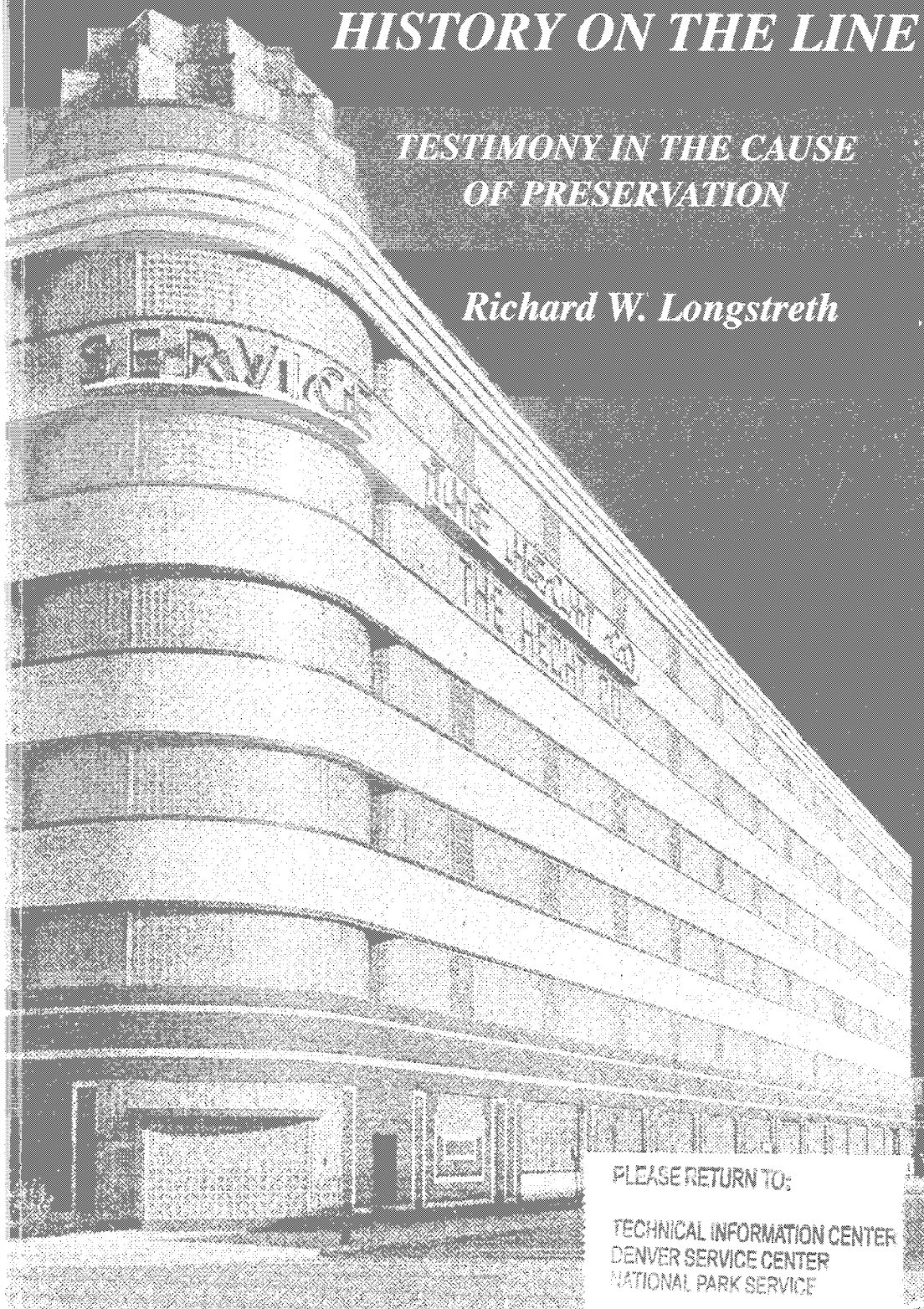


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HISTORY ON THE LINE

*TESTIMONY IN THE CAUSE
OF PRESERVATION*

Richard W. Longstreth



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TESTIMONY IN THE CAUSE OF PRESERVATION

Richard W. Longstreth

History on the Line is the result of a cooperative agreement between the National Park Service and the National Council for Preservation Education, a nationwide non-profit organization chartered in the District of Columbia to advance preservation education both in academia and among the general public. The National Council would like to thank the following for their support in producing this work: de Teel Patterson Tiller, Chief, Heritage Preservation Services, Antoinette J. Lee, Acting Chief, Preservation Initiatives Branch, and Stephen A. Morris, formerly Certified Local Government Program Coordinator.

Funding for this publication was provided through a cooperative agreement between the National Park Service, Department of the Interior and the National Council on Preservation Education. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of the Interior. Under Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, handicap, or age in its programs. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility of the U.S. Department of the Interior, or you desire further information, please write: Director, Equal Opportunity Program, Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1849 C Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20240.



Published for
The National Council for Preservation Education
and
The National Park Service
by
Historic Urban Plans, Inc., P.O. Box 276, Ithaca, NY 14850.
ISBN: 0-9662723-0-7
Printed in the U.S.A.

Longstreth, Richard W.

History on the line: testimony in the cause of preservation. Ithaca, N.Y.: Historic Urban Plans and the National Council for Preservation Education, 1998.

112p. ill. 23cm
ISBN 0-9662723-7

Contents: Chapter I. Greyhound Depot; Chapter II. Hecht Company Warehouse; Chapter III. Woodward & Lothrop Warehouse; Chapter IV. Sears, Roebuck Store; Chapter V. Community Garden at 3901 Connecticut Ave., NW; Chapter VI. Woodward Building; Chapter VII. Victor Building.

1. Evidence, Expert-United States. 2. Historic sites-Law and legislation-United States. 3. Historic buildings-Law and legislation-United States. 4. Historic preservation-Law and legislation-United States. I. Title.

For Sally Berk, Tersh Boasberg, Dorn McGrath, and Richard Striner
--friends and valued colleagues in the cause of preservation.

