomas Blagden. A prominent merchant, Blagden maintained a lumberyard as early as 1834 on the east side of New Jersey Avenue near the city's canal. Not the first improvements to Square 368, the row of four dwellings was constructed as speculative housing, one of the earliest illustrations of such development in the area. Blagden became synonymous with the square, lending his name to the H-shaped alley bisecting it.

With the exception of three buildings in Squares 313 and 315, the majority of the improvements in the Mount Vernon West neighborhood were located in Squares 367 and 378. Early residents

¹¹ The 1853 Meigs Survey can be found in the *Report of the Commissioners of the District of Columbia*, 1875.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 11

included General Land Office draftsman Horatio G. O'Neale at 917 M Avenue (1839-1844) and carpenter John W. Marlow at 941 N Street (1844-1954). Pump maker Thomas B. Sprigg resided at 1213 10th Street (1833-1839) and waiter Samuel Thomas lived at 900 O Street (1839). Both Sprigg and Thomas were free African Americans born in the nation's capital. Of particular note in Square 367 are residents Henry Naylor at 1217 10th Street (1854-1859) and grocer Dickerson Naylor, who owned the buildings at 1311-1313 10th Street (1844-1854) and 943 N Street (1859-1863). As was Square 368 with Blagden Alley, an H-shaped alley originally divided Square 367. Presently known as Naylor Court, the alley was historically known as Naylor Alley. In Mount Vernon, as in many of Washington's newest neighborhoods, improvements in the city infrastructure followed the streetcar lines, with real estate values directly tied to a lot's proximity to the streetcar route. This finally prompted construction both east and west of 7th Street, particularly on the developing transportation arteries of 9th and 11th Streets where migrating merchants and tradesmen could get housing near their commercial space. For example, baker David Volland lived at 907 N Street while maintaining a stall at the Northern Liberty Market and Allison Nailor, Jr. worked at a livery stable at 13th and E Street while living at 815 9th Street.

More buildings were initially constructed on the squares to the west of 7th Street, while those to the east remained sparsely improved.¹² Development remained south of O Street along 9th and 10th Streets. To attract development, owners of the larger lots began to further subdivide their holdings into smaller parcels, some of which had no access to the streets except through the alleyways. The greatest development was residential construction, particularly brick rowhouses. During this period, construction in the alleys swelled, moving from Blagden and Naylor Alleys to include Iowa Alley in Square 280, Shepherd Alley in Square 369 and Turner Alley (later known as Columbia Street) in Square 366. Alley improvements were limited to the erection of modest two-story wood-frame rowhouses and utilitarian structures. The alley dwellings in Mount Vernon were constructed primarily between the 1830s and 1870s.

To support the increasing domestic construction, religious institutions moved into the area. The first church in the Mount Vernon West area was the McKendree Methodist Episcopal Church on Massachusetts Avenue between 9th and 10th Streets in Square 370. Located outside the present

¹² Lloyd Van Derveer, *Map of the City of Washington, D.C.*, 1851.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 12

boundaries of the Mount Vernon West district, this mission chapel provided the community with its first religious institution. This modest brick building was constructed on the outskirts of the city in the 1840s. With the growth of the religious community, and development migrating northward, the congregation split. A second church building was constructed at 4th Street and New York Avenue in Square 514 between 1854 and 1857. Designated the Fletcher Chapel, the building was the first religious structure erected in the Mount Vernon Square area, as well as one of the first buildings erected east of 6th Street to the north of New York Avenue. The McKendree Methodist Episcopal Church continued to serve the Mount Vernon West community well into the second quarter of the 20th century.

Other contemporary religious structures erected in the community worthy of note included the Church of the Incarnation at 1112 N Street in Square 314 and the Mount Vernon Place Methodist Episcopal Church at the corner of 9th and K Streets in Square 402. Serving a white Episcopal congregation, the Incarnation church was constructed on a rectangular corner lot at 12th and N Streets in the period between 1869 and 1873. This stone building currently serves as the Pentecostal Church. The Mount Vernon Place Methodist Episcopal Church, a two-story, brick building that faced Mount Vernon Square, was erected in the late 1860s. This imposing religious structure, assessed for \$30,000 in 1874, served the community until it was razed in 1918 to allow for construction of the International Machinists Building.

Late 19th Century Development: 1870-1900

The Territorial Government and Municipal Building Codes

The greatest to the physical composition of the city and its lagging amenities occurred during the short-lived administration of the Territorial Government. In February 1871, Congress passed a bill establishing a new government for the District of Columbia that was composed of a legislative assembly, a five-member Board of Public Works, and a governor. Under Commissioner Alexander R. "Boss" Shepherd, the Board of Public Works began a massive program to modernize the city and improve the intolerable road conditions. The Board let

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 13

contracts for laying public sewers and water mains, planting thousands of trees, and grading and paving streets. The \$20,000,000 ultimately expended by the Board was intended to ensure that the City of Washington would remain the national capital.

Immediate and rapid improvements were targeted for the “center city,” an area defined by the Mall on the south, P Street on the north, New Jersey Avenue on the east, and New Hampshire Avenue on the west. In addition, special consideration was paid to the improvement of certain thoroughfares in order to facilitate the transport of produce to the markets. Seventh Street in particular was graded and macadamized. Ninth and 11th Streets were graded and streetcar lines were installed in 1872 and extended just one year later. By 1874, sewer lines, gas mains, and water pipes were laid along 9th Street.

One of the first projects undertaken by the Board of Public Works was the enactment of new building codes. George Washington’s original 1791 prohibition against wooden buildings had been eased in 1796 and, thus, wood framed houses became predominant, in both type and number. The new 1872 building regulations still allowed wooden structures to be constructed within the city limits, though not within twenty-four feet of any house built of brick or other non-combustible material. Eventually, the construction of wooden buildings was forbidden within an area called the “fire limits,” defined as the limits of the City of Washington and the southern part of Georgetown. Although existing wooden buildings were not demolished, the building regulations essentially required that after 1877 all new dwellings would be of brick and/or stone. This regulation had a dramatic influence on the architectural development of Washington, D.C., specifically such residential neighborhoods as Mount Vernon where rows of modest wood-frame dwellings housed the middle class. Consequently, during the late 1870s and 1880s, rows of attached brick houses were built along the main public streets. These new brick rowhouses were built adjacent to and often replaced their wood-frame predecessors, creating a second phase of architectural development in Mount Vernon. Larger and containing more architectural embellishment than the wood-frame houses, the brick buildings reflected contemporary architectural trends in residential design and featured elaborate cornices, metal, stone or molded brick window surrounds, and other applied ornamental elements.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 14

The passage of the Building Projection Act in 1871 was equally formative in its impact on the physical form of buildings in Mount Vernon. The act allowed builders to erect projecting bays up to four feet deep over the building line into the property at the front of the building, known as the parking area. Architecturally, the first bays were tentative in design, typically only one story in height, of wood construction, and appearing as if tacked onto existing flat fronted houses. Once generally accepted, the projecting bay became almost universally used in Washington rowhouse construction, and builders constructed larger bays that were better integrated into the body of the house.

