

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

### National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any 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 Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks  
other names The Ebony Table; Kushner's Sea Food Grill; Minoux Bakery; Harry C. Johnson & Son; The Kaieteur

#### 2. Location

street & number 3815 Georgia Avenue, NW  not for publication  
city or town Washington  vicinity  
state District of Columbia code DC county District Columbia code 001 zip code 20011

#### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments).

DAVID MALONEY DC SHPO 2/4/2009  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
DC HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE  
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 of the Keeper Patiuk Andrus Date of Action 3/17/2009  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks  
Name of Property

District of Columbia  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal
- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
	0	sites
	0	structures
	0	objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

None

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/restaurant

COMMERCE/bakery

RESIDENTIAL/single dwelling

COMMERCE/furniture construction, (re)finishing, sales

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

VACANT

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

foundation concrete

walls brick; brick and concrete masonry units

\_\_\_\_\_

roof flat, built-up

other

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 7 Page 1

## Description Summary:

The two-story building at 3815 Georgia Avenue was constructed in 1923 as one of a row of four attached brick commercial/residential buildings on the west side of Georgia Avenue, a largely commercial corridor in the Petworth neighborhood of northwest Washington, D.C. The row follows a typical early-twentieth-century commercial building type, where apartments were built over stores with entrances flanking a central show window. As conceived and constructed, the row reflects a cost-conscious efficiency in plan and design in its use of common walls and cornices, and standard window shapes, sizes and types. Architectural detailing was limited to the cornices, parapet roofs, and some decorative cast concrete wall panels.

During the period when 3815 Georgia Avenue achieved its historic significance as Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks, the original storefront was removed and false half-timbering, stucco, and decorative brick nogging were applied to the façade, giving the building a faux Tudor character. This décor, which remained throughout the building's most significant use survives, though the half-timbering at the second story has been covered with a stucco finish. Because the major changes date to within the period of significance, the building retains its integrity of design, materials and craftsmanship.

The abutting companion buildings remain intact to their original design, more or less, giving the subject property its integrity of location and setting. Most significantly, however, the former restaurant and local cultural landmark retains its integrity of feeling and association. The building is presently vacant and awaiting renovation.

## Exterior Description:

As originally constructed in 1923, the two-story brick building at 3815 Georgia Avenue was one of a row of four nearly identical buildings erected as apartments over first-story commercial spaces. Typical of the city's other commercial/residential buildings of the mid-1920s, this row is clad in a blonde-brown façade brick and is characterized by stepped parapets atop essentially flat roofs. Although less highly detailed than earlier Victorian and Beaux-Arts examples, this commercial row is nonetheless characterized by its semi-hexagonal storefronts, its applied sheet-metal cornices on both the primary and storefront rooflines, its brickwork, and its inset cast-concrete decorative wall panels at the second story level, all common in the city's 1920s architecture. The buildings are also typical of the two-part commercial block of the period in that each one originally had two entry doors flanking the central storefront—one for entrance to the ground-floor commercial space, and the second providing access to the upper-story stairs and the apartment(s) above.

The unit at 3815 Georgia has been altered from its original design. In addition to various mechanical, plumbing and electrical upgrades and interior renovations over the years, there have been a number of exterior changes. A fire in 1947 spurred a comprehensive rehabilitation including the reconstruction of the main floor and may

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 7 Page 2

have been responsible for the destruction of the original storefront and the application of a new metal pent roof, along with new face brick and stucco to the scarred façade. This primary elevation was further altered by the application of false half-timbering and decorative brick nogging in herringbone and basket-weave patterns and the introduction of simulated leaded-glass windows to create a Tudor look. Although it is not certain when these alterations took place, it is most probable that they were made when the restaurant changed from Kushner's Restaurant to Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks in 1956, since it is known that Billy Simpson was partial to a Medieval aesthetic.

As it appears currently, the primary (west) elevation facing Georgia Avenue has been altered from its heyday as Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks. The first story retains its central bay of brick nogging and half-timbering to either side of and below a central row of four windows. However, while the window openings are still intact, they lack their simulated leaded-glass, diamond-paned sash that added to the Tudor appearance of the building. The doors to either side of the central bay may date from the Billy Simpson's period of use, based upon their Tudor appearance. They are solid wood doors with a central square opening at eye level with heavy wrought iron grillwork. The doors are boarded up on the exterior, but visible from the interior.

The second-story level above the pent roof has been covered in stucco, though ghosting of the half-timbering indicates that the false timbering is still intact behind the stucco finish. The building signage has also been removed, including the Gothic script lettering on the central window stiles reading "Ebony" and "Table" to identify the upstairs "Ebony Table" lounge at Billy Simpson's.

The building has a number of rear additions that are visible on the west elevation from the alley behind Georgia Avenue. The first addition—a single-story, unadorned, 30-foot-deep, flat-roofed box equal to the 20-foot width of the lot—was erected in 1929, expanding the bakery that was then tenant. In mid 1942, despite the scarcity of building materials during the war, a later tenant reconstructed this addition to add a second story. Then, in 1948 another one-story, jumbo-brick and concrete-block addition filled out the rear of the lot.

### Interior Description:

During its use as Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks, the building included a dining room with knotty pine paneled wood walls on the first story with a kitchen in the rear wing and the exclusive Ebony Table lounge on the second floor. The Ebony Table included the "Gold Coast Bar" illustrated in photographs from the mid-1960s as well as a "light-up" map of Africa on the ceiling. Today, the interior of the former restaurant is in deteriorating condition with a few prominent remnants from its Billy Simpson days, including the original bar. The interior is reached by the door on the south end of the façade that leads to a small vestibule. The vestibule opens directly onto a straight-flight wood stair that leads to the second story or through an interior door on the left that leads to the first story. On the first story, the interior consists of a long open room with terrazzo flooring, a tall 9' 6" ceiling, and knotty pine wood wall paneling from the Billy Simpson era running

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks

---

Name of Property

District of Columbia

---

County and State

Section 7 Page 3

horizontally above a vertical-paneled wood wainscoting. Diagonally placed wood paneling, visible in historic photographs, remains against the rear wall of this main first floor room. A wood shingled mansard roof overhang that projects from the side walls likely dates from its Caribbean bar days. A kitchen, well-lit by a monitor roof, is located at the rear of this front room in the rear wing of the building. Commercial-grade appliances remain, though they are in a dysfunctional state. An exterior sign for The Kaieteur, the building's last occupant, is on the floor propped against the interior side wall of the building.

The straight-flight stair is enclosed on either side by brick walls. It leads up to the second story and former Ebony Table room. This space, also in deteriorating condition, has brick side walls, a dropped acoustical tile ceiling and wood flooring. However, the sinuous bar pictured in a circa 1960s photo, and an important aspect of the exclusive Ebony Table room remains, as do remnants of the smoky mirrored wall behind the bar. Conversely, no vestige of the map of Africa on the ceiling is apparent.