D.C. LOCATION MAP

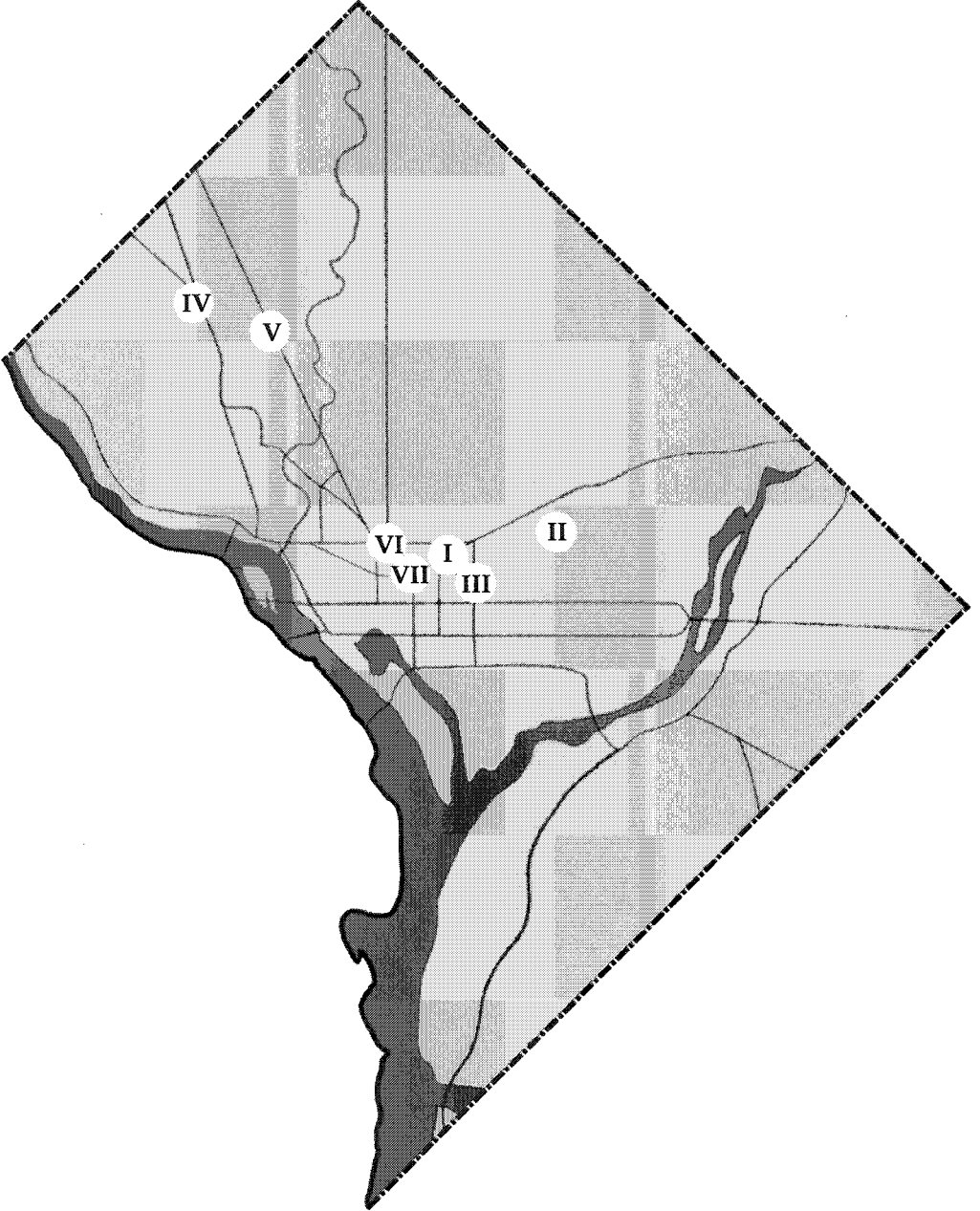


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PREFACE

Most historic preservationists firmly believe that "every building deserves its day in court." Unfortunately, they often fail to present an adequate case for the merits of an historic property, whether arguing before a municipal commission or a local judge. In part this is because the number of historians who regularly become involved in historic preservation controversies is extremely limited. Even fewer historians repeatedly serve as advocates, as opposed to paid professionals, volunteering their time and using their education and political acumen to investigate the merit of unrecognized historic properties. Professor Richard Longstreth, director of the graduate program in historic preservation at George Washington University, a well-known scholar and author, is one of that select group and is arguably the most experienced in the country in publicly presenting meticulously researched, persuasive historical arguments. The compilation of testimony presented in *History on the Line* is but a sampling of his work, drawn from a wide variety of cases presented before the Historic Preservation Review Board and other bodies in the District of Columbia. Longstreth's testimony is also unusual because, as an architectural historian, he makes excellent use not only of the spoken word, but also of a wide array of his own images to demonstrate the points. In the work that follows, these illustrations are keyed to his presentation much in the same fashion as they were when his arguments were first delivered, providing the reader with the equivalent of a "video replay" in each case.

The primary motivation in publishing this compilation of testimony is to provide the preservation community with solid models for framing arguments on behalf of historic properties. To further underline the key ideas and approaches, Professor Longstreth provides an explanation of *why and how* he cast his arguments, in a number of comments provided between the illustrations in the side bar. It is hoped this will spur those preparing testimony to become more self-critical, to enable them to present their case as best as possible, and provide those reviewing the testimony some measure of guidance in judging it. Hence, while the primary audience includes the staff and members of local and state historic preservation commissions, preservation advocacy groups, and cultural resource managers, students young and old who wish to enter the field in any number of capacities will also benefit from this work. The lessons are important for every day, somewhere, history is "on the line."

Michael A. Tomlan,
Project Director, National Council for Preservation Education

INTRODUCTION

Historic preservation in the United States is characteristically more an action-oriented than an intellectual endeavor. The historical significance of properties too often is seen as a secondary or even peripheral matter in preservation practice. Effusive lip service may be given to the value of things from the past: yes, one must undertake historic resource surveys and prepare detailed nominations for listing at the local, state, and national levels. But many preservationists view history as a hoop through which they must dutifully jump to get to the next and ostensibly much more important business of saving things. "Too much" history is a waste of time, the sentiment runs. Let's survey as many properties as quickly as possible, eliminate having to do a "mini-dissertation" for National Register listing, and not deplete scarce resources by commissioning a detailed account of our community's historical development.

The pragmatic approach Americans have taken to historic preservation has led to a broad range of achievements seldom matched by other countries. Our preservation stands among the most diverse and popular phenomena of its kind on the globe. Yet the second-class status often accorded to history brings serious shortcomings to the process. Frequently, properties that should be preserved are neglected because they are not properly understood. Often, too, sites are "preserved" while being mutilated in the process because those participating do not understand the salient qualities that require retention. In too many cases, "history" and "architecture" continue to be viewed as discrete entities, as if history has no physical dimension and the built environment is to be analyzed by some undefined, yet immutable, canon. When additions or modifications are proposed to a listed property, on numerous occasions the key issue is viewed as one of "design" rather than of protecting the property's historic character. In an alarming array of examples, listed properties are described as "historic," while others are dismissed as "non-historic," irrespective of their actual significance.¹

My own experience has shown that, far from being a sideline issue, history is central to the real world of protecting valuable portions of the past. Such knowledge is essential if important resources are to be identified in the first place and if sound priorities are to be set. A solid historical perspective is no less necessary in the process of securing legal protection for properties and in ensuring that changes made to them are appropriate. If history is not the foremost guide, the process is governed instead by personal opinion, preference, and taste—views that can differ widely and that can be readily challenged. To give history less than its due is unbusiness-like as well as a cultural disservice. It should not be surprising that communities and states where preservation is the strongest are often the ones where history is taken with the greatest seriousness.

Explaining the past to others is important not just to build support, but also to enhance the standing of preservation in a community. Developing a constituency in this way is not well accomplished through amassing facts and figures presented as raw data or couched in "professional" jargon. It is achieved through insight and understanding conveyed in plain English to the lay public. Even when an audience may not grasp all aspects of an explanation, be it an oral presentation or a published work, most people are responsive when addressed in a reasonable manner. Public officials and bodies can be just as sympathetic to this approach as the residents of a neighborhood or the citizenry at large.

History is not a panacea. Many other factors figure prominently in any preservation case, and occasions exist when history is dismissed altogether no matter how

compelling. On the other hand, history can be a powerful tool. The concept of heritage, while varying in particulars, cuts across economic, social, and racial lines.