Another major initiative of the Board of Public Works affecting Mount Vernon was its improvements to Washington, D.C.'s dilapidated older markets. In time, the Northern Liberty Market had become the "intolerable nuisance" that all such markets became before Washington's sewer system was created. In 1860, local citizens unsuccessfully filed a petition for the removal of the unsanitary facilities. In 1867, the market was described in the following words:

On market days the most offensive matter accumulates in the adjoining streets, greatly detrimental to the health of the residents of the neighborhood. The refuse vegetable matter thrown from the wagons of the hucksters, and the offal from the stall of the butcher, mingle with the filth created by the many animals which are brought and allowed to stand around the place, causing a most disagreeable stench, especially in the summer.¹³

It was not until 1872, however, that action was taken, as Shepherd notified vendors that the Northern Liberty Market was to be closed. When they refused to move, he had a large demolition crew raze the building at night; the falling debris accidentally killed two market workers. Shepherd's actions were highly controversial, and litigation went on for years.¹⁴ After the demolition, some of the dealers formed the Northern Liberty Market Company and purchased "Savage Square" bounded by K, L, 5th and 6th Streets, just south of the Mount Vernon Square

¹³ George J. Olszewski, *Mount Vernon Square, Washington, D.C.* (National Park Service, Office of Historic Architecture Eastern Service Center, 1970), p. 7.

¹⁴ Olszewski, p. 8.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 15

neighborhood in Square 483. James McGill, a prominent Washington, D.C. architect, designed the new Northern Liberty Market, which was completed in 1874. Distinguished by towers, dormers, and rich brickwork, the new market was touted as one of the most innovative structural achievements in Washington: the iron and steel truss roof spanned the full length and width of the building. While many Mount Vernon residents maintained stalls in the new market, it never achieved the anticipated success as it was unable to compete with the draw of the established Center Market on Pennsylvania Avenue. Additionally, the market was considered to be too far from the major transportation artery of 7th Street.

For the remaining displaced vendors, Shepherd allocated space at 7th and O Streets (Square 422) for the site of a new market. As was his practice, Shepherd awarded the construction contracts to firms in which he owned large amounts of stock. With the discovery of his corrupt practices, Shepherd was promptly forced to abandon his post. Consequently, many of the commissioner's improvements, whether in the planning stages or underway, were deserted. Construction of the new market structure in Mount Vernon was delayed until 1881. Commonly known as the O Street Market, the market is a rectangular, one-story brick building with a standing seam metal roof capped by a monitor. The dominant feature of the structure is a two-level square tower with a tall pyramidal roof. At the time of its construction, the nation's capital contained between six and eight markets. Recognized as a local landmark in 1968, the O Street Market stands today as one of only three extant 19th century public markets in the city.

With the removal of the Northern Liberty Market, the immediate future of Reservation 8 was uncertain; yet, for the surrounding community, the square was an essential element to its identity. Although not officially declared, some years earlier Reservation 8 became known as Mount Vernon Square (or Place). The report of Brevet Brigadier General Nathaniel Michler of the Office of Public Buildings, Grounds, and Works appears to be one of the first documented sources to label the site as Mount Vernon Place.¹⁵ This 1867 report included citywide recommendations for landscaping improvements, with particular attention paid to Reservation 8:

¹⁵ The Office of Public Buildings, Grounds, and Works was the processor to the Board of Public Works.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 16

In planning the city, a large reservation, known as *Mount Vernon place*, was laid out at the intersections of K street north with New York and Massachusetts avenues. Most unfortunately for the ornament and health of that part of the city, the original design has not been perfected. Eighth street has not only been opened through it, separating it into two parts, but on one of these divisions has been erected a most unsightly building for a market house. The latter, with its attending annoyances, forms an intolerable nuisance, which should be abated at once.... By what authority the market is located on this public reservation cannot be ascertained. It [the market] should be removed, and arrangements similar to those in all our large cities be adopted to supply wants of the community. The grounds could then be improved and become what they were originally intended to be.¹⁶

Of course, no one ever knew for certain what the grounds were originally intended to be, save one of the public reservations L'Enfant wanted devoted to the states of the Union. Thus, in an effort to provide a more direct route through the area, both Massachusetts and New York Avenues were subsequently extended through Mount Vernon Square. Asphalt carriage roads divided the square into several triangles. In spite of the bisecting roads, landscaping improvements were gradually carried out. In 1877, the District Board of Public Works constructed concrete roadways and planted lawns and shrubbery in the square. It also installed sidewalks, curbing, and an ornamental iron fountain on a mound at the center of the square. Despite these improvements, the conditions in the square were unpleasant and often dangerous. Its central mound proved to be the only safe point for pedestrians who sought to escape the wheels of rapidly passing carriages. Area property owners were displeased and signed a petition requesting the removal of the roadways and improvement of the park area. In 1882, this situation was addressed: the carriage roadways were closed and eventually removed, and in their place were gently curving footpaths surfaced with gravel. Drinking fountains and lampposts were installed, flowerbeds were planted, and the ornamental fountain was given a new coat of paint.¹⁷

¹⁶ Nathaniel Michler, "Appendix T," *Report of the Secretary of War*, p. 524.

¹⁷ Olszewski, pp. 9-10.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 17

Park visitation increased as a result of these improvements and, in 1884, twenty-five new benches were placed along the walks.

With the loss of the Northern Liberty Market and the decline of its successor on Square 483, the surrounding community was deprived of its namesake. Fortunately, the new park setting of Mount Vernon Square (Reservation 8) provided the area with a nucleus from which to take its identity, thus the neighborhood to the north of K Street, along New York and Massachusetts Avenues was christened *Mount Vernon*. The name Northern Liberties continued to denote the community, however, in official documents such as city directories and maps until the late 1870s, when improvements to the landscaped square encouraged overwhelming acceptance of the sobriquet "Mount Vernon" for the surrounding neighborhood.