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history.
- B** Property associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- 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)

**Area of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ETHNIC HERITAGE/Black  
SOCIAL HISTORY

**Period of Significance**

1956-1975

**Significant Dates**

1956; 1975

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

William W. "Billy" Simpson

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Walter A. Dunigan  
Julius Wenig; Charles J. Grimes  
John Marcus Hallett; Cladny Construction Company

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

**Previous documentation on files (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 8 Page 1

### Summary Statement of Significance:

Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks and its proprietor played a central role in the social and political culture of the District of Columbia's African American community during the period of transition from segregation to an era of Home Rule with a largely black political leadership. Beginning in 1956 when he opened Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks, William W. "Billy" Simpson met a demand for a fine dining venue for Washington's black middle and upper classes, and in so doing created a meeting place for the African American luminaries of politics, government and entertainment. Simpson led an informal "Round Table" (also known as the "Uptown Forum" or "Billy's Friends") of black Congressmen, journalists, and federal agency officials that met at his exclusive, upstairs Ebony Table to discuss and plan the political and civil rights events of the day. He provided moral, political and material support to the rising black political class and to the causes of the tumultuous 1960s, including the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, the Poor People's Campaign, and the anti-war movement. The Ebony Table lounge also became a favorite resort of Washington's corps of African diplomats, often not warmly welcomed by "white" establishments. Simpson was successful in diverse enterprises and a strong booster of African American business and self-help efforts and of economic development in prominently black neighborhoods. He challenged discrimination in hiring and later championed the cause of federal aid to Washington's minority businesses.

As his primary endeavor, the property's use and the man himself are inseparable. The restaurant was a cultural and networking center, and Simpson was its guiding genius. The property meets National Register Criterion A, for its association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of the District's history and particularly of its African American community, and Criterion B, for its association with the lives of significant persons, namely Simpson himself and the many leaders and entertainers who he befriended and who frequented his establishment.

The building at 3815 Georgia Avenue, the former home of Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks, is a typical commercial row building of the period which Simpson renovated during his ownership for his purpose and to his taste. Despite some changes, including stucco, painting and replacement windows on the first story, and its current deteriorating condition, the exterior retains, overall, the appearance of its heyday. The building thus retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials and workmanship. More significantly, however, the building retains integrity of feeling and association. Indeed, the building is still considered locally as "Billy Simpson's" despite the thirty years that have lapsed since it closed in the late 1970s.

The Period of Significance extends from 1956 when Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks moved into the building to 1975 when proprietor Billy Simpson died and the restaurant began its demise. Because the end-date of the property's Period of Significance is less than 50 years old and the property is of exceptional importance to the city's African American culture, the property meets Criterion Consideration G.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks
Name of Property
District of Columbia
County and State

Section 8 Page 2

## Resource History and Historic Context:

### Building Construction and Use History:

The two-story brick building at 3815 Georgia Avenue is one of a row of four nearly identical buildings each constructed as an apartment over a ground-floor commercial space. The development was a speculative one, constructed by builder and real estate investor Walter A. Dunigan in a short 5 ½ months and seemingly without the assistance of a registered architect. Dunigan had been associated with his brother, prominent builder D.J. Dunigan until 1919 when he went into construction on his own. In 1920, he briefly partnered with Victor Cahill in building and general real estate, and within four years he appears to have become one of Washington's more prolific builders and a charter member of the Operative Builders Association of the District of Columbia, which included all of the major builders of the day. Before the late 1920s, when he became heavily involved in suburban residential construction in North Cleveland Park, Marietta Park and North Chevy Chase Park, Dunigan's most significant projects appear to have been rows and stores in Petworth and Columbia Heights. The construction permit for his Georgia Avenue commission erroneously recorded Dunigan as owner of the lots, but their true owner was Florence Barbour, who had previously subdivided much of "Block 28" of Petworth.<sup>1</sup>

By this time, Georgia Avenue was being heavily developed with a fine-grained mixture of residential and commercial uses, spurred by the 1890s electrification of the Georgia Avenue streetcar line. Development in the early twentieth century may have proved too rapid. While the hundreds of Petworth row houses built by Morris Cafritz and others in the mid 1920s found eager buyers, many of the commercial spaces strung the length of the avenue were underutilized, a problem that remains today. Until 1932, half of the storefronts in the 3813-3819 row were, on average, vacant in any given year. As the Depression and war years led to increased demand for housing, Petworth's residential streets and its commercial rows began to fill to capacity. In general, however, the upstairs units were often occupied by persons unrelated to the ground-floor use.

Following the 1923 completion of the commercial row, Florence Barbour sold 3815 Georgia Avenue to Anna S. Thomas. Thomas retained the property for fifteen years, becoming landlady to its first tenant, Eugène François Minoux. Minoux was a 36-year-old, francophone native of Alsace-Lorraine who emigrated in 1906. He married an Irish immigrant shortly after his arrival in America and for several years operated a bakery at Jamestown, Rhode Island. Minoux, his wife Helen, and their eldest daughter moved to Washington in 1914. The family operated a little ice cream shop or confectionery at 812 H Street, NE and then at 2475 18<sup>th</sup> Street, NW. In 1924, Eugene opened a bakery on the ground floor of 3815 Georgia Avenue. It appears to have been a

<sup>1</sup> District of Columbia Building Permit #5575, December 12, 1922; *Washington Post*, February 18, 1920, May 27, 1923, November 7, 1926, May 22, 1927, December 9, 1928 and April 25, 1959; District of Columbia Surveyor's Book 69, p. 140; District of Columbia Deed Book 4789, pp. 394-396.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 8 Page 3

small operation whereby the family lived over the business until 1935. During this period, the neighboring stores housed groceries, a delicatessen, a dry goods store, a cigar shop, a restaurant, and a liquor store at 3813 that would remain under a succession of proprietors from 1934 until 1980. Perhaps the commercial neighbor of longest tenure, located just north of this row, was the photography lab and studio of Walter Hicks that endured from 1927 to 1983. Eugene Minoux emerged as a leader among his fellow shopkeepers, serving as president of the Georgia Avenue Business Men's Association beginning in at least 1930 and elected treasurer of Washington's Federation of Business Men's Associations in 1932, posts he retained until his move far up Georgia Avenue across from Walter Reed Hospital by the spring of 1935. While at 3815 Georgia Avenue, Minoux made several mechanical upgrades to his space for baking purposes and erected the building's first addition, a simple one-story, brick, rear wing designed by Julius Wenig and constructed by Charles J. Grimes.<sup>2</sup>

Eugene Minoux's bakery was followed by the little cabinetmaking firm of Harry C. Johnson & Son, founded 1906. The senior Johnson had brought his son, Harry Jr., into the business in 1920. After only three years on Georgia Avenue, the Johnsons moved to the rear of 2110 5<sup>th</sup> Street, NE, where the business remained until 1970, concentrating on furniture finishing. The younger Johnson moved it to Bethesda in 1970, and then retired and sold out, including the firm name, in 1972. His successors relocated to Gaithersburg.<sup>3</sup>

In 1935, about the time the Johnsons first leased 3815 Georgia Avenue, a new restaurant opened next door at 3817. Its proprietor was Aaron Kushner, a Russian Jew born April 14, 1901, who emigrated as a child and settled with his family in Baltimore. He served in the U.S. Army infantry in World War I and then moved to the Washington area with his wife, Edythe, in 1925. By 1930, Aaron and Edythe resided on Fir Street in Mount Rainier, Maryland and operated a nearby lunchroom or "barbecue stand." By the mid-1930s, it appears that the Kushners took over a restaurant at a second location, 3000 Rhode Island Avenue. The ownership was in the name of Aaron Kushner's younger sister, Esther, who had been a waitress at the Mount Rainer branch for several years. In 1935, they moved the business next door to Harry C. Johnson & Son, taking over a seafood restaurant and lunch counter. The city directories again suggest that Esther Kushner assumed a primary role at the new place, but Aaron, living around the corner on Quincy Street, was identified as manager. When the Johnsons opened their new cabinet shop on 5<sup>th</sup> Street, NE, the Kushners took their former space at 3815 Georgia, as it was larger than their own next door.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> District of Columbia Deed Book 5052, p. 277; District of Columbia Deed Book 7201, p. 145; United States Census, District of Columbia Population Schedules, 1920; United States Census, District of Columbia Population Schedules, 1930; Sampson & Murdock Co., *The Providence Directory and Rhode Island Business Directory for the Year Commencing May 1, 1912*, (Providence: Sampson & Murdock Co., 1912), p. 858; R.L. Polk & Co., *Boyd's District of Columbia Directory*, 1915, 1924, 1925 and 1936; *Washington Post*, July 21, 1930, October 31, 1932, April 2, 1933, July 11, 1933, October 26, 1933, July 30, 1934 and October 19, 1934; District of Columbia Building Permit #121745, March 20, 1929.