This book is a selection of testimony delivered before the Historic Preservation Review Board and other public officials in the District of Columbia between 1986 and 1996. The thrust of these presentations is to delineate how and why the properties involved are historically significant. Through the use of examples, this book offers a guide to preparing testimony in preservation initiatives. Readers may also find the contents useful in developing nominations or other material to advance the understanding of historical significance. On the other hand, this book does not presume to offer full-fledged histories of the resources in question, which, whether geared to a scholarly or lay audience, would require a substantially different format. Nor do these pages provide complete preservation case studies, which likewise would require another approach and would best be written by an independent party.

The specifics of each resource may interest some readers, so that a few footnotes are included to assist further inquiry.² But the main purpose of the book is to give insight on broader matters. Most of these cases involving the designation of a landmark or proposed changes to a listed property were considered uphill battles at the time they began and often throughout the process. Some were vigorously opposed by their respective property owners, who hired consultants to build a case against designation. Many of the buildings involved were considered in certain circles as unworthy of preservation. Conversely, strong support generally existed for many of the proposed changes, which, had they been realized, would have destroyed much or all of their respective buildings. Arguing the historical significance of these resources proved a primary instrument by which they were preserved.

Each case was selected for other key issues it represented as well. The first five chapters address landmark designations and thus the testimony encompasses a full range of contributing historical factors. The Greyhound bus depot (Chapter I) was a building type little appreciated at the time of its hearing and perhaps most importantly was a building whose qualities existed more or less intact, but could not be seen. Part of the challenge of securing local landmark designation was to convince the city's Historic Preservation Review Board that the significance of this resource was sufficiently great to warrant designation nevertheless. The Hecht Company warehouse (Chapter II) likewise was a building type seldom the focus of preservationist's attention, but possessed design attributes that were highly admired. On the other hand the design of the Woodward & Lothrop warehouse (Chapter III) was far less appreciated in this regard even though it was the same size, type, and vintage, and by the same architectural firm. When considered together, the two cases underscore the potency of appearances and fashion in the preservation arena. Unlike Hecht's, too, this was a contested case, and there was the need to ensure that history did not end where controversy began.

As a type, the Sears, Roebuck department store (Chapter IV) was hardly new to preservation, but as an example of modernist retail design from the 1940s, the building was not one most people considered prime for landmark status. The community garden at 3901 Connecticut Avenue (Chapter V) seemed antithetical in most respects from properties normally associated with preservation, representing a vernacular tradition that had modified the appearance and use of its property.

The remaining two chapters are devoted to cases where designated properties were threatened. With the Woodward Building (Chapter VI), a source of contention was the extent to which it contributed to its historic district. The Woodward experienced an all-out assault on its significance, more founded on taste and assumption than on fact. Finally, the significance of additions made to the Victor Building (Chapter VII) and thus the integrity of the landmark itself was questioned. The issues in

these two cases as well as those in the five chapters previous are relatively common to the field across the country. And in general terms the buildings are not unlike what can be found in many other communities.

Washington is the federal center for establishing preservation laws, policies, and standards, but the preservation done at the local level does not differ significantly from that found elsewhere. Historic preservation groups are overworked and underfunded. A failure to communicate adequately may occur between interested parties, public- and private-sector alike. Sometimes public officials are indifferent, neighborhoods are overzealous, and preservationists are too quick to compromise. The Historic District and Historic Landmark Protection Act of 1978, D.C. Law 2-144, was considered among the strongest in the country when it was passed and continues to be an effective instrument for advancing preservation, but efforts to weaken the law, even to eviscerate it, are unusually strong as well. The Historic Preservation Review Board, which must approve all proposed designations and proposals for change to designated properties, is like many others nationwide. Its members are intelligent, well-intentioned people, most of whom had little or no direct involvement with preservation prior to their appointment. Washington, D.C., has experienced conspicuous failures in preservation, an abundance of facade projects high among them, but also many successes, none of which has been achieved without more than the anticipated amount of hard work.

Several facets of the local law warrant explanation to understand the context in which these cases were argued. Landmark and historic district nominations are normally prepared and advocated by private-sector organizations, not by the city government. The group or groups involved work closely with the staff member of the Historic Preservation Division (the city office) assigned to the case. In general, the Historic Preservation Review Board gives great weight to the staff recommendation. Yet the staff report is usually brief. The applicant is expected to present the arguments in detail. No time limitation is given, but the applicant's full presentation in complicated cases can run between forty-five and ninety minutes. If the case is contested, the applicant, but not the opponent, has the opportunity to rebut.

The Board's decision is final except with federal or city properties. If demolition of any part of a designated property is proposed, however, the case must be reviewed and approved by the Mayor's Agent for D.C. Law 2-144. Furthermore, if the board denies proposed changes to a designated property, the applicant can appeal to the Mayor's Agent either on the grounds of economic hardship or "special merit." Both proponents and opponents have a second opportunity to argue their case at these hearings. To date, economic hardship has been interpreted by the Mayor's Agent in a literal sense, not as loss of anticipated revenues. On the other hand, special merit is a loosely worded provision that enables factors deemed of unusual benefit to the community to outweigh those of preservation. Special merit has been interpreted in various ways over the past fifteen years, as chapters on the Woodward and Victor buildings indicate. Individual testimony before the Mayor's Agent can be brief or extended, depending upon the particular circumstances. Especially in contested cases, the presentation by each side may last the entire day, sometimes even longer. Both sides have the opportunity to rebut.

Much of my testimony was delivered as preservation subcommittee chair of the Committee of 100 on the Federal City, a citizens' group that has focused on a wide range of planning and other environmental issues since its founding in 1923.³ On many occasions I represented a coalition of groups. My perspective has been fundamentally shaped by my discipline, architectural history, as well as by experience in the preservation field. Nevertheless, I have sought to develop a holistic approach, integrating economic, social, and urbanistic factors in my historical analysis and prac-

tical concerns as well as those of principle in pursuing sound preservation solutions.

In every case, my testimony comprised but part of an effort to which a host of others contributed. Far too many people participated in important ways to list here, but special acknowledgment is due some. Invaluable guidance and support came from Committee of 100 colleagues, including its then chairman, Dorn McGrath, Jr.; Cornish Hitchcock and Richard Nettler, fellow board members and superb legal counsel; Anne Sellin, vice chair and now chair of the preservation subcommittee; and Tersh Boasberg, Antoinette Lee, Nellie Longworth, and Kathleen Sinclair Wood. Richard Striner, founder and former president of the Art Deco Society of Washington, proved as able a strategist and thinker on the local scene as I have encountered in preservation. His successor, Lauren Adkins, was of great help in advancing the Sears initiative as were Jean Pablo and Joel Odum. Without Stephen Dennis and Carolyn Pitts, no initiative would have been launched to protect the Community Garden at 3901 Connecticut Avenue. Sally Berk, Stephen Callcott, Elizabeth Jones, Jacqueline Prior, and Patricia Wilson of the D.C. Preservation League were a pleasure to work with in common cause. Many others contributed time and knowledge—Andrea Ferster as counsel and Russell Keune, Chester Liebs, Thomas Moriority, Joseph Passonneau, Donovan Rypkema, de Teel Patterson Tiller, Mario di Valmarana, and Richard Wagner as supporting witnesses. Much was accomplished, too, from the efforts of Stephen Raiche, director of the Historic Preservation Division of the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, and his staff, including Tanya Beauchamp, Suzanne Ganschietz, Glenn Leiner, and David Maloney.