The Victorian Building Boom

Combined with a strong, rapidly growing national and local economy throughout much of the last quarter of the 19th century, Washington, D.C. experienced a tremendous residential building boom during the Victorian period. According to a survey by the Water Department, taken in October 1875, the boom had transformed the northern areas of the city, particularly Mount Vernon. Commercial activity remained focused along 7th Street. Yet, with the growth of the 14th Street corridor and Logan Circle (originally known as Iowa Circle) to the northwest of the Mount Vernon West neighborhood, commercial development was sparked along Rhode Island Avenue. Square 337 was developed with seven commercial enterprises. Sporadic commercial development also migrated northward along 9th and 11th Streets as the streetcar rails opened the corridors to neighboring residents. This survey documents the existence of 866 dwellings, the majority of which were constructed of brick rather than wood frame. Residential construction had spread to include all the squares flanking 9th and 10th Streets between Massachusetts and Rhode Island Avenues. Containing over 229 residential buildings, three of the four squares in this area were bisected by alleys and, therefore, retained the greatest number of wood-frame dwellings, as residential construction had commenced there prior to the Civil War. Masonry construction, as the building codes regulated, appeared throughout the area, with the greatest concentration within Square 366. No wood-frame buildings stood in Square 366 in 1875.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 18

The almost uniform residential development pattern consisted of rows of buildings joined by party walls, with architectural emphasis placed only on the street-fronting facades. Builders took advantage of an economy of scale in building rows of identical houses, using mass-produced building elements. Fireplace mantels, windows, doors, interior woodwork, stair elements, gas light fixtures, and bathroom fixtures, as well as brackets, finials, molded bricks and cast iron stairs were all mass-produced elements that were purchased and pieced together by residential builders in infinite variations. Often entire blocks of rowhouses were designed and constructed at the same time, typically with identical massing and architectural detailing whose repetition was offset by projecting or recessed bays, turrets, oriels, dormers, and applied ornamentation in wood, brick, stone and metal. Rows ranged from two houses to an entire block throughout the Mount Vernon neighborhood. Most of the buildings in the area were designed, and often financed, by small-scale speculative builders. Many of the investors were carpenters, masons, and other building craftsmen who evolved into developers, but frequently they interchanged between the role of tradesman, hired builder, and equity-holding builder/developer.

Stylistically, rowhouses in the 1880s and 1890s in Washington, D.C. were inspired by eclectic, European sources, including the English Gothic and Queen Anne, Romanesque, and French Second Empire design motifs. Houses tended to be asymmetrical in form – emphasized by projecting and recessed bays – and constructed with a dark palette of red brick and brownstone, finished by wood and metal trim painted in somber tones. Architectural emphasis was placed on the fronts of the building, and sides of corner buildings; rear elevations were utilitarian, most often with ancillary ells. Although dwellings prior to 1875 were typically two stories in height, houses constructed in the late 1870s and 1880s, particularly along the public streets, tended to be three stories (sometimes two floors with a raised English basement). By the 1890s, houses in the area were more typically four full stories.

Commercial development mimicked the architectural trends illustrated on the surrounding residential buildings. The two-part commercial buildings had a single-story lower zone at street level that indicated public spaces. The upper floors were more private spaces, including residences, offices, hotel rooms, or meeting halls. The lower and upper zones were distinctly

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 **Page** 19

separated by projecting cornices, transoms, and expansive window openings. The upper stories were ornamented with applied detailing including elongated window openings, hoods and lintels, paneled friezes, brackets, cornices, and parapets. One of the more ornate examples of a commercial building displaying the fashionable architectural detailing typically found on residential buildings is 1000 O Street (Square 339), constructed in 1874 for the Fine Family. The parapet crowning the detailed Italianate building, originally used as a grocery, documents the original owner and building address.

As seen throughout Washington, D.C. during the latter part of the 19th century, the speculative ventures were financed by friends and relatives, in the case of small builders, and by neighborhood-based building and loan associations that lent more economically and freely and required no commission or bond against liens. In general, larger builders relied on traditional banks; these men frequently had the connections to find out where the government was planning road grading and sewer laying, permitting them to purchase land ahead of planned civic improvements. Partnerships, formed by builders, investors, relatives, and friends for the express purpose of development, were the norm. As time progressed, the building industry in Washington became increasingly divided between very large and very small construction businesses, both venturing into speculative building. During the 1870s, approximately 50% of all buildings in the city were built on speculation; by the mid-1880s, the percentage jumped to 75%.¹⁸ For Mount Vernon, the paving of streets, the extension of streetcar lines, and improved amenities augmented the residential building boom. The development was characterized by the rapid subdivision of undeveloped squares and by infilling empty lots between existing structures.

The most prominent speculative development in Mount Vernon West can be found along 9th Street and 10th Street in Squares 367, 397, and 340. Nicholas T. Haller constructed the rows of brick dwellings in the period between 1885 and 1892. An entrepreneur as well as an architect, Haller often invested in his own designs, serving as property owner, architect, and builder. Haller, who maintained an office at 931 F Street in northwest Washington, D.C., was a prominent architect in the nation's capital. During his career, between 1871 and 1917, Haller designed the Warder Building (Atlas Building) at 527 9th Street, 38 apartment buildings citywide,

¹⁸ "Greater U Street" National Register Nomination Application, (1998), Section 8, pp. 10-11.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 20

and an array of dwellings in the neighborhoods of Logan Circle, Foggy Bottom, Dupont Circle, Greater U Street, old downtown, and Capitol Hill. Haller's work in Mount Vernon West resulted in the construction of twenty single-family dwellings, all stylistically similar. The buildings, although not constructed at the same time in contiguous rows, present the appearance of unity and cohesiveness through form and ornamentation, a deliberate statement to identify the work of one developer and architect. The two- and three-story brick buildings illustrated the highest interpretation of the fashionable architectural styles, particularly Queen Anne. Building notices in the *Manufacturers' Record* for the years 1885 to 1907 record that Haller was designing buildings estimated to cost anywhere from \$3,000 to \$9,000. Haller's speculative development included the rows of dwellings at 1539-1549 9th Street in 1885 (Square 397), 1330-1336 9th Street in 1887-1888 (Square 367), 1248-1252 10th Street in 1888 (Square 340), and 1323-1327 10th Street in 1892 (Square 367). The architect was also responsible for the design of 1111-1115 N Street (1882-1883) in Square 313 and 918 O Street in 1889 and 1315 Naylor Court West in 1899 in Square 367.

H.D. Boteler was another individual who recognized the speculative development prospects available in Mount Vernon West. Boteler purchased numerous parcels in Square 368, with lots fronting Blagden Alley. In 1885, the developer was responsible for the construction of sixteen single-family dwellings that were all erected by the firm of Haney and Ward. The two-story brick rowhouses were each two bays wide, with segmentally arched openings and minimal stylistic ornamentation. Of the sixteen flat-fronted buildings, only six are extant – 36-46 Blagden Alley South. The ten buildings at 12-16 Blagden Alley West and 1-5 Blagden Alley were all razed to allow for the construction of automobile garages in the second quarter of the 20th century.

Tax assessments from the 1880s and 1890s indicate that new brick dwellings, such as those constructed by Haller and Boteler, ranged greatly in value from \$500 up to \$15,000 in a few instances, while pre-1871 wood-frame dwellings tended to be assessed from \$100 to \$1,500. According to newspaper advertisements in 1879-1880, the most expensive houses in the nation's capital fronted Lafayette Square (\$65,000), while a mansion along Vermont Avenue just south of

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 21

Logan Circle was listed for \$16,000. In the Mount Vernon area, a brick rowhouse would be assessed anywhere from \$1,000 to \$7,000 depending on the size, location, and number of rooms.