<sup>3</sup> R.L. Polk & Co., *Boyd's District of Columbia Directory*, 1936, 1938; *Washington Post*, October 24, 1947, November 27, 1967, March 30, 1981 and August 23, 1990.

<sup>4</sup> R.L. Polk & Co., *Boyd's District of Columbia Directory*, 1935, 1936; *Washington Post*, November 24, 1931, November 25, 1931, January 22, 1972 and July 20, 1991; United States Social Security Death Index; United States Census, Maryland Population Schedules 1930.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 8 Page 4

The Kushners' landlady was Helen F. Ingersoll, who had acquired the property less than one year prior to the move. The new location clearly suited the Kushners who purchased the building in February 1938. Like the Minoux family, and possibly the Johnsons, the Kushners lived over their business for a time, moving out to Maryland in 1943 and then renting out the upstairs apartment(s). By the end of 1940 Aaron Kushner was personally firmly in charge of the restaurant, and unlike its earlier Maryland counterpart, it was now specializing in the service of seafood under the name "Kushner Sea Food Grill." He "took pride in traveling daily to the Eastern shore to pick up clams, oysters and crabs. He always insisted on making the trip himself." Known for his hard-shell crabs, Kushner also boasted that "People tell us our lobsters are the best they've ever had." The Kushners set out to increase the size of the building, presumably to add to the upstairs apartment, having the Cladny Construction Company erect a John Marcus Hallett-designed addition atop Minoux's earlier one. A 1947 fire that originated in the basement collapsed the building's first floor, requiring reconstruction and renovation and providing the opportunity for a late 1948 addition that filled out the depth of the lot. The restaurant must have been out of commission for nearly a year. Nonetheless, and despite the fact that they had long shuttered the Mount Rainier stand, the Kushners were successful enough that they were able to expand into another Maryland location, 8523 Piney Branch Road in Silver Spring, around the end of February 1951.<sup>5</sup>

### Billy Simpson and his House of Seafood and Steaks

While the Kushners retained their Silver Spring restaurant until after Aaron Kushner's death in 1972, they sold their Georgia Avenue affair to William W. Simpson in the autumn of 1956. "Billy" Simpson, born 1914, was a native Washingtonian. As a youngster, he overcame a serious speech impediment, only to become known later for his loquaciousness:<sup>6</sup>

Ironically, a man who could communicate with such ease to so many people suffered a terrible speech impediment during his youth that elicited cruelty from other children. But when he reached the eighth grade at Dunbar High School, he read in history class about how the great philosopher Socrates used pebbles to correct his speech. Simpson likewise filled his mouth with marbles, went to a Washington reservoir and "hollered" until he was able to speak clearly. He termed it a miracle. Years later, he became a member of a highly successful debate team at Miner's Teachers College...<sup>7</sup>

Because of his parents' illness and a lack of funds, Simpson was forced to drop out of college after only two years. It was the Great Depression, and Billy went to work for the Government Printing Office before seeing duty in the Pacific with the U.S. Navy during World War II. He then returned to his old job as "stock keeper"

<sup>5</sup> District of Columbia Deed Book 7176, p. 527; District of Columbia Deed Book 7201, p. 145; District of Columbia Building Permit #308953, July 9, 1948; District of Columbia Building Permit #304678, April 1, 1948; District of Columbia Building Permit #305794, April 27, 1948; District of Columbia Plumbing Permit #30962, April 30, 1948; District of Columbia Building Permit #308955, July 9, 1948; *Washington Post*, April 5, 1942, June 21, 1942, December 25, 1947 and March 7, 1951.

<sup>6</sup> District of Columbia Deed Book 10757, p. 319; *Washington Post*, April 5, 1964 and July 20, 1991.

<sup>7</sup> *Jet*, September 18, 1975.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 8 Page 5

until at least 1948, saving enough capital to open his own restaurant or club, the Robin Hood Dell at 652 Newton Street, NW.<sup>8</sup>

For several years [it was] the favorite spot of a large segment of Washington's café set, the local club followers and other colorful personalities... The spot had been open only a short time before the patrons found the address of the location a contagious one and so the short name for the place became merely "652"...<sup>9</sup>

This first establishment was later characterized as a "licker club," and Billy as a fellow who paid off police to keep the place open after hours. But Simpson had aspirations to run a bigger, classier place to cater to Washington's African American elite. He purchased Aaron Kushner's Georgia Avenue restaurant and reopened it as Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks on November 1, 1956. Simpson may have retained Kushner's chef as well, partly accounting for Simpson's shift in emphasis from private, late-night club to a full-fledged restaurant specializing in seafood. The Kushners retained ownership of the building and land, however, until finally selling to Simpson and his wife in 1973. Billy brought a few things with him from "652," namely, a well-stocked bar; a "652" sandwich special that kept alive the name of the old place; and a preference for a medieval motif, expressed in the false half-timbering and Gothic-script signage applied to the façade of the new restaurant. Simpson's served shrimp, fish, lobster, crabs, oysters, steaks, chops, roasts, liver, chicken, sandwiches, salads and appetizers. Its "full line of choice food stuffs... rivals the specialization of a 'Hogates' in D.C. or the 'Hungry I' in San Francisco." But it became truly famous for its "fiery" New Orleans gumbo, the specialty of chef "Miss Mary." The first-floor interior was appointed in "elegant knotted pine," a wall finish typical of the 1950s, and the bartender was always attired in a tuxedo.<sup>10</sup>

The restaurant was an immediate success. "When you visit the spot you'll readily agree that the meals served at Billy Simpson's compares with the finest served in the city," raved one reviewer. "You'll find an atmosphere, decor, and excellent cuisine similar to that featured at Harvey's, Longchamps, O'Donnell's and other seafood and steak houses." There were few other upscale restaurants to attract prominent African Americans. Perhaps most notable was Keys on 7<sup>th</sup> Street near S, and the Harrison Café on Florida Avenue, which had been around since the 1910s. Simpson's was one of few black-owned restaurants that lacked entertainment. "Why should I pay entertainers to draw people here?" asked Billy. "I got 'em coming through the portals after my steak and shrimp." Black professionals flocked to the restaurant; it was across the street from medical offices, so many doctors came in. "The young, middle-aged and elderly are drawn to Billy Simpson's." Families generally came to Simpson's for Sunday suppers. The rest of the week, it especially attracted important figures and up-and-comers of the government, political and entertainment worlds. An *Ebony* spread in February 1959 featured the

<sup>8</sup> *Washington Post*, September 1, 1975; William W. Simpson scrapbooks; R.L. Polk & Co., *Boyd's District of Columbia Directory*, 1948.

<sup>9</sup> News clipping in William W. Simpson scrapbooks.