Not enough appreciation can go to Michael Tomlan in taking on this publishing project and seeing it to conclusion, contributing enormously to its improvement along the way. I am also very grateful to the support of de Teel Patterson Tiller, Stephen Morris, and Antoinette Lee, of the National Park Service for their advice and encouragement as well as generous funding and co-sponsorship.

Each chapter has prefatory paragraphs delineating the circumstances of the case to give the testimony a basic context. I have indulged in minor editing to compensate for the fact that the text does not contain all the illustrations that accompanied the oral testimony as well as otherwise to improve clarity and readability. I have also added a few notes in places where further references seemed useful. To assist readers further, I have presented below ten suggestions for developing historical testimony. For those who wish to know more about the criteria for designation under D.C. Law 2-144, they are listed as an appendix.

TEN SUGGESTIONS FOR DEVELOPING HISTORICAL TESTIMONY

1. Know the subject. This sounds painfully obvious, but the point cannot be emphasized enough. All too often testimony falls short of the mark on what should be its bedrock. Knowledge entails facts, of course, but it also entails interpretation. Showering decision makers with data may lose their attention quickly. Discuss what the facts mean as you introduce them. Give your audience a clear reason why they should listen to you and should arrive at the same conclusions. If a case is contested, always make sure you know more than the opposition. Anticipate what the opposition may claim and structure your own arguments accordingly. Especially when it is likely that the review body may be unsympathetic to your case, present a line of reasoning that is irrefutable.

2. Integrate the material. Make the presentation as coherent as possible. Often attributes that contribute to a property's significance are related. Avoid fragmentation. Use each facet—social, economic, technical, locational, and political—to reinforce the others whenever applicable. Make sure every matter you raise has a clear point, and that your audience can understand how a certain facet relates to a larger whole.

3. Be an advocate. Enthusiasm for and commitment to the resource(s) you are trying to protect can influence decision makers. Presumably the matter at hand is important to you and to others. Speaking with clear conviction bolsters the case. At the same time, you should never let such feelings dilute the historical integrity of your argument. Good testimony, like teaching, requires a delicate balance between salesmanship on one hand and professional detachment on the other.

4. Build a strong record. Often, properties are historically significant for a variety of reasons, at least some of which are interrelated. Testimony should include the full spectrum of reasons why a resource has significance. Some of these may not be obvious at first; be thorough as well as imaginative in your investigation. Never take things for granted under the assumption that the reviewing body already knows about the issues at stake. Most members of such bodies want to listen to the argument in its entirety, irrespective of how much attention they have given to the nomination and/or any other written material available beforehand. In most communities, the hearing is the key forum.

5. Never claim too much. Sometimes enthusiasm for a resource or lack of understanding of how it relates to a broader context can lead proponents to claim greater than justifiable significance. Such assertions can be easily assailed and undermine your credibility. It is also valuable to focus on the local context; that is what primarily interests most decision makers

6. Address your audience as equals. The best atmosphere for a hearing is one of professionals exchanging information and views. Never talk down to those whom you are addressing. Instead share your knowledge with them. Even if decision makers do not fully understand all the details being presented, they appreciate a forthright presentation. Always avoid jargon—descriptive, intellectual, and otherwise. Speak in plain English in ways that educated lay persons can understand.

7. Make the presentation interesting. Organize and present your arguments in a way that will keep your audience engaged. Remember, decision makers generally have to listen to many persons speak for hours on end. Work hard not to lose them while you are being heard. Gimmicks will probably have little value in this regard. The best approach is to develop a good, solid narrative that is easy to follow and makes listeners want to know about your subject. If you embellish testimony with such techniques as an occasional humorous aside, make sure it is something you do well.

8. Enrich the presentation visually. In most cases, images should form an integral part of the presentation. They can be very useful in furthering interest, but also should be essential in making key points when some aspects of the resource's significance are physical. Slides are generally the best way to show this material. The images should be of high quality. All too often, testimony is marred by slides that are poorly exposed, taken under bad conditions, or are otherwise conspicuously unprofessional. There is no excuse for such shortcomings. Almost anyone can learn how to take respectable photographs; however, if there are reasons preventing you from doing so, ensure you have the assistance of someone who can do the job properly.

9. Avoid carping. Put your case in a positive light rather than bickering over disagreements. Differences with the opposition should be addressed frankly, but matter-of-factly. Never present yourself as superior to the opposition or anyone else. Most decision makers dislike *ad homonym* exchanges between parties. If you are assailed by the opposition, keep to the high road. No matter how much you may disagree with decision makers over a point, expressing those frustrations in testimony will probably hurt your case. Never remind decision makers of what their responsibilities are and never tell them how they have to decide in a matter ("If you do not make this property a landmark, this Board will lose all credibility. . .").

10. Prepare your case carefully. Take the time to ensure you cover everything you need to in a logical coherent order and in a timely fashion. Oftentimes testimony lapses into lengthy, rambling, train-of-thought presentations that are counterproductive. Even if you are accomplished at speaking extemporaneously, it may be advisable to read testimony so that nothing is inadvertently left out. In some cases, too, written statements may contribute to the sense of authority imparted by your presentation. If you take the latter course, bear in mind that the contents will be heard rather than read by the reviewing body. Avoid dense prose; it will disengage even the most interested, sympathetic listeners.

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

ADSW Art Deco Society of Washington, a community-based non-profit organization founded in 1982, active in saving mid-twentieth-century architecture.

DCPL D.C. Preservation League, a non-profit organization founded in 1971, primarily involved in preservation issues in or near the city center.

HPD Historic Preservation Division, Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, the agency that performs the dual function of city and state preservation office.

HPRB Historic Preservation Review Board, the decision-making arm of HPD, charged with ruling on all designation proposals and proposed changes to designated properties.



1

1100 New York Avenue N.W. (between 11th and 12th streets)

Constructed 1939-1940, Wischmeyer, Arrasmith & Elswick, architects

Building covered, 1976

Landmark application filed, March 1984

Property sold, September 1985

Landmark application heard by HPRB, April 1986

Landmark designation granted by HPRB, January 1987

Facility closed, August 1987

Initial scheme of Manufacturer's Real Estate heard before and denied by HPRB, April 1988

Second scheme of Manufacturer's Real Estate heard before and approved by HPRB, July 1988

Building uncovered, January-February 1989

Construction begun, March 1989

Project completed, September 1991

CHAPTER I

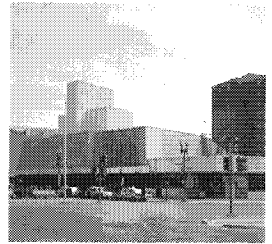
GREYHOUND DEPOT: SIGHT UNSEEN

Many preservationists in Washington, D.C. assumed the city's Greyhound bus depot (1939-1940) was altered past the point of feasible restoration after it was "modernized" in 1976—changes that completely obscured the original building, inside and out. (Figs. 1-2). However, in the early 1980s, Richard Striner, then president of the Art Deco Society of Washington (ADSW), documented the cosmetic nature of the modifications and found that the original building lay largely intact beneath its new veneers. A landmark nomination for the building, cosponsored by ADSW and the D.C. Preservation League (DCPL), was filed in 1984. Not long thereafter Greyhound sold the property, which was increasingly viewed as prime real estate for office building development in the then fast-paced expansion of downtown.