Renting a house was not uncommon to any economic level during this period. Costs varied greatly depending again on the building's size and location. As with sale prices, the area around the President's House was the most desirable and the most expensive. Yet, the Mount Vernon area was alluring for its convenient proximity to downtown, the streetcars, and the markets. The 1880 census does not indicate whether the occupants owned their dwellings, but the *Washington Star* reported in 1882 that most government clerks considered their employment to be so insecure that they were reluctant to buy houses, and therefore preferred to either rent or live in boarding houses. The Civil Service Act of 1883 enhanced the job security of federal employees, and thereby increased their ability to become homeowners.¹⁹

The increasing influx of European immigrants and African Americans expanded the population of the city, and had an impact on the Mount Vernon neighborhood. Although the area remained a desirable residential community for the middle class well into the 20th century, Mount Vernon began to be segregated by class and race after about 1875. For example, by 1880, the census records show that the majority of the occupants along Blagden Alley and Naylor Court were African Americans who held jobs as coachmen, hucksters, laborers, and laundresses. Along public streets such as M Street, the residents were predominately white middle-class workers, who worked as clergymen, government employees, small businessmen, tradesmen, skilled laborers, and professionals. Doctors, lawyers, and dentists who lived in the area tended to own their houses, using the first floor as office space and the second floor as living space – a common 19th century practice.²⁰

A significant number of white residents came from other states in the Union, including New York, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Massachusetts, Vermont, Maryland, Alabama, Nebraska, and Ohio. Unlike neighboring Mount Vernon Square, whites born in the District of Columbia and Virginia comprised the highest percentage of residents in the neighborhood in 1880. For example, Zack

¹⁹ Don't Tear It Down, "Lower Shaw/Mount Vernon West Survey Final Report," 1984, p. 5.

²⁰ United States Census Records, National Archives, Record Group 21, 1880.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 22

Downing, a bricklayer living on 9th Street, was born and raised in Washington, D.C. and his wife was from Maryland. James B. Williams was a cigar manufacturer from Virginia who lived on N Street with his family. The majority of African Americans inhabiting Mount Vernon West were born in the nation's capitol and Maryland. Living in Naylor Court, African American Peter Thomas was originally from Virginia, while his neighbor, Lawrence Wess, was a native of the capital city.²¹

One of the most significant individuals residing in Mount Vernon during this period was Senator Blanche Kelso Bruce (1841-1898). Bruce, born into slavery in Prince Edward County, Virginia, was the first African American to serve a full term in the United States Senate. Having attended classes at Oberlin College in Ohio, Bruce taught at the first African American elementary school in Lawrence, Kansas, and then helped to establish a school for African American children in Hannibal, Missouri. In 1869, Bruce began his political career as conductor of elections in Mississippi's Tallahatchie County and was then elected Sergeant-at-Arms of the state Senate. Within two years, Bruce assumed a number of additional responsibilities that enhanced his political aspirations – Assessor of Taxes and Superintendent of Education, county sheriff, and member of the Floreyville Board of Aldermen. In 1875, Bruce was elected to the United States Senate, representing Mississippi until 1881. Losing his senatorial seat in 1880, Bruce remained in Washington, D.C., and was appointed Register of the Treasury, Recorder of Deeds, and trustee to the District of Columbia Public Schools. During his tenure in the Senate, Bruce resided in the Second Empire brick rowhouse at 909 M Street, located within the Blagden Alley/Naylor court Historic District. The three-story building, constructed in 1873 for Nellie Hamlink, was recognized as a National Historic Landmark in 1975 for its association with Senator Blanche K. Bruce.

With development increasing in the neighboring squares in the late 19th century, the Mount Vernon community was substantially improved. As seen decades earlier, religious institutions were built to serve the expanding Mount Vernon West community. Primarily dating from the early 1870s and late 1880s, the four most noteworthy churches serving the area included Salem

²¹ United States Census Records, National Archives, Record Group 21, 1880.

²² W.E.B. DuBois was the first.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 23

Baptist Church, Hamline Methodist Episcopal Church, Immaculate Conception Church, and Church of Ascension and St. Agnes. The Salem Baptist Church, known today as North Presbyterian Church, was founded in the 1870s. The Gothic Revival brick building was erected at 917 N Street in Square 367 by Board of Public Works commissioner Alexander Shepherd and several of his development partners.

The Hamline Methodist Episcopal Church, when it was originally constructed in 1873, was a two-story brick structure with a 50-foot tower rising at the corner of 9th and P Streets in Square 365. This building was actually the second structure dedicated by the congregation in the neighborhood, the previous wood frame building having been erected in 1866 and replaced by 1873 with the present Romanesque Revival style brick church. The religious building served a white Methodist congregation until it was sold, becoming the Shiloh Baptist Institutional Church in 1924. As the congregation and surrounding neighborhood grew, the church complex also grew to include a 1957 educational building and 1981 family life center with underground parking, auditorium, classrooms, and gymnasium.

Fronting Massachusetts Avenue in Square 282, the Church of the Ascension and St. Agnes was constructed in 1875 at 1201 Massachusetts Avenue. The striking stone church building with its 187-foot spire, originally serving a white Episcopal congregation, was designed by Baltimore architects Thomas Dixon and Charles Carson. The land on which the high Victorian Gothic style building was constructed had been dedicated to the church by philanthropist William W. Corcoran. Prior to completion of the National Cathedral on Wisconsin Avenue, the Church of the Ascension and St. Agnes served as the seat of the Episcopal bishop from 1902 to 1912. The church was listed in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Places in 1964 and the National Register of Historic Places in 1984. The rectory is located at 1219 Massachusetts Avenue, in the Romanesque Revival style T. A. Lambert House (1887).

The first Immaculate Conception Catholic Church at 1315 8th Street (Square 423) was constructed in 1870-1874. The brick building, Gothic Revival in design, was one of eight resources associated with the church complex – church, schools, rectories, and convents. The Immaculate Conception Catholic Church is the oldest mission church associated with St.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 24

Patrick's Church, now at 10th and G Streets, NW. Originally the parish boundaries were centered along 8th and N Streets, extending as far north as Florida Avenue between 3rd and 13th Streets. Catering to the growing needs of the neighboring community, the church established the Immaculate Conception Academy at 1554 8th Street in 1872. The girl's academy was under the direction of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul, which was founded by Ann Seton. A school for boys was constructed at 711 N Street in 1908, with Brothers of Mary (the Marianists) originally in charge of the educational programs. The 1870-1974 church building was listed in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Resources in 1968.