<sup>10</sup> Personal communication with Robert Artisst; *Washington Post*, November 1, 1975; District of Columbia Deed Book 10757, p. 319; District of Columbia Deed Book 13495, p. 296; *Ebony* Table menu, 1977; William W. Simpson scrapbooks; personal communication with Perry Queen.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 8 Page 6

restaurant as a destination for attractive and fashionable single women. Stars, such as comedians Redd Foxx and Dick Gregory, would drop in after performing on U Street. Ella Fitzgerald came in regularly with her entourage during the early days, a fan of bartender Perry Queen's version of a "Moscow Mule." Sidney Poitier visited, in town for political events such as President Kennedy's inauguration. It was Simpson's political and government connections, however, that put his restaurant at the center of the network of Washington's African American establishment.<sup>11</sup>

Billy Simpson was already connected, perhaps from his days at the 652 Club. Close friend Rev. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. performed the wedding of Billy to Edith Berkley only a year after the new restaurant opened, and Congressman Charles Diggs stood as best man. Powell, of course, had been a powerful civil rights leader in the 1930s and 1940s, crusading for jobs and housing for African Americans in New York City. He was the first black man elected to City Council and Representative from the 22<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District (Harlem) since 1945. He had been critical of the Democrats weak platform on civil rights in 1956 and, as chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, spearheaded the passage of Kennedy's and Johnson's social programs. Charles C. Diggs was another leading spokesman for civil rights in Congress. Elected from Detroit in 1954, he served a total of 26 years and was the first chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus. This relationship between Simpson, Powell and Diggs may have been the seed of Simpson's centrality among the African American elites of the world of politics and government. After all, they needed places to meet to relax, to discuss, to make plans. Simpson's restaurant soon became a veritable *salon* or political forum.<sup>12</sup>

The chances are that any issue of political importance to Negroes here is fully debated—and possibly settled—at Billy's long before you hear about it. [The restaurant] is home base for one of the town's most potent political forums..."

The word among Negro politicians is, first you read it in the papers, then you go to Billy's to find out what it means, how much of it is true, and what can be done about it.

Many of the participants have been "Hatched out" of active politics because of their Government jobs. But even the Hatch Act doesn't bar informal political discussions, and members of the Round Table at Billy's can discuss with the best of them.

"Charter" members of the informal forum include Simpson himself, Rep. Charles C. Diggs (D-Mich.); Ed Sylvester of the Labor Department's international affairs staff; Griffin Davis, USIA

<sup>11</sup> Personal communication with Robert Artisst; *Washington Post*, December 5, 1971; personal communication with John Moore;  
<sup>12</sup> Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adam\\_Clayton\\_Powell,\\_Jr](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adam_Clayton_Powell,_Jr) and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles\\_Diggs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Diggs), 2008; All Politics webpage, CNN, <http://www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/1998/08/25/ap/diggs.obit/>, 2008; Tony Chapelle, "Adam Clayton Poweel, Jr., Black Power Between Heaven and Hell," in *The Black Collegian Online*, <http://www.black-collegian.com/african/adam.shtml> 2008.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 8 Page 7

staffer; Bob Kitchen of the AID central office; Sam Westerfield, Treasury Department economist, and Chuck Stone, former editor of the Afro-American....

No woman has held a full membership in the forum, although a few—notably New York Democratic Congressman Adam Clayton Powell's chief clerk Maxine Dargans—are what amount to associate members.<sup>13</sup>

In 1965, Simpson held a benefit for Powell after the latter had been ordered to pay a \$52,000 judgment for libel. The party was organized by jazz musician Lionel Hampton.<sup>14</sup>

“[P]ractically every Negro member of Congress... is a Billy Simpson habitue. Rep. Augustus F. Hawkins (D-Calif.) a freshman congressman had been in Washington less than 12 hours when he found himself having a steak at Billy's.” Another of the regulars was Representative Robert N.C. Nix, Sr. of Philadelphia, although the Congressional clientele was hardly limited to African Americans. “Other frequent guests include Reps. James Roosevelt (D-Calif.),... John Kyl (R-Iowa) and Ed Edmonson (D-Okla).”<sup>15</sup>

“Billy's Friends,” the “Uptown forum” or “Round Table” was not merely a debating club. The group was particularly supportive of local politician Frank D. Reeves, legal counsel for the Southern Christian Leadership Council, a Howard University professor, a founder of the National Conference of Black Lawyers, and one of the legal team that had won the battle for school desegregation in the 1950s. Reeves was the first African American appointed to the District's Board of Commissioners and the first black member of the Democratic National Committee. In December 1963, he agreed to the Democratic Party Central Committee's request that he not stand for re-election as Committeeman for the District but “later reconsidered after the Round Table launched a ‘draft Reeves’ movement.” According to a former bartender, Reeves was discussed at Simpson's restaurant as a potential first Mayor-Commissioner for the District, a position to which Walter Washington was ultimately appointed. And in 1964, when Louisiana Senator Allen J. Ellender suggested that low registration in the District indicated that its African American population was indifferent to voting, Simpson's forum mapped out a registration effort prior to that year's primaries. “It was partly a result of that session that the final registration weekend set a District record, in spite of bad weather.” Billy would later be a strong political supporter of and contributor to both Mayor Walter Washington—who held his first post-appointment meeting at the restaurant—and the Rev. Walter E. Fauntroy, an organizer of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom and the District's first Congressman. Fauntroy conducted a number of meetings there, including a celebration of the electoral defeat of South Carolina Representative John McMillan, a hated chairman of the House District Committee. Simpson's restaurant would also serve as Jesse Jackson's headquarters during the 1968 march of

<sup>13</sup> *Washington Post*, April 5, 1964.

<sup>14</sup> *Washington Post*, April 6, 1965.

<sup>15</sup> *Washington Post*, April 5, 1964.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 8 Page 8

the Poor People's Campaign. As early as 1973, it was said that "some of the most important decisions concerning black Washington were made there."<sup>16</sup>

It was the corps of bright African American government agency officials struggling against the racial glass ceiling that filled the restaurant's seats. Regulars included Carl Rowan, later a newspaper columnist but then Deputy Secretary of State, ambassador to Finland and director of the U.S. Information Agency; George Weaver, Assistant Secretary of Labor for International Affairs; Franklin H. Williams, an organizer of the Peace Corps; and Kennedy's associate press secretary Andrew Hatcher. Simpson was a strong supporter of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, and perhaps his greatest professional and social coup was co-hosting with Charles Diggs and Captain William S. Bourne at Andrews Air Force Base a "New Frontiers" Party in 1961 to welcome the new administration and especially its black officials. Guests included scores of agency officials and staffers, presidential aides, military officers, congressmen and congressional staffers, African diplomats, journalists, Howard University faculty, and District leaders. Billy Simpson would later be invited to dinner at the Johnson White House, and he was the first African American restaurateur to cater a State Department conference, in 1962.<sup>17</sup>

Although Billy Simpson never ran for office, his influence was widespread:

[Y]et hardly anything of significance to Washington—and most particularly to black Washington—came to fruition without Billy Simpson's significant, albeit non-public role in it....

Sometimes his role was advisory, sometimes catalytic—getting the right people together to move a plan of action forward, easing political difficulties, helping a reporter meet the right news sources.

Nearly always he operated in such a way that few besides the activists knew of his involvement. Thus, the puzzlement [at his 1975 funeral] when old-line SNCC workers, CORE pickets, embattled judges, activist clergymen, struggling and successful businessmen and principals... all took to the microphones to tell their favorite Billy Simpson stories.<sup>18</sup>

Simpson did serve as a D.C. delegate to the Democratic National Conventions of 1968 and 1972 and was long a champion of home rule for the District—an important topic of conversation and political strategizing at the restaurant. In fact, the District of Columbia Home Rule Act was passed by Congress in 1973 during the heyday of Billy Simpson's as a key meeting place of politicians. The Act, which provided for an elected mayor and a

<sup>16</sup> *Washington Post*, July 27, 1973, October 27, 1970, July 2, 1974 and September 28, 1986; personal communication with Perry Queen.