The hearing for landmark designation was postponed by mutual agreement in the hope that the applicants could reach accord with the new property owner, Hadid Investor Group. When it became clear that an acceptable solution for incorporating the depot into new development was not readily attainable, the applicants pressed to have the hearing take place. Only landmark status, they believed, would give the needed leverage for a preservation initiative to succeed.

Several challenges existed in presenting the case for designation before the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB). At that time, Art Deco and other modernist buildings were still often seen as lying outside the realm of what was rightfully "historic." The building was less than fifty years old. In some quarters, too, bus depots carried only pejorative associations; why should such a facility be celebrated? But the greatest obstacle lay with the fact that the HPRB was being asked to designate something it could not see except in old drawings and photographs. No precedent could be found for granting local landmark status of an aboveground resource whose original exterior was not visible.

I advised ADSW on the case almost from its inception. We decided it was imperative to build the strongest possible argument for designation—one that would be extremely hard for any party to refute. Four witnesses were introduced. Chester Liebs, then director of the Graduate Preservation Program at the University of Vermont, discussed the historical significance of this kind of resource in broad terms. Tom Moriority, formerly with the National Main Street Cen-



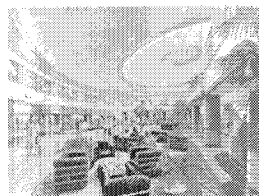
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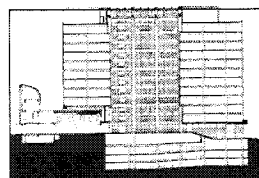
ter, delineated how it had become common practice to restore buildings that had been covered with later veneers. Russell Keune, then vice president of US Chapter of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and a registered architect, discussed the documentation of the building's historic integrity. I closed by analyzing the depot's historical significance.

ADSW assembled a number of useful documents on the building in the course of preparing the nomination. Most of the material needed to discuss the depot in terms of development of its type, of bus design, and of the business during the inter-war decades I gleaned from a detailed review of *Bus Transportation*, the industry's principal journal. Other trade literature, a recent history of Greyhound, and my own visits to depots across the country since 1970 were helpful as well.

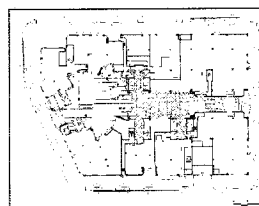


4

The HPRB initially expressed some reservations over the building's integrity. The owners opposed the initiative. Although they did not present witnesses at the hearing, their attorneys subsequently claimed that the applicants had not met the burden of proof that the historic building was intact. After an onsite inspection of the property, however, the HPRB granted landmark status. Negotiations with the owner remained cordial, but still failed to produce the desired results. In 1988, a new developer, *Manufacturer's Real Estate*, took an option on the property, but little progress was made with this group either. By that time, however, a close working coalition had developed between Richard Striner (ADSW), Penny Jones (DCPL), and myself (Committee of 100). We vigorously opposed the company's initial design, which the HPRB turned down.¹ Only then did the situation begin to change. Later the same year, *Manufacturer's* offered an acceptable scheme, which retained the building in toto, restoring its exterior and main interior spaces (Figs. 3-6). Even though it was incorporated into a much larger complex, the coalition members believed the building's salient historic features would be sufficiently retained to make the project worthwhile. Construction began in 1989; the project was completed in 1991—eight years after the effort to save the depot began.²



5



6

On the eve of World War II, the *Architectural Record* devoted an issue to transportation facilities, which began with National Airport and concluded with an article on bus terminals, featuring Greyhound's new facility in Washington, D.C. These two building types had evolved, for the most part, during the previous decade, and it is not surprising that examples in Washington would figure so prominently, for they were and are premier representatives of their respective kinds.

During the 1930s buildings associated with new transportation forms—the automobile, the airplane,

and the bus—were seen as representing much more than additions to a growing number of specialized facilities. These new types afforded challenges to create unprecedented forms, expressive not only of their particular utilitarian requirements, but also of emerging forces that were having a profound effect on living patterns and on shaping the era.

Washington's Greyhound terminal is a nationally significant work. Among terminals not incorporated into multipurpose complexes, it was considered to be one of the largest and certainly one of the finest, the "Grand Central of the motorbus world," as it was called. Today the depot stands as a rare surviving example from the seminal period of the type's development. Many counterparts in cities across the country—New York, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Detroit, Louisville, Atlanta, San Francisco, to name a few—have been demolished or substantially, not just cosmetically, altered. Only a handful of examples from the period remain more or less intact, and it is possible that some of these will perish in the years ahead.

This endangered species tells us much, not only about architecture and about transportation, but about people and a whole system that was devised to bring thousands of communities within easy reach of urban centers. For the many Americans who could not afford a car of their own, inter-city bus service provided a comfortable, safe, and efficient mode of conveyance to all parts of the nation. These features appealed to a more affluent clientele as well. During the 1930s bus transportation was perhaps the most democratic means of travel. The great terminals as much as the new sleek streamlined buses themselves were striking symbols of transportation progress.

Washington's terminal was conceived as a special building within this context—elegant, dignified, and at the same time an emblem of dynamic forces of change. The terminal's significance to this city matches its significance to the nation.

After careful review of the criteria applicable in this case, I have concluded that the Greyhound terminal meets every one of them, and meets them with ease.

Criterion A.1. The terminal is significant in the development of the nation's capital, and specifically as a major transportation center for almost half a century. It has served hundreds of thousands of people since it opened in March 1940. It is an important gateway to the city for visitor and resident alike, and, equally, a departure point for other cities and for the hinterland.

There was a huge expansion of bus service nation-

It is always important to summarize key facets of the property's significance at the beginning to build a framework for the testimony that follows.

Organizing the presentation by the criteria can be especially useful to the reviewing body when its members are not familiar with the kind of historic resource under discussion. This approach was imperative here since the historic building could not actually be seen except from vintage documents.

Because bus companies have diminished stature in the minds of many people, it was important to delineate what a major impact on travel Greyhound once had.

wide during the 1920s, and particularly during the 1930s, when Greyhound emerged as the nation's leading carrier, with a vast network of routes to all portions of the country. In 1934 Greyhound alone carried 15 percent of inter-city bus traffic. By 1944 the percentage rose to 35, over one-third of all bus transportation in the United States. At that time the company had some 4,000 buses; it served over 6,000 cities and towns, covering almost one-half of the population of the United States and over 64,000 miles of roadway, equaling one-quarter of all railroad trackage in the United States. In other words, by the early 1940s, Greyhound had the most extensive public transportation network ever developed in the United States by a single carrier.

Greyhound and other bus lines reached thousands of communities not served by rail, and many others as an appealing alternative to the train.