Within the boundaries of Mount Vernon, few public schools or educational facilities existed; thus neighboring institutions played important roles in the social life of the entire community. Illustrating the racially mixed nature of the area, the number of elementary schools for African American children nearly equaled that of schools for whites until the elimination of segregation in 1954.²³ The Abbott School stood at the intersection of New York Avenue and 5th Street in Square 482S of the Mount Vernon Square Historic District. Built as a white grammar school in 1875, it was active until it closed in 1934. It was later demolished, and a police station was built on the site. African American students initially attended the 1880 circa Banneker Colored School in Square 526 south of New York Avenue. With the growth of the Greater U Street area, more African American schools were erected to the north, including Garnet School (1880) and Patterson School (1893) at 10th and U Streets.

Unlike the elementary schools that served the communities in which they were located, the high schools drew their enrollment from the entire city; students attended them according to their interest in the curricula offered: academic, business, science, or manual training. The nation's premier African American high school was located at New York Avenue and M Street in Square 556. Known as the M Street High School, the institution played a significant role in the development of African American education in the United States as the first permanent home of the first African American high school in the country. The M Street School had its origins in the Negro Preparatory School, established in 1870 to teach future African American teachers. In 1891, the school moved into the newly constructed M Street building, just south of the Mount

²³ Don't Tear It Down, "Lower Shaw/Mount Vernon East Survey Final Report," 1984, p. 5.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 25

Vernon Square Historic District. By 1896, however, the school was plagued by serious overcrowding, a condition that was somewhat relieved by the construction of Dunbar High School on the west side of 1st Street, between O and N Streets in 1916. Now known as the Perry School, the M Street High School was recognized as a National Historic Landmark in 1986.

To the east of the Mount Vernon community, in Square 554, stands the Armstrong Technical High School. Authorized by Congress in the late 1890s, Armstrong Manual Training School was established for any African American student desiring a secondary education. The building was opened in 1902, and a number of exceptional African American educators were trained there: Garnet C. Wilkinson, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, Arthur C. Newman, and Dr. Benetta B. Washington. The 28-room building was designed to house 300 students. By the 1950s, after three additions, Armstrong accommodated nearly 1,300. In 1964, it was designated an adult education center. The building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1996.

Twentieth Century Development: 1900-1940

As the residential building stock of the neighborhood had been almost fully developed by the turn of the 20th century with single-family dwellings, developers and builders focused their attention on the construction of apartment buildings and commercial structures. Of the limited number of residential buildings constructed during this period, the majority was multi-family dwellings, particularly apartment buildings. In 1902, the dwelling at 1213 N Street (Square 280) was converted into the Carlisle Apartments, illustrating the changing housing needs in the Mount Vernon West neighborhood, illustrating the changing needs of the area. One year later, in 1903, the first purpose-built apartment building was erected in the neighborhood at 1236 11th Street (Square 314). The brick and limestone building, known as the Plymouth, was constructed by the Carolina Apartment Company for an estimated cost of \$80,000. Designed with the Beaux-Arts styling of the period, the Plymouth originally contained 56 housing units within its seven stories. The building was listed on the D.C. Inventory of Historic Places in 1985 and the National Register of Historic Places in 1986. Other noteworthy apartment buildings included New Berne Apartments at 1113-1115 12th Street in Square 315 (1905), the Lurgen at

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 **Page** 26

919 L Street in Square 369 (1913), and the Sagamore at 1215 10th Street in Square 368 (1915). Also worthy of note as representatives of the first great wave of apartment house construction in the nation's capital are the now demolished Royalton (918 M Street, 1903), the Homestead (1314-1318 11th Street, 1904), the Gornto (1223 12th Street, 1905), and the Alabama (1015 N Street, 1905). Like the neighboring commercial buildings, the apartments were more imposing in size than the single-family dwellings, rising anywhere from four to seven stories in height with crowning cornices. Each reflected the popular architectural fashions of the period, most commonly revival styles, with projecting bays, heavy lintels, and projecting cornices. The apartment buildings, while predominately of masonry construction, introduced the lighter, more subdued tones of yellow and buff brick to present a contrast to the dark red brick of the surrounding community.

As automotive travel became prevalent in the early 20th century, 7th Street, 9th Street, and Massachusetts Avenue became principal commuter routes. The corridors of commerce cutting through the Mount Vernon area were lined with gas stations, stables, automobile garages, stores, laundries, and warehouses. Of the 128 resources documented from this period, 45 buildings were devoted to the automobile, including garages, gas stations, showrooms, and repair shops, 25 are extant. The greatest numbers of auto-related resources were garages, erected of brick or wood frame at the rear of a property. Such examples are found along Reese Alley in Square 397 and Logan Place in Square 279, where one-story garages lined the bisecting alleys.

One of the more notable commercial buildings in the Mount Vernon neighborhood was the Louise Hand Laundry at 1405 12th Street in Square 312. Developing into one of the best known commercial laundries in the District of Columbia, Louise Hand Laundry was founded in 1912 by the newly widowed Margaret F. Nicodimus, who named her business in honor of a friend. The two story brick and concrete building was designed by Washington, D.C. architect Julius Wenig in the residential square adjoining the Logan Circle and the Mount Vernon neighborhoods. The laundry was locally known for its handwork, especially with historical items sent for cleaning by the White House and Smithsonian Institute. Purchased by Beulah Hall in 1943, the Louise Hand Laundry provided personalized care to the laundry of Presidents, Members of Congress, ambassadors, and visiting dignitaries, not to mention neighboring residents until 1977.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 27

The most notable non-residential buildings in the Mount Vernon neighborhood dating from the early part of the 20th century is the Central Library of the District of Columbia at 800 Mount Vernon Place. Erected between 1900-1903, the building's construction was paid for by steel magnate and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. As one of the most ornate and lavish of the Carnegie-funded libraries, the Washington Central Library served as a model for numerous Carnegie libraries across the country. The first structure erected specifically for the D.C. Public Library, the Carnegie Library served the city for nearly seventy years as a public library. Like the Northern Liberty market that once stood on the same square, the library building became the focal point of the surrounding Mount Vernon community, despite initial opposition from the *Washington Post* to its erection within the open public park at Mount Vernon Square:

...immovably opposed to the breach of trust involved in diverting the city's parks from public use as such, and covering them with bricks and mortar. This sentiment of course dominates every thoughtful Washingtonian. Once assent to the theory that these public spaces may properly be utilized in this way, and never will another public building site be purchased in Washington. The reservations will be cut up and parcelled out...²⁴

Owned by the United States government, the use of the vacant square was actually embraced by city officials, Congress, and the neighboring public as it would not violate any principle or create a dangerous precedent. McMillan's committee report showed sensitivity to the vistas enjoyed by the site as envisioned in the L'Enfant plan:

Situated in the center of Mount Vernon Square, the view of the building would be obtained from Massachusetts Avenue, K Street and New York Avenue, and would add dignity and beauty to a portion of the city where ornamentation is somewhat lacking.²⁵

²⁴ Hoagland, p. 79

²⁵ Hoagland, p. 81.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 28

Consequently, a bill was passed and signed by President McKinley on March 3, 1899, just two months after Carnegie had promised to provide the funding for the building's construction.²⁶ On July 18, 1899, the firm of Ackerman and Ross was selected from among more than twenty-five entries. The New York firm, in existence from about 1897 to 1902, included principals William S. Ackerman and Albert Randolph Ross. With no established stylistic design guidelines, Ackerman and Ross drew upon the Beaux-Arts traditions for the siting and styling of the new Washington Public Library. Their design was in keeping with contemporary national architectural trends made nationally popular expressed at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. This architectural style featured prominent entryways with monumental arches; stone exterior walls with exaggerated horizontal coursed lines; and the hallmark Beaux-Arts details such as lavishly ornate keystones, paired columns, pilasters, floral swags, shields, and escutcheons. The library's cornerstone was laid on April 24, 1901, and the building was completed in December 1902, nine months after the completion date established by the 1899 legislation.

Humanitarian Reform and the Alley Dwelling Authority

In the second quarter of the 20th century, demographic shifts can be seen in the residential patterns in the Mount Vernon community. One of the most significant factors in the shift resulted from the on-going humanitarian reform movement that regarded alleys as being unfit for human habitation, "lined on both sides with miserable dilapidated shanties, patched and filthy."²⁷ In 1892, the efforts of the reforms culminated in Congress passing a ban on the construction of dwellings in alleys. Though no new construction was permitted in alleys, the ban did not abolish the alley housing that already existed.

From 1890 to 1910, many reformers studied and reported on the living conditions in Washington's alleys. In 1896, an investigation by the Committee on "Housing of the People" of the Washington Civic Center reported that alley houses in Washington were unsanitary, overcrowded, and harborers of disease. The surveyors had accounts of seven to ten persons

²⁶ U.S. Statutes at Large 30 (1899), pp. 1372-1373

²⁷ Board of Health, *Second Annual Report*, (Washington, D.C., 1874).

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 29

living in two rooms. The physical conditions of alley dwellings appalled the investigators. The houses were without cellar or attic, floors rested on the earth – open below the floor – and not built to withstand cold or rain. The hot sun shone on the bare tin roofs, plagued with poor drainage. The privies were often located in close proximity to the dwellings as the modest size of the yards averaged 10' by 12'.

An 1897 census conducted by the police department documented that 237 blocks within the original boundaries of the Federal City had inhabited alleys with a total population estimated at 17,244 (11% of the city's population). Of the residents, 16,046 were African American, while only 1,198 were white. The greatest numbers of alleys were concentrated in the southwest quadrant of the city; the northwest quadrant between 1st and 15th Street; and, to a lesser extent, in the Foggy Bottom area. The Mount Vernon West neighborhood encompassed six inhabited alleys – Iowa (Square 280), Turner (Square 365), Redfern (Square 366, later known as Columbia), Naylor (Square 367), Blagden (Square 368), and Shepherd (Square 369).

The alleys were viewed as encouraging immoral behavior:

There is no secret that many of the alleys hide criminals. Our records reveal three openly disreputable houses.... In one dwelling resides a woman with a jail history. Other houses are tainted with the suspicion of being "fast" and men in them are supported by women who have no visible income. Tenants, not immoral themselves, profit from the traffic in sin as one night chambermaid in a brothel whose "tips" exceeded her wages.²⁸

Reformers continued the campaign to abolish alley dwellings throughout the 1890s and the first decade of the 20th century. In 1904, reformers brought the noted humanitarian Jacob Riis to report his findings on the alley conditions in the nation's capital to Congress. The report, supported by a significant amount of publicity, prompted President Theodore Roosevelt to urge Congress to

²⁸ Clare D. Grafenreid, "Typical Alley Houses in Washington, D.C.," *Women's Anthropological Society*, Bulletin 7, 1897.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 30

perform a systematic study of alleys, concluding that the “hidden residential alleys are breeding grounds of vice and disease and should be opened into minor streets.”²⁹

In 1909, Secretary of the Associated Charities Charles Weller published a study on the alleys of Washington, D.C. Weller compiled previous studies and actually lived for a month in what he called a “typical” alley. Weller lived in Blagden Alley, the labyrinth of Square 368. He recorded:

It is with some misgiving that one leaves the well lighted outer streets with their impressive residences and turns into a narrow passageway where he must walk by faith, not sight. Noises which faintly recall those of the Midway Plaisance at the world’s fair, grow louder as the explorer approaches the wider inside alleys. Night with its dark shadows accentuates the strangeness of the scene. Near a gas light on one of the inner corners a group of people are seen playing together roughly. A cheap phonograph near by rasps out a merry ditty. The shrill cries of children pierce the air as the ragged, dirty youngsters dart about among their elders. Two lads with notably large feet and broken shoes dance skillfully while a slovenly, fat woman picks at her guitar. From the little mission in an alley parlor comes occasionally a wail of primitive, weird chanting. An uncouth black man lounges up to a buxom young woman and hugs her. On a doorstep nearby a young man is heard arguing with his mistress and begging her to “le’ me ha’ fi’ cents.

Older folks, crowded around their doorways, are complaining of the sultry, oppressive August air and some are arranging ironing boards and rocking chairs on which they will sleep all night outside the houses. They call back and forth to each other across the alley street and speak with notable civility to the policemen who pass, in pairs, at intervals, with their clubs kept close in hand. There is a burst of profane quarrelling occasionally and some fighting, but most of the prevailing

²⁹ James Borchert, “The Rise and Fall of Washington’s Inhabited Alleys, 1852-1972,” *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, (Washington, D.C.: the Washington Historical Society), p. 280.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 31

noises are merry and careless. Pandemonium reigns. One sees no immediate cause for fear, but feels intuitively a suggestion of evil possibilities and latent danger.³⁰

By 1914, the reform movement reached its peak, having enlisted the support of Washington society, including First Lady Mrs. Ellen Wilson. Her deathbed request to abolish the alley dwellings was in great part responsible for legislation that completed the eradication of alleys by 1918. The advent of World War I, however, effectively stopped implementation of the legislation.

Reports on the number of dwellings located in the alleys continued to be collected. For example, in 1912, there were 46 dwellings reported in Blagden Alley and 11 in Naylor Court. By 1929, the number had decreased to 16 dwellings in Blagden Alley and just two in Naylor Court. The decreasing number of alley dwellings reflected not only the actions of the reformers, but also changing economic pressures. Business demands on the alleys increased and dilapidated housing was razed in order to construct commercial structures.