<sup>17</sup> *The Capital Spotlight*, August 11, 1961; William W. Simpson scrapbooks; *Washington Post*, April 5, 1964 and July 27, 1973; *Washington Afro-American*, December 15, 1962.

<sup>18</sup> *Washington Post*, September 8, 1975.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 8 Page 9

13-member Council of the District of Columbia, restored a certain amount of political independence to the city for the first time since 1874 when Congress abolished the city's Territorial government in favor of direct rule. Despite this important Act, Congress still retains significant oversight of the District's local affairs and could revoke the city's home rule charter at any time. Because of this lack of independence, home rule is still a controversial issue between residents of the District of Columbia and Congress. The controversy is exacerbated by the fact that residents of the District of Columbia have no voting representation in Congress.

Billy Simpson was a lifetime member of the NAACP, and as such was involved in the major civil rights activities of his era, keeping his place open all night during the 1963 March on Washington and providing food for participants of the Poor People's Campaign march five years later. "He once personally delivered a box of fried chicken at 3 a.m. to a group of citizens who had taken over a military base... 'in the name of the people.'" Activist and comedian Dick Gregory later recounted his own protests and hunger strikes in Washington in the 1960s: "When I think of Washington, D.C... I think of Billy Simpson. He balanced out the Klan, the war. The whole time I was on a liquid fast and never ate, I would come in there just to relax with him." Monsignor Joshua Mundell eulogized Simpson as the city's "unelected mayor" of the pre-Home-Rule era. Billy was one of the organizers of the Emergency Committee of D.C. Black Businessmen and Professionals, which called for a federal inquiry into police shootings in 1968. And nearing the first anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., white merchants called Simpson for advice as to whether to close up shop in observance. Just as important, other black civic activists gravitated to the restaurant as a hospitable meeting place. One quoted in 1971 revealed that "If I have a meeting with a civic group, it's Billy's or Murphy's." School board member-elect Marion Barry explained his allegiance to Simpson's—"I heard about Billy Simpson's long before I came to Washington.... It was supposed to be the place for blacks, and I came soon after I got in town"—continuing that, "The only time I don't go to a black place is when I don't want to talk business..." Although Simpson was progressive, his place was soon considered "establishment," that is, part of the African American establishment. On the night Barry was interviewed at the upstairs Gold Coast bar, he was "flanked by an insurance executive and a Labor Department official. At a nearby table was a group of young lawyers—men and women—who had stopped for cocktails after a meeting of the Howard University Alumni Law Club."<sup>19</sup>

By the early 1960s, Billy Simpson's restaurant became a comfortable meeting place for the African diplomatic corps in a still segregated city. Staffers from the embassies of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Ghana had attended Simpson's New Frontiers Party, and Simpson had since made several "personal loans to strapped African students" in Washington. Interested in African affairs, Simpson and his wife, Edith, who was by then vice president of the business, remodeled the upstairs space in honor of the continent's free nations. Paneled in African mahogany, this "Ebony Table" room became something of an exclusive club within the restaurant and the new home of Billy's "Round Table." The focal points were the "Gold Coast" bar (still intact) backed with mirrors and a relief map of Africa on the ceiling, with little lights demarking the capitals of the nations' capitals.

<sup>19</sup> *Washington Post*, April 2, 1969, December 5, 1971, July 27, 1973, September 1, 1975, September 5, 1975 and September 8, 1975.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 8 Page 10

A crimson carpet and ebony tables and chairs, upholstered in gold, completed the picture. A sizeable entrance canopy and new signage were added to the building's facade. Eleven ambassadors or their representatives attended the grand opening June 17, 1962. For his hospitality and support, the Liberian government honored Simpson with its "Star of Redemption" medal in 1964 while he was on a seventeen-day tour of that nation as guest of its treasury secretary and attendee at the inauguration of President William V.S. Tubman.<sup>20</sup>

A philanthropist, Billy Simpson supported his community in many ways beyond the gustatory or political. He served on the boards of the Howard University Cancer Research Center, the Washington Urban League, and the Anthony Bowen YMCA, for the latter of which "he headed a fund-raising drive to provide free memberships for 5,000 youths." He also sponsored little league baseball teams at the Parkview and Raymond playgrounds and adult bowling teams.<sup>21</sup>

Billy Simpson was ambitious as well as community-spirited. He strove for personal success and the advancement of African American business interests. Racial uplift and community uplift were motivations for his push to broaden borrowing opportunities for African Americans while on the board of the Independent Federal Building and Loan Association and for his spearheading, with Mayor Washington, the successful effort to land a Safeway supermarket on Georgia Avenue. Billy networked through such relationships as with the Chamber of Commerce's executive committee, which would sometimes have lunch meetings at the Ebony Table, and Berkley Burrell, a regular and director of National League of Businessmen. By 1960, he was diversifying his business interests into new fields. A fledgling National Negro Licensed Beverage Association brought together tavern owners for their mutual benefit. Simpson was elected the first vice president of the Washington chapter and thereafter led a fight against "the unfair, racially restrictive employment policy and practice of local beer and liquor distributors."<sup>22</sup>

There are about 128 salesmen employed by local distributors; only two are Negroes. There are also an approximate 212 drivers employed. The Negro community represents about 60 per cent of business in this area; and its time that we get our rightfully proportionate share of the employment opportunities."<sup>23</sup>

Failing to persuade a local distributor to open up job opportunities to African Americans, Simpson successfully urged the chapter's boycott of that company's products. One of the results was an offer to Simpson from the Sunshine Brewing Company of Reading, Pennsylvania to distribute its products in Washington. He accepted, and set up the aptly named Pioneer Sales Company and soon had a team of black salesmen and black drivers in his delivery fleet of "Sunshine Beer" Jeeps and Volkswagen van. "The name 'Billy Simpson,' ..." one

<sup>20</sup> *The Capital Spotlight*, August 11, 1961; William W. Simpson scrapbooks; *Washington Post* April 5, 1964; *Jet* September 18, 1975.

<sup>21</sup> *Washington Post*, September 1, 1975 and September 4, 1975; William W. Simpson scrapbooks.

<sup>22</sup> *Washington Post*, July 27, 1973 and September 1, 1975; personal communication with Robert Artis; William W. Simpson scrapbooks.

<sup>23</sup> Undated Agnes C. Kendrick "Off the Record" column in William W. Simpson scrapbooks.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 8 Page 11

columnist predicted, "will one day be lauded along with John (Whitelaw Hotel) Lewis, Jesse (Industrial Bank) Mitchell, John R. Pinkett, Thomas Parks, Barrington (Henry Oil Co.) Henry, and others credited with having pioneered and broken new trails in business in our town." Not everyone was complimentary. Simpson directed to the Chamber of Commerce a strongly worded request for censure of an African American member of the board who had disparaged Pioneer Sales as "just another Negro business, operating on insufficient funds, that cannot last." In his memorandum, he first pointed out that he had already rejected offers to buy stock in his company.<sup>24</sup>

"I must also comment on the irony in the officer's attitude toward 'Just another Negro business.' Had Pioneer Sales been financed primarily by white people, then this same officer undoubtedly would have accused us of being 'owned by white' and a not a genuine Negro business. Since the officer himself is a Negro and operates a business, does he solely own his business or is it something other than a 'Negro business'?"