The attraction of a bus came not only because its fares were cheaper, but because it was safe, clean, dependable, and convenient. Railroad stations were often located on the edge of city centers, in their own precincts, and oftentimes, too, became surrounded by a variety of service facilities, some of them considered unsavory.

Bus terminals, by contrast, were generally located right in the city center adjacent to or near hotels—as was the case in Washington—and within easy walking distance of many other places.

Location was key in determining the site as close as possible to the city's core. Siting a depot had to balance proximity to hotels and other key destination points on one hand, and having ample, relatively inexpensive land easily reached via a major interstate route on the other. Greyhound's first terminal in Washington, built in 1931-32, was so situated on New York Avenue just east of Fifteenth Street, N.W., the best location among those of several competing companies. Within a few years, however, it was too small to meet the increasing demand for traffic. The current site, three blocks to the east, was even more centrally placed in relation to the business district, but still lay a block or so beyond the area of intense development.

Greyhound and other carriers promoted their services not only for people who had to travel on business but for those who wanted to travel on vacation or to see family and friends. In this respect, the nature of this transportation form was ideal, because many out-of-the-way places could be reached easily, oftentimes directly, along established routes or through a variety of tour packages, a promotion device pioneered by Greyhound in the early 1930s. Even for

Don't take anything for granted. The location of a historic resource can reveal much about its nature—and its significance.

people who had automobiles, highway travel in the days before interstate freeways could be tedious and sometimes dangerous. Buses were air-conditioned, unlike cars, and they eliminated the guesswork from finding destinations.

Criterion A.2. The terminal is significant in the social history of the nation's capital as a place that served people from all walks of life and from all parts of the country. Terminals were great points of convergence, where millions of American could enjoy a good standard of service, a standard that was new for many travelers.

During World War II, the Washington terminal was especially important for people coming to this center of activity and going home. One columnist in the *Washington Herald*, fascinated by the human dimension of the facility, wrote in a 1943 feature:

If you wish to find out what kind of people come in and out of Washington, drop in at the bus terminal. There is never a dull moment there day or night. You will be joining the club of visitors who make a regular practice to slip in and out of the depot whenever they are in the neighborhood. You are bound to run into scenes you will long remember.

The bus depot provided a rich spectrum of human activity with which only the railroad station could compete. It was estimated that over twenty-eight billion rides, covering some eight billion miles, were taken on buses during World War II alone, not just to cities and towns, but also to induction centers, training camps, bases, and manufacturing plants, many of which were located away from established rail lines. Military planners generally acknowledged that essential public transportation during the war could not have been handled by the train alone.

The Greyhound terminal is equally significant in the architectural heritage of Washington and the nation, both in terms of type and style. These are closely interrelated so the following points address aspects of both criteria 2 and 3.

Beginning in the early 1930s, streamlining rapidly became a major and sometimes the dominant concern in many areas of design. The origins of this phenomenon lie with advances in the study of aerodynamics. Not surprisingly, motorized transportation became a primary object of streamlining efforts. But streamlining represented much more. Acquiring a strong es-

A social perspective may often form an integral part of the argument for significance, even when the primary justification lies in the physical realm. Often it is difficult to separate the two; each contributes to the other.

thetic and emotional appeal as a symbol of how science and technology could benefit society, streamlining became an emblem of friendliness, efficiency and order—an evocative suggestion of how modernism could improve daily life. During the Depression, this thrust in design became enormously popular as an expression of better things to come. The industrial designer emerged as a leader whose work touched all aspects of life, from trains to toasters, from typewriters to terminals.

By the mid 1930s, streamlining began to have a pronounced effect on bus design. Here, too, Greyhound was the nation's leader. As with other carriers, the company played a major role in determining the design of its coaches, charting the course taken by the manufacturer. The aim was not only to build better machines—larger, faster, more comfortable—but to develop a powerful image that would promote the idea of bus transportation. Greyhound pulled out all the stops in 1935-1936, with Raymond Loewy as the consultant for the design of a new Yellow coach that was radically different from the norm in its conception. The engine was placed in back. The passengers were placed above the wheel base. The interior was air-conditioned. More passengers were accommodated in roomier quarters; the ride was much smoother—among other attributes. The Greyhound bus became the most luxurious vehicle on the highway, affording more comforts than most motor vehicles of the period.³

Greyhound was very aggressive, constantly making improvements to its rolling stock. Loewy's "Silver Sides" design, commissioned in 1939, completed in 1940, and a classic in bus design, was the epitome of this effort, combining a host of technical innovations with a simple elegance that made it an enduring symbol of transportation unequaled by any other carrier.

From an early date, bus companies, especially Greyhound, drew close ties between the nature of their vehicles and their terminals. The bus was seen as architecture and architecture was seen as one of the most essential symbolic components of selling the idea of bus transportation. The two were inseparable. The depot was also important for the conveniences it offered. Many early bus terminals were of a low standard in this regard. By the mid 1930s, Greyhound was leading a nationwide campaign to reverse that status.

Washington's Greyhound terminal of 1939-40 is a consummate expression of these objectives to make the facility clean and practical, servicing the traveler's every need, and is a potent emblem of the company that provided that service. It is a splendid example of streamline design conceived and executed as a three-

Beginning a discussion of a building's physical qualities with the broad context of what this tendency in design means rather than enumerating motifs and details can be crucial to conveying to people why that building is significant. In this case, these qualities are also directly linked to the buses served by the depot.

dimensional object, a focal point for its immediate precinct and for downtown.

Taking advantage of its large site, the lower section fills up the front, then steps up to accommodate regional offices on the second floor, and culminates in a massive central block with a swept vertical pylon. The design is simple, clean, and suggestive of the speed and efficiency of a transportation system it serves. The building is also expressive of its function as a point of arrival and embarkation. Finally, and here being in Washington surely had an influence, the scheme balances the sense of innovation and dynamics with one of dignity and reserve. It is not a classical building, yet it is one fully at home in the classical world of the nation's capital.

The front of the building is, of course, the most elaborate elevation. But this building was designed to be seen from all sides (Fig. 7). The front emphasizes portal, the sides reveal the nature of the loading area in a manner that is at once frank and cohesive with the overall concept. Thus, despite its different exterior parts, the scheme reads as a unified entity, a mid-space object coherently addressing symbolic and practical needs.

The Greyhound terminal's configuration is what is known in the trade as an island type: a freestanding building with buses entering, docking, and leaving around it. This type was for the most part developed during the 1930s in response to the particular needs of bus terminals, and it is unique to buildings of this order.

In plan as in elevation, the forms suggest a movement of people and vehicles that is inherent to its function. That movement also is splendidly expressed on the interior from the wide entryway right into a large curving space two stories high, capped by a great skylight—open, expansive, clean, and with all the functional parts arranged so as to be easily perceived by the public. The streamline effect is carried down to the smallest details, such as curving banded veneers and stair rails. A variety of new materials and of new material uses were employed, including steamed walnut, Formica and terrazzo—all for their durability, easy maintenance, but also for their appeal as elegant modern veneers. The spatial sequence inside was designed for easy passage—to have all the public portions of the building easily perceivable, with spaces calculated to direct people, to clarify function, as well as to contain it.