Another factor that greatly affected the subsequent use of alleys and alley buildings was the increasing popularity of the automobile. Thus, during the 1920s and 1930s, thus, a number of stables and alley dwellings were converted into garages. In the case of dwellings, this was most often accomplished by removing the second story and widening the original front openings to accommodate cars. The trend is especially evident in Blagden Alley and Naylor Court.

With the Depression, New Deal reformers again sought the removal of alley housing. In 1934, Congress created the Alley Dwelling Authority "to provide for the discontinuance of the use as dwellings of the buildings situated in alleys in the District of Columbia." Under the Alley Dwelling Authority, no alley houses were to be inhabited after July 1, 1944. Though the Authority made considerable progress in opening a number of alleys to create wider streets, the advent of World War II and the resulting housing shortage postponed the enforcement of the abolition of alley dwellings until 1955. In 1954, citizens' groups involved in the historic preservation movement of Georgetown and Foggy Bottom were successful in repealing the ban on

³⁰ Charles F. Weller, *Neglected Neighbors* (Philadelphia, PA: John f. Winston Company, 1909).

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 32

the abolition of alley dwellings. It was reported in 1970 that at least 20 inhabited alleys remained in Washington, including Blagden Alley and Redfern Alley (opened as Columbia Street).

Desegregation and its Influences on the Mount Vernon Neighborhood: 1940-Present

With the regulations over alley dwellings and the emergence of the Greater U Street neighborhood as Washington's premier African American community, all classes of African Americans began to move to surrounding sections of the city, specifically LeDroit Park, Strivers Section, Brookland, and Cardozo. Accordingly, by the 1920s, the number and economic diversity of African American residents in the area had decreased markedly. This migration of African Americans from Mount Vernon was notably in contrast to the gradual white middle-class exodus occurring concurrently throughout the nation's capital. The latter exodus was undertaken by white residents who moved from formerly integrated urban neighborhoods like Mount Vernon to the newly developed residential suburbs, made easily accessible by the automobile.

Since the latter part of the 19th century, covenants were used to restrict ownership and/or occupancy of a property, and were typically drawn up by land companies, developers, homeowner groups, and citizens' associations, ostensibly to protect property values. In 1926, the Supreme Court upheld the use of racial covenants in *Corrigan v. Buckley*, letting a decision of the D.C. Court of Appeals stand. The Court of Appeals had found that "the constitutional right of a negro to acquire, own, and occupy property does not carry with it the constitutional power to compel [the] sale and conveyance to him of any particular private property."³¹ The case reflected the legalization of segregation by the courts that stood until after the Second World War. Thus, the number of residential neighborhoods open to African Americans was limited to older communities such as Mount Vernon.

In 1948, however, the Supreme Court reversed its previous rulings, finding that the covenants violated the Federal Civil Rights Act, and were contrary to the public policy of the United States. While not immediate, the court's refusal to uphold racial covenants had a dramatic impact on the

³¹ Mara Cherkasky, "For Sale to Colored," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, Volume 8, Number 2 (Washington, D.C.: Columbia Historical Society, Fall/Winter 1996-1997), pp. 40-57.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 33

racial geography of Washington. Legally, African Americans were now free to buy anywhere in the city, and flight from the older neighborhoods to outlying suburbs was no longer restricted to whites. Consequently, by the 1950s, the aging housing stock of Mount Vernon and its surrounding neighborhoods was deemed no longer desirable by the middle classes of any race or nationality. Dwellings were increasingly leased, rather than owner-occupied, and many of the single-family residences were divided into apartments and rooming houses for a more transient population. Increased density, overcrowding, and poverty began to plague the once middle-class area.

In 1966, the Mount Vernon community was targeted as part of the larger Shaw urban renewal zone, and federal funds for the area's redevelopment were made available. The Shaw area, never before thought of as a single cohesive neighborhood, was bounded by Massachusetts Avenue to K Street, 14th Street, Florida Avenue, and the railroad tracks leading north from Union Station.³² Unlike the Southwest urban renewal area, the neighborhood had a voice in the effort, under the leadership of Reverend Walter Fauntroy, who created the Model Inner City Community Organization as a vehicle for citizen participation. The planned incentives were interrupted, however, when destructive riots followed the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in April 1968. The resulting devastation affected much of the social and economic infrastructure of Shaw, with 7th Street to 9th Street at the center of the looting and burning of buildings. Already in place, the federal funding provided within the urban renewal program aided in the rebuilding of the community. The City Council's May 1968 report, entitled *Rebuilding and Recovery of Washington, D.C. from the Civil Disturbances of April 1968* recognized the need to provide additional "short-term aid and long-term redevelopment" particularly to the area north of Mount Vernon Square between 6th and 9th Streets. Following the initiatives and plan of the National Capital Planning Commission, and the articulation of the community development objectives, the Redevelopment Land Agency worked in close coordination with the departments of the District government to improve living conditions. Ultimately, by 1976, new housing developments with a substantial number of dwelling units were completed, and the rehabilitation of existing units was underway. Seventh Street, in particular, was greatly improved with mini-

³² The area was named Shaw after a local junior high school that was named in honor of Civil War Colonel Robert Gould Shaw.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 34

parcs and new street lighting. In recent years, the opening of the Metro's Green Line and the present construction of the Convention Center have encouraged the economic growth and vitality of the area. The erection of new buildings on vacant lots, the multi-million dollar restorations, unassuming rehabilitations, and landmark designation of historic buildings such as the O Street Market, Plymouth Apartments, the Blanche K. Bruce House, the Carter G. Woodson House, and the Carnegie Library, have made great strides in rejuvenating the 7th Street corridor, Mount Vernon Square, and the greater Mount Vernon neighborhood.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 9 Page 1