...Does the D.C. Chamber of Commerce believe it a fitting and proper thing for an officer—or for that matter, any member—to publicly make remarks which are derogatory to our collective efforts as Negro business men? Have we advanced so little down the road to economic equality that we cannot appreciate the need for unity instead of personal bickering and under-handed sneers at ourselves?

...[O]ur task is to grow, develop, expand—not criticize, denounce, or ridicule. The latter only serves to reduce our effectiveness and make it easier for whites to dominate business in the Negro community.... But we can grow by combining resources in exactly the same manner as have the Jews, the Irish, and the Italians."<sup>25</sup>

By 1973, Simpson also led a group of black businessmen that owned a half interest in the joint venture Capital Area Transit Advertising Associates that bid on a multi-million-dollar contract to advertise on Metro buses and in the rail system. After more than a year, and despite political pressure to at least provide a share of the opportunity to the local group, Metro apparently chose instead New York-based Transportation Displays, Inc., the largest transportation advertising agency in the country.<sup>26</sup>

Simpson also set out to expand his core business, the restaurant, to a second location, the Southwest waterfront. Because urban renewal of that quadrant had displaced thousands of African American residents and scores of businesses, the Redevelopment Land Agency ultimately granted waterfront leases for restaurants to at least one former Southwest seafood restaurant and to an African American group partly controlled by Simpson. The group, Brookland Enterprises, Inc., was founded by 1970, partly funded by federal anti-poverty aid for minority

<sup>24</sup> William W. Simpson scrapbooks.

<sup>25</sup> William W. Simpson scrapbooks.

<sup>26</sup> *Washington Post*, March 9, 1973, May 4, 1973, May 11, 1973, May 31, 1973 and April 5, 1974.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 8 Page 12

businesses. In November of that year, the group, the only all-black developer involved in the urban renewal, revealed plans for a three-story, \$1.7- to 2-million, 725-seat seafood restaurant on the leased property to be operated by Simpson. The lease was signed in December, but the facility was still many months away from opening even at the time of Simpson's death in late 1975.<sup>27</sup> Brookland Enterprises retains the leasehold today, but without a branch establishment of Simpson's, it rents to another restaurant tenant.

Billy Simpson's success is apparent in the progression of photographs taken after his marriage to Edith which show his "slightly rotund picture of good looks." Indeed, good living may have contributed to his untimely death by heart attack as he attended the Colorado Springs appointment of Gen. Daniel "Chappie" James, Jr. to command of the North American Air Defense Command and the Aerospace Defense Command. James, a heroic Tuskegee Airman, was the first African American to achieve four-star rank—and was an old friend of Simpson's.<sup>28</sup> Billy's funeral drew 800 mourners to Shaw's Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, among them all of the African American luminaries of the local and federal governments. Within weeks, the Board of Education was considering naming a new school after him.<sup>29</sup>

Simpson's widow and business partner, Edith, made a go of the restaurant for a few more years. But without Billy, the place lost its guiding spirit and its cachet. Outmigration from Washington's urban neighborhoods only intensified after the 1968 riots, creating a more difficult environment for upscale entrepreneurs along the city's major corridors. More important was the continuing integration of business and social life, which encouraged African Americans to patronize downtown businesses and more posh "white" establishments. In 1977 Edith Simpson announced that "Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks (Soul food, too) is still under its original ownership." She encouraged continued patronage by offering a free drink coupon with the purchase of lunch or dinner. After the restaurant closed in the late 1970s, the mortgage was apparently not kept up, and the holders of the note sold the property to a group of investors, Royston DeSouza, Winslow Vickerie and Lennox Douglass (who formed D.D.V. Associates a decade later) and their wives, in 1980.

Many neighborhoods had failed to integrate as quickly as eating establishments did, and by that time, many residents could justifiably complain that Washington no longer possessed "a single fancy black restaurant." After a couple years' vacancy, 3815 Georgia Avenue was leased to another restaurant, The Kaieteur, which served Caribbean cuisine and offered dancing in the popular upstairs lounge. The restaurant reflected the influx of another generation of newcomers to the neighborhood; from 1988 to 1991, the upstairs occupant of the

<sup>27</sup> *Washington Post*, November 6, 1970, March 20, 1973, December 24, 1974 and September 5, 1975.

<sup>28</sup> William W. Simpson scrapbooks; *Washington Post*, April 5, 1964, September 1, 1975 and September 5, 1975.

<sup>29</sup> *Washington Post*, September 5, 1975; *Washington Afro-American*, September 20, 1975.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 8 Page 13

neighboring 3813 Georgia was "Organization Caribbean," presumably an ethnic advocacy or cultural group, and another Caribbean restaurant later occupied its ground floor. In the year 2002, partly in satisfaction of a debt to the District of Columbia government, D.D.V. Associates sold 3815 Georgia Avenue to the Department of Housing and Community Development. The property, again vacant, now awaits redevelopment, with a request for proposals having been recently released by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development.<sup>30</sup> In September 2008, Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks was listed as an Historic Landmark in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites.

<sup>30</sup> Haines and Company, Inc., *Haines Washington and Suburban Criss-Cross Directory*, 1977-1991; *Washington Post*, March 20, 1980 and May 5, 1982; William W. Simpson scrapbooks.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 9 Page 1

### Major Bibliographical References:

All Politics, CNN. <http://www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/1998/08/25/ap/diggs.obit/>. 2008.

Robert Artisst, personal communication, August 14, 2008.

*The Capital Spotlight.*

Chapelle, Tony. "Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.: Black Power Between Heaven and Hell." On *The Black Collegian Online*, <http://www.black-collegian.com/african/adam.shtml>. 2008

*The Chicago Daily Defender.*

R.L. Polk & Co. *Boyd's District of Columbia Directory*. Multiple years.

District of Columbia Deed Books. District of Columbia Recorder of Deeds.

District of Columbia Building Permits, July 1, 1915 to September 7, 1949. Entry 97. Records of the Government of the District of Columbia. Record Group 351. National Archives and Records Administration.

*Ebony.*

Haines and Company, Inc. *Haines Washington and Suburban Criss-Cross Directory*. Multiple years.

*Jet.*

John Moore, personal communication, June 14, 2008.

*The National Leader.*

Perry Queen, personal communication, August 12, 2008.

Sanborn Map Company insurance atlases for Washington, D.C., 1926 and 1960.

William W. Simpson scrapbooks.

Dolphin G. Thompson, *A Picture Guide to Black America in Washington, D.C.* Washington, D.C. Brownson Printing Company. 1976.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 9 Page 2

*Ticker Tape USA.*

The United States Census, 1920 and 1930.

United States Social Security Death Index.

*The Washington Afro-American.*

*The Washington Post.*

*The Washington Star.*

Wikipedia.

Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks  
Name of Property

District of Columbia  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.04 acres

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	1 8	3 2 4 5 5 5	4 3 1 1 8 6 1	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4			

See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Timothy A. Jones, Timothy J. Dennee and Kim Williams (editor)  
Organization DC Historic Preservation Office date October 2008  
street & number 801 North Capitol Street, NE telephone 202-442-8800  
city or town Washington state D.C. zip code 20001

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

- X 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

- X 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 SHPO or FPO)

name District of Columbia Department of Housing and Community Development  
street & number 801 North Capitol Street, NE, Suite 8000 telephone 202-442-7200  
city or town Washington state D.C. zip code 20002-4202

**Paperwork Reduction 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 the 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 Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 10 Page 1

---

## Verbal Boundary Description:

The 20-foot-by 94.1-foot Lot 52 in Square 3028 of the District of Columbia.