Now, as with many design solutions that appear simple and obvious, this one was not easily achieved. Bus terminals experienced rapid evolution during the



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It is always important to talk about buildings as buildings—as three-dimensional objects—but the point was especially crucial to make here given the attempts to date to render the building a facade fragment.

Again, take nothing for granted. Even when a building's arrangement is straightforward, the type may have had a complex evolution. Here the historical background adds to the meaning of the end product.

previous fifteen years. Early examples were typically like small retail buildings, with offices, stores, waiting rooms, and service spaces. The buses remained out on the street, an approach that added to congestion and quickly became unacceptable, particularly since the volume of bus traffic itself was fast increasing. The bus had to get off the street, but how to contain a number of them posed another problem. Sheltering passengers had to be taken into consideration as well.

Early examples of off-street loading areas portray dark and, no doubt, noisy and fume-ridden places. This arrangement did not do much for the appeal of bus transportation, and it also continued to provide only limited space—space soon outgrown as occurred in Knoxville, with its terminal of 1925 and also with its replacement of only five years later.

Another approach was to have the facility include other functions such as stores and offices so that the land could generate greater profits. Yet other examples, including those in San Francisco, Saint Louis, and Kansas City, combined the depot with ostensibly related uses—hotels, warehouses, or parking garages (Fig. 8). In size and often in exterior treatment, the results could be very impressive. But almost at once, these combination terminals proved unsatisfactory for accommodating the bus passenger. Patrons had to walk long distances more often than not. The buses were still inside, as was the noise, the exhaust, the dim light, and the congestion—lots of congestion—because there was room for almost everything except the growing number of buses in these facilities, and few options were available to expand once the building was completed.

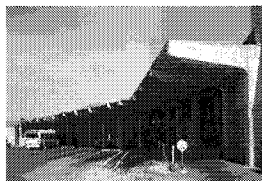
It also became apparent that the bus was not a train, and bus terminals were not railroad terminals even though some parallels exist between them. Despite erstwhile attempts at conversion, the results failed to give the bus companies an image of their own.

By contrast, the island type of terminal was freestanding, with lots of docking space located out of doors, but with some cover for the protection of passengers. The arrangement minimized congestion, noise, and fumes. Oakland, California's depot of the mid 1920s is one of a first (Fig. 9). The idea soon caught on and, by the mid 1930s, became the preferred configuration. Thereafter, the goal was to minimize walking distance from the street—from the entrance to the terminal to the bus itself—while maximizing the space available for buses.

By the mid 1930s, too, Greyhound depots began to fuse the compact, freestanding attributes of the island terminal with the concept of streamlining. As with bus design, the company was a pioneer in this realm.



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One of the earliest examples was Thomas Lamb's 1935 depot next to Pennsylvania Station in New York. In architecture, streamlining was most extensively used for commercial work as a device for selling products. This was not new. However, there have been few episodes where design was so aggressively promoted to sell products in a highly competitive marketplace, and also to promote new services. Many examples of streamline storefronts and small, freestanding retail buildings used to exist. The attrition rate, either through demolition or remodeling, has been enormous in Washington and throughout the country.

Washington has very few first-rate examples of streamline design left. Besides the Greyhound terminal, there is the Hecht Company warehouse, a splendid advertisement for its owner, placed beside major transportation arteries, the highway, and rail line. The other example of comparable stature was the late, great Trans-Lux Theatre of 1936, designed by Thomas Lamb, and destroyed in 1975, which stood only two blocks west of the Greyhound depot (Fig. 10).⁴ Washington does have other work of this period that merits preservation. But the point is that there are almost no examples in the city possessing historical significance comparable to that of the Greyhound terminal. And there now are no others downtown. The Greyhound terminal is not only a rare building nationally, but also a unique one to its urban context.

Now, Criterion A.4. The Greyhound terminal is significant as an example of a work of William A. Arrasmith, then a partner in the Louisville firm of Wischmeyer, Arrasmith & Elswick. Arrasmith was born in North Carolina in 1898. He attended the University of North Carolina, architecture school at the University of Illinois, graduated in 1921, went back to Chapel Hill and worked on the campus plan. Arrasmith came to Louisville the following year where he worked for several architects, then formed a partnership with Herman Wischmeyer in 1928, which soon was joined by Fred Elswick.

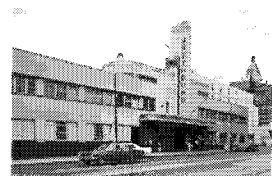
Arrasmith was the principal designer. The firm did a variety of types of work, but it became nationally known for its bus terminals, most of them for Greyhound. Two premier examples, both now demolished, were depots in Louisville of 1937 and in Cincinnati of 1941-42 (Fig. 11).

Arrasmith, along with Thomas Lamb of New York and George Brown of Charleston, West Virginia, were the key designers responsible for developing a distinct image for the company and for the bus station as a distinct type. Each design is quite different in its details and sometimes in its form and in its scale. Yet

When the degree to which a once common resource is becoming scarce may not be well recognized, emphasize the point.



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great pains were taken to ensure that these buildings would not be confused with ones serving any other function. Even without the graphics and the advertising, they are readily distinguishable for what they are.

While creating a strong corporate identity for Greyhound through its new terminals, Arrasmith avoided replicative designs. Some are variations of others. That in Fort Wayne, Indiana, for example—which still stands, but is derelict with an uncertain future—is a smaller, simpler version of the Louisville depot, now gone. The Atlanta station, opened in 1940 and demolished some years ago, echoes features characteristic to ours in Washington. Erie, Pennsylvania's, now greatly modified, is similar to that in Savannah, now vacant.

The small number of examples I have shown you, represent the prevailing pattern in terms of the fate of these buildings: most have been demolished or greatly altered. There are some happy endings as well. Binghamton, New York's still functions with minimal change. A striking design that Arrasmith developed for Evansville, Indiana, in 1938 is now a local landmark and listed on the National Register of Historic Places (Fig. 12). One that he designed in Jackson, Mississippi, is part of a historic district, and there is a move afoot that may coalesce to preserve Arrasmith's depot in Baltimore of 1940-41.⁵

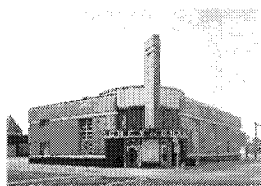
These examples—and certainly more could be cited—make an impressive showing for one firm during the course of about half a dozen years. Arrasmith was considered a leader, not only in giving Greyhound a distinct image in the urban landscape, but also in planning terminal layouts. These buildings, of which Washington's is a primary example, synthesize image and function.

That synthesis was high on Greyhound's agenda, and it was also an underlying concept in streamline design.

The Washington depot is an exceptionally significant illustration of these tendencies. It was so considered at the time it opened and, to my knowledge, it is among the very last big city terminals of streamline design built prior to World War II that remain extant.

Now, criteria A.5. and C, which I think may be considered together. For a few years after World War II, bus terminal design continued in much the same vein as it did during the 1930s and early 1940s. The premier postwar example is Cleveland's Greyhound terminal of 1946-48, which happily still stands. It was designed by Arrasmith, by then in practice on his own.