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 9 Page 2

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 9 Page 3

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 10 Page 1

UTM References, continued

7	<u>1 18 / 3/2/4/1/0/5/</u>	<u>4/3/0/7/9/8/0/</u>	21	<u>1 18 / 3/2/4/6/2/0/</u>	<u>4/3/0/8/6/2/0/</u>
Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
8	<u>1 18 / 3/2/4/1/2/0/</u>	<u>4/3/0/8/2/0/0/</u>	22	<u>1 18 / 3/2/4/6/2/0/</u>	<u>4/3/0/8/4/6/4/</u>
Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
9	<u>1 18 / 3/2/4/0/0/0/</u>	<u>4/3/0/8/2/0/0/</u>	23	<u>1 18 / 3/2/4/4/8/5/</u>	<u>4/3/0/8/4/6/4/</u>
Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
10	<u>1 18 / 3/2/4/0/0/0/</u>	<u>4/3/0/8/3/0/0/</u>	24	<u>1 18 / 3/2/4/4/8/0/</u>	<u>4/3/0/8/4/6/0/</u>
Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
11	<u>1 18 / 3/2/4/0/4/4/</u>	<u>4/3/0/8/3/0/0/</u>	25	<u>1 18 / 3/2/4/5/8/0/</u>	<u>4/3/0/8/4/6/0/</u>
Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
12	<u>1 18 / 3/2/4/0/4/4/</u>	<u>4/3/0/8/3/6/0/</u>	26	<u>1 18 / 3/2/4/5/8/0/</u>	<u>4/3/0/8/2/8/0/</u>
Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
13	<u>1 18 / 3/2/4/0/8/4/</u>	<u>4/3/0/8/3/6/0/</u>	27	<u>1 18 / 3/2/4/6/2/0/</u>	<u>4/3/0/8/2/8/0/</u>
Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
14	<u>1 18 / 3/2/4/0/8/2/</u>	<u>4/3/0/8/4/4/0/</u>	28	<u>1 18 / 3/2/4/6/2/0/</u>	<u>4/3/0/8/2/4/0/</u>
Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
15	<u>1 18 / 3/2/4/1/8/0/</u>	<u>4/3/0/8/4/4/0/</u>	29	<u>1 18 / 3/2/4/6/6/0/</u>	<u>4/3/0/8/2/4/0/</u>
Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
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Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
17	<u>1 18 / 3/2/4/2/2/0/</u>	<u>4/3/0/8/4/6/5/</u>	31	<u>1 18 / 3/2/4/5/0/0/</u>	<u>4/3/0/8/1/8/4/</u>
Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
18	<u>1 18 / 3/2/4/2/2/0/</u>	<u>4/3/0/8/5/6/0/</u>	32	<u>1 18 / 3/2/4/4/6/5/</u>	<u>4/3/0/7/8/6/0/</u>
Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
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Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
20	<u>1 18 / 3/2/4/6/6/5/</u>	<u>4/3/0/8/6/2/0/</u>	34	<u>1 18 / 3/2/4/3/0/0/</u>	<u>4/3/0/7/8/2/0/</u>
Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

The Mount Vernon West Historic District begins at the intersection of 9th Street and L Street North, NW. The boundary runs north on 9th Street to N Street, including all the properties fronting the street to the west, and turns east on N Street. Running one block east to 7th Street, the boundary includes all of Square 399 and the southern portion of Square 427. Returning to 9th Street, the boundary travels north to P Street, where it turns east to include all of Square 397 and those properties fronting 8th Street in Square 425. At Q Street, the boundary runs east to 7th

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 10 Page 2

Street, moving north to intersect with Rhode Island Avenue. The district boundary runs southwest along Rhode Island Avenue, turning south at 11th Street, where the border meets the Greater 14th Street/Logan Circle Historic District. The district lines converge along 11th Street to P Street, down 12th Street, to the alley immediately north of Lot 824 in Square 280. Turning west, the boundary continues along the north line of Lot 824, south along the east line of Lot 830 and west along the south line of Lots 830, 860 and 847, to 13th Street. At 13th Street, the boundary turns south and meets N Street. At N Street, turns east to 12th Street, where it turns south to Massachusetts Avenue. Included within the boundary along Massachusetts are the Church of Ascension and St. Agnes at 1215 Massachusetts Avenue, the dwellings at 1217-1219 and 1200 Massachusetts Avenue, and Reservations 68 and 69 (Edmund Burke and Samuel Gompers Parks) along L Street South. At the intersection of L Street South with 10th Street, the boundary runs north, turning east on L Street North to its place of beginning at 9th Street.

Squares included in whole or part in the Mount Vernon West Historic District are: 279, 280, 282, 283, 312, 313, 314, 315, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 396, 397, 399, 420, 421, and 423, as well as Reservations 68 and 69.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the expanded historic district are comprised of a portion of the much larger community that grew around Mount Vernon Square. Drastic physical changes in the latter part of the 20th century have created two distinct neighborhoods, Mount Vernon Square and Mount Vernon West. Collectively, Mount Vernon was historically known as the Northern Liberties, bounded approximately by 3rd, 15th, G, and O Streets.

Seventh Street and its evolution as a primary commercial and transportation corridor for the city of Washington is essential in the understanding of the Mount Vernon area. The proposed historic district boundary is limited to those properties on the east side 7th Street between K Street at New York Avenue and M Street. The recent demolition of historic resources and construction of the new D.C. Convention Center on the west side of the street in Squares 400, 401, 402, 424, 425, and 426 warrants the exclusion of these squares from the district boundaries. This area is bounded by N Street to the north, 9th Street to the west, 7th Street to the east, and K Street to the south, and includes 8th Street. Squares 396 and 422 were excluded for the late 19th century improvements and the lack of integrity of historic resources. The O Street Market at the corner of O and 7th Streets in Square 422 is individually listed in the National Register and the

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number 10 Page 3

D.C. Inventory of Historic Resources. Terminating the Mount Vernon West boundary line at the center of 7th Street is based on the 1968 redevelopment initiatives of the Shaw Urban Renewal Project and the recent redevelopment of the 7th Street corridor north of M Street. This has resulted in the demolition of historic fabric and the construction of commercial buildings, low-rise apartment housing, and the 1975 Dunbar High School.

Running northeast to southwest, Rhode Island Avenue serves as the northern boundary. The avenue, laid out by L'Enfant in 1791, is a major transportation corridor into the capital, as well as a visual boundary. The neighborhood to the north of Rhode Island Avenue, between 7th and 11th Streets, has experienced the significant adverse effects of demolition and new construction, resulting in the loss of integrity of the remaining resources. Additionally, the historic context and the architectural development of the neighborhood date from a later period of significance.

On the west, the Greater 14th Street/Logan Circle Historic District serves as the boundary for the proposed district. The Greater 14th Street/Logan Circle Historic District has a different architectural, development and social history represented in distinct periods and areas of significance not applicable to Mount Vernon. Fronting Logan Circle and 14th Street are Victorian-era buildings, early 20th century apartment buildings, and national churches that developed in response to their location along important L'Enfant streets and a landscaped reservation (formerly known as Iowa Circle). Fourteenth Street, like 7th Street, was one of the first transportation corridors to be serviced by the streetcar. As such, the architecture and early development phase of the two districts is harmonious. The early to mid-20th century development of 14th Street, however, is related more to the establishment of the street as primary transportation route for automobiles and related resources like the auto showroom. To the south of the Greater 14th Street/Logan Circle Historic District, the Mount Vernon West Historic District boundary follows 12th Street, excluding squares extensively developed by late 20th century apartment buildings that do not contribute to the period of significance.

The southern boundary of the expanded historic district is marked by Massachusetts Avenue at L Street. At one time, Massachusetts Avenue was the northern boundary of downtown Washington, the border beyond which pigs were allowed to roam northward. The avenue is now a major transportation corridor with numerous mid- to late 20th century buildings, thus making Massachusetts Avenue both a visual and physical border.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Vernon West Historic District, Washington, DC

Section number Map Page 1