## Boundary Justification:

The boundary circumscribes the original and current lot occupied by the contributing building. The extent and designation of the property have not changed since at least 1922, i.e., since before the building was erected.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

## PHOTOGRAPHS

*The following information is common to all photographs:*

Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks  
3815 Georgia Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C.  
Kim Williams, photographer  
November 2008  
DC Historic Preservation Office (DC HPO)

- 1) General view of commercial row with 3815 in the center of row (southern one of the two center buildings); view looking northeast across Georgia Avenue  
1 of 8
- 2) General view of row looking southeast across Georgia Avenue  
2 of 8
- 3) West elevation; view looking east from across Georgia Avenue, NW  
3 of 8
- 4) East (rear) elevation; view looking west from alley  
4 of 8
- 5) Interior of first floor; view looking west  
5 of 8
- 6) Interior, first floor, detail of door (boarded up on exterior)  
6 of 8
- 7) Interior, stair to second floor  
7 of 8
- 8) Interior, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor showing "Gold Coast Bar"  
8 of 8



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

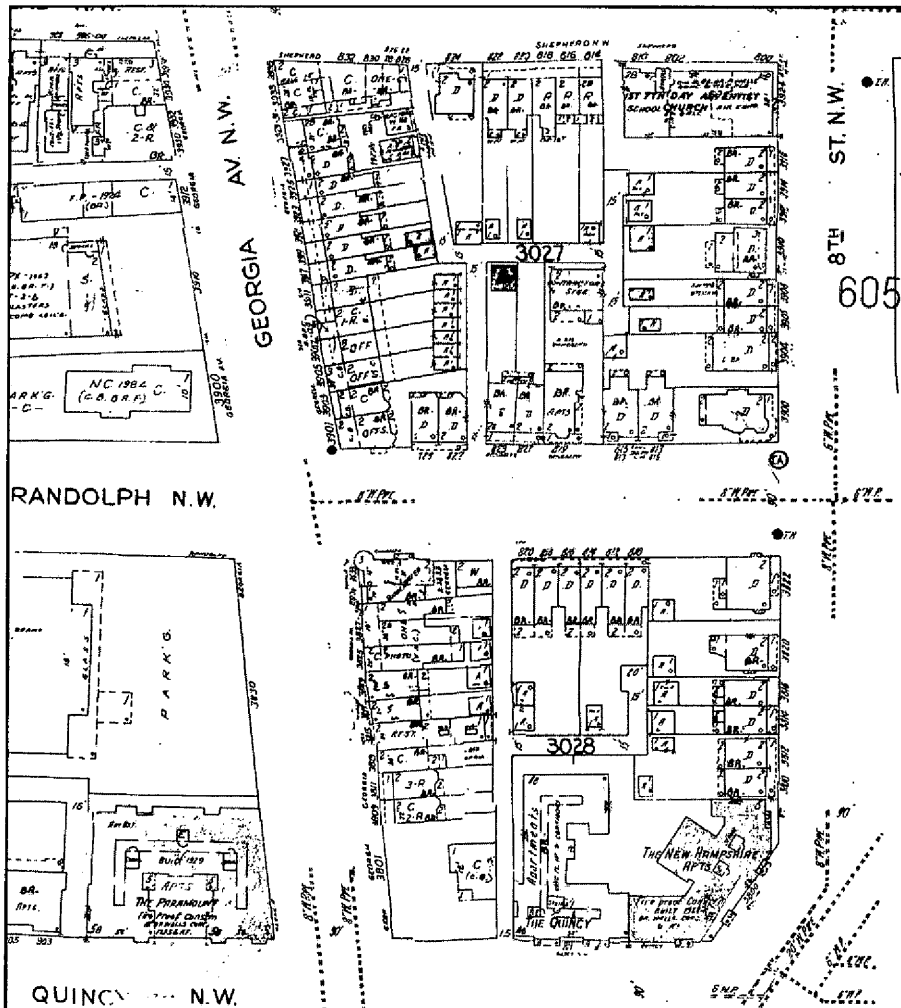
Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

## SITE PLAN



From Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1991

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

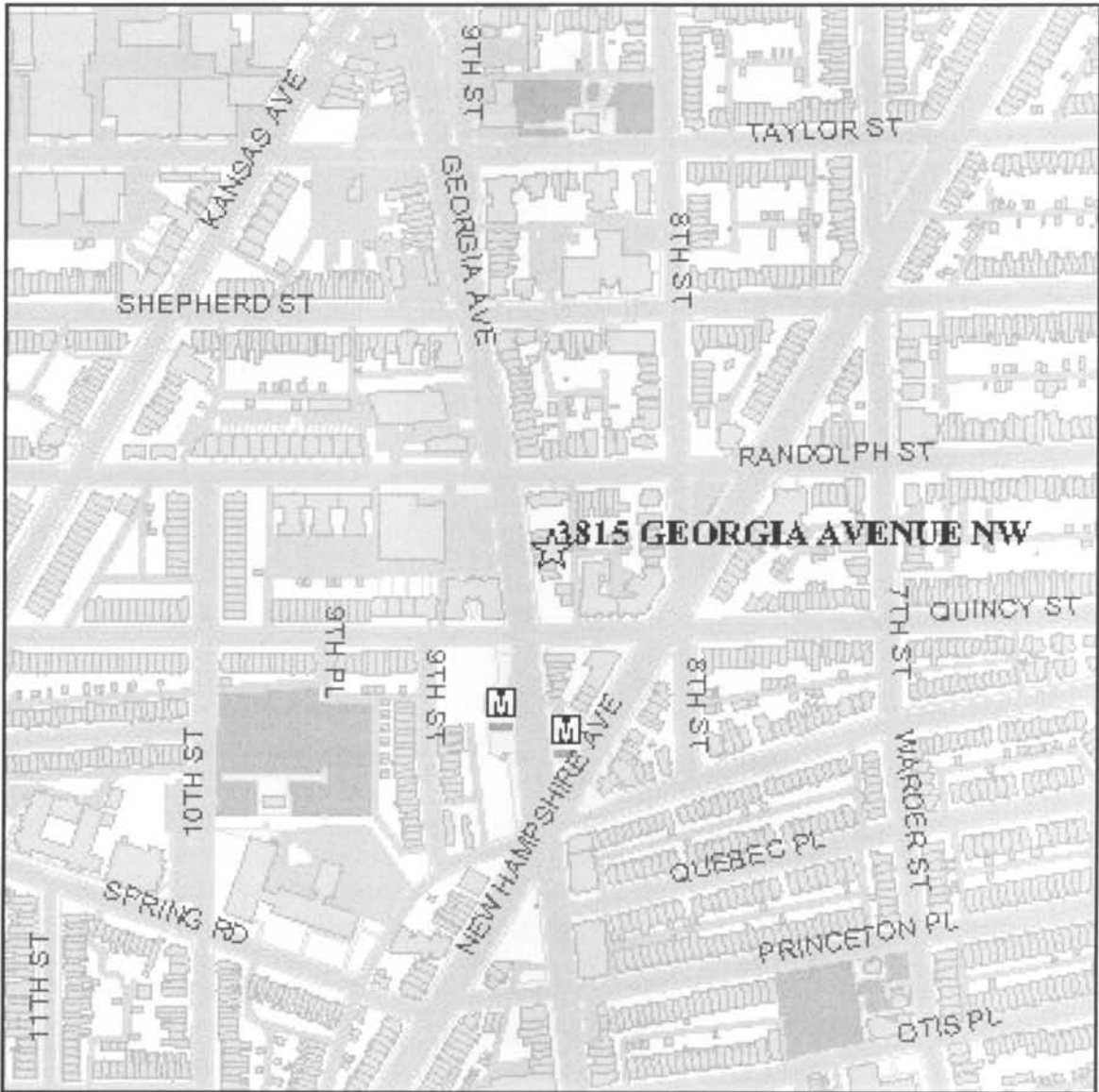
# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

SITE PLAN

County and State



From DC Geographic Information System  
([www.dcatlas.dcgis.dc.gov](http://www.dcatlas.dcgis.dc.gov))

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

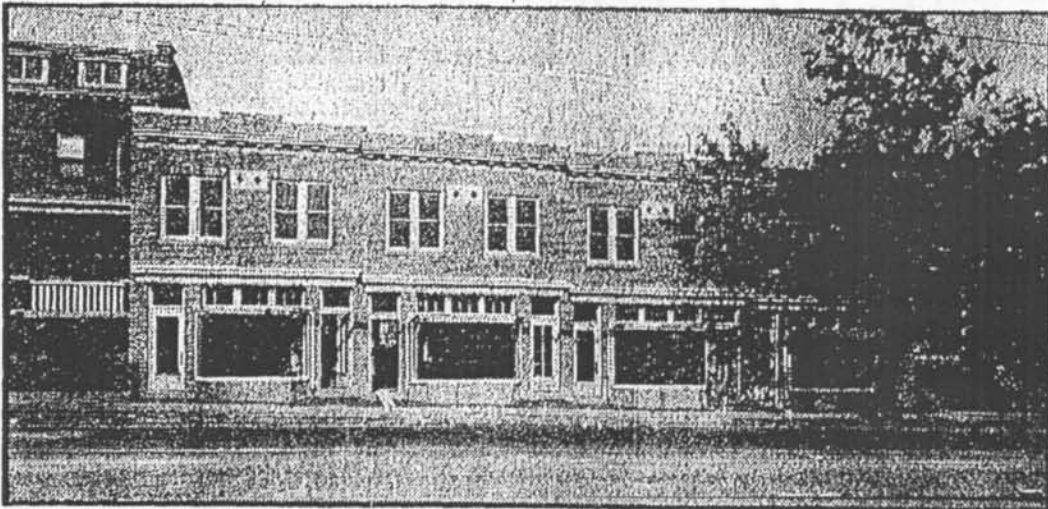
Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

## HISTORIC IMAGES

### STORE AND APARTMENT BUILDINGS COMPLETED



Four new structures just completed at 3813 to 3819 Georgia Avenue Northwest by Walter A. Dungan. There are stores on the ground floor with apartments above.

(From *The Washington Post*, May 1923)



(From *A Picture Guide to Black America in Washington, D.C.*, 1976)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

### HISTORIC IMAGES



Edith and Billy Simpson at the Ebony Table, early 1960s. The light-up map of Africa is prominently visible on the ceiling.  
(From William W. Simpson scrapbooks)



Billy Simpson's House of Seafood & Steaks

Washington, DC

October 2008

Kim Williams

DC HPO

View looking NE across Georgia Avenue

1/8



Billy Simpson's House of Seafood + Steaks

Washington, DC

October 2008

Kim Williams

DC HPO

View looking SE across Georgia Avenue

2/8





Billy Simpson's House of Seafood & Steaks

Washington, DC

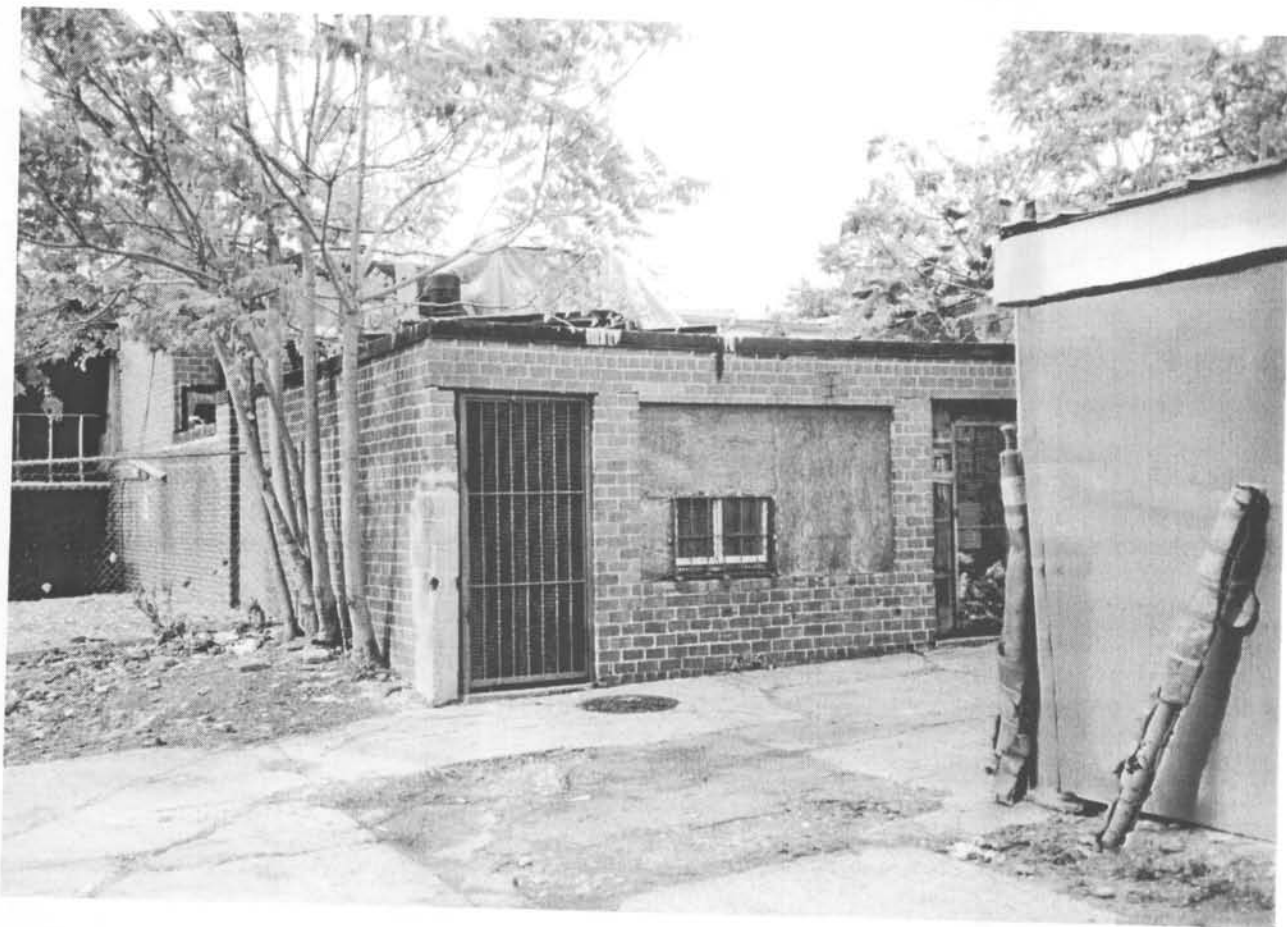
October 2008

Kim Williams

DC #PO

West elevation, view looking east

3/8



Billy Simpson's House of Seafood & Steaks

Washington, DC

October 2008

Kim Williams

DC HPO

East (rear) elevation; view looking west

4/8