During the 1950s, however, major changes occurred in the design of terminals. The prototype was



the Port Authority in New York City. The depot became part of a larger transportation facility. In the case of Pittsburgh's, which replaced a streamline terminal of the 1930s by Thomas Lamb, the main function is a parking garage (Fig. 13). The ensemble no longer speaks the bus depot as an important entity in itself. There is no longer a distinct corporate image. There is no longer a celebration of the idea of bus transportation. Much more research needs to be done on work of this period. But it is reasonable to hypothesize that this shift may reflect the eroding prestige of the bus industry itself. As more and more Americans had cars and used them more often, and as highway travel itself became safer, faster, and more efficient, the bus, much like the train, seems to have lost appeal and was taken more out of necessity than as a desirable alternative to other transportation modes.



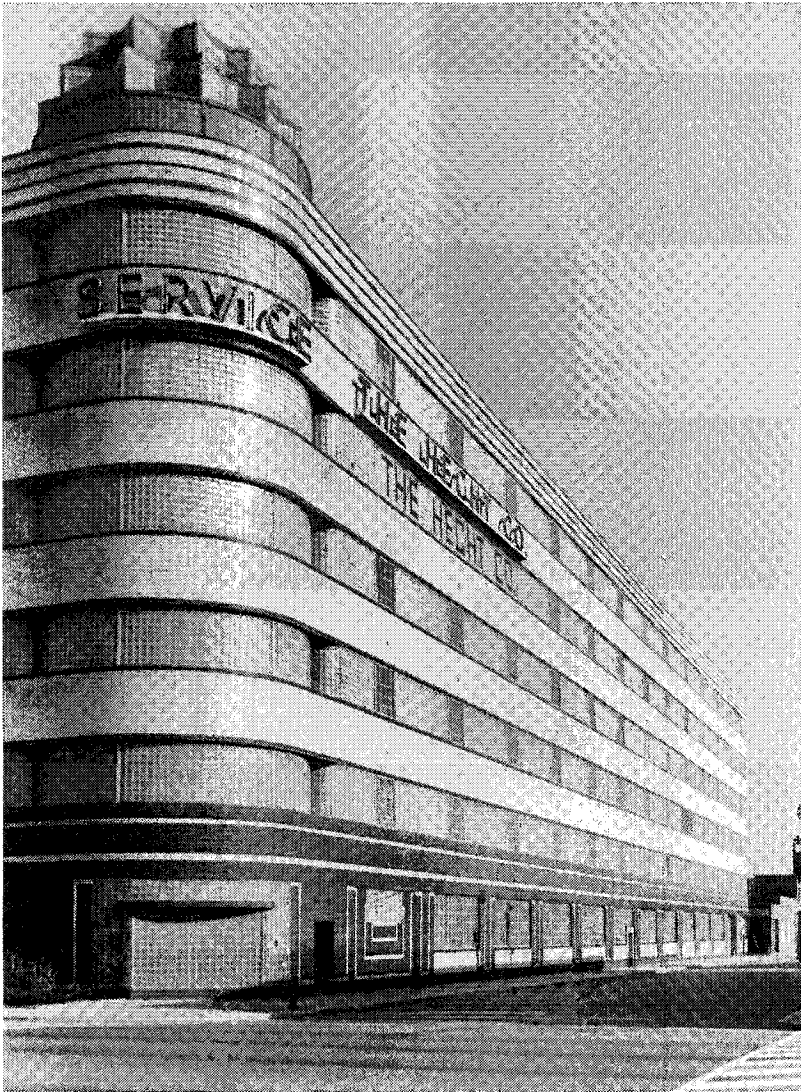
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These changes, of course, fall beyond the scope of what is being considered today. But the essential point in this deliberation is that the 1930s and the 1940s represent a distinct phase in bus terminal design, one that is very different from what has occurred over the past three and a half decades.

Architecture of the 1930s and 1940s has been subject to serious scholarly investigation during the past twenty years. My own work in this area began in the late 1960s. Colleagues, nationally and internationally respected for their research on streamline design, vigorously support this nomination. Work of the period is not only considered a legitimate subject for scholarly research, it is one currently of focused investigation.

Great effort has been made to document the fact that behind these veneers there is a real building. It is still there, intact, and it is much too significant a property to lose. The Greyhound depot is a major example of its kind for Washington and indeed for the nation. It begs our attention; it deserves full protection.

Since buildings of this type and period were not as widely accepted at the time of the hearing as they are today, underscoring the validity of resource was important in closing.



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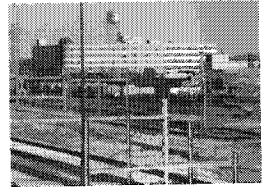
1401 New York Avenue, N.E. (at Fenwick Street)
Constructed 1936-1937, Abbott, Merkt & Company, architects/engineers
Additions 1948, 1961
Landmark application filed, November 1990
Landmark application heard before and approved by HPRB, February 1992
Restoration begun, March 1992
Project completed, October 1992

CHAPTER II

HECHT COMPANY WAREHOUSE: GOING BEYOND THE OBVIOUS

The Hecht Company warehouse was an obvious choice for landmark designation in the late 1980s. Rising along one of the major highways into the city, it was widely known and now widely appreciated (Figs. 14-15). The building had appeared on the cover of Hans Wirz's and Richard Striner's *Washington Deco* (1984), and the rescue of the Greyhound Depot had helped raise the public's consciousness of the need to save the legacy of the 1930s.¹ ADSW had long planned to prepare a nomination on the building; however, no serious threat to its future seemed to exist and more pressing historic preservation cases postponed the initiative. The issue came to the forefront in 1990 when it was learned that the building suffered from an acute case of facade failure (the exterior veneer was separating from the structural frame) and that Hecht's owners, the May Company of Saint Louis, would soon begin repairs. The immediate purpose of securing landmark designation, then, was to have the leverage to ensure the work was a restoration rather than a less appropriate treatment. A nomination was quickly prepared and submitted jointly by ADSW and the Committee of 100. Soon thereafter, DCPL entered as the third applicant.

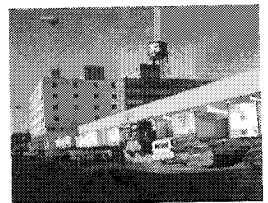
Initially, May Company officials opposed landmark designation. After a prolonged effort we were able to meet with company representatives, and after two sessions reached an accord. May was willing to spend the extra money for a first-class restoration (the cost differential proved to be not that great) if the applicants agreed to a subdivision of the property. The original building and additions of matching design constructed in 1948 and in 1961 would remain in the nomination (Fig. 16). On the other hand, a recent addition, a sprawling, one-story plant entirely different in character, unseen from the two principal public rights of way, and not addressed in the nomination, would be excluded (Fig. 17). This latter component served as the main part of the facility, and May wished to modify it without HPRB review. The loss was non-existent in our view, while the gain of having a major corporate owner support the nomination was significant. The client's good will was especially important if the work done on the building was to be exemplary rather than just meet an acceptable thresh-



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old. Here, where the salient qualities of the exterior hinged on a minimalist treatment, even minor changes in the materials or joinery of new work would conspicuously mar the building's appearance.

I testified before the HPRB on behalf of the applicants. Although all parties supported designation, the statement was detailed, going well beyond the obvious features of the building, which now held widespread appeal, to further the pride the owners took in the property and also to build a strong record for local twentieth-century "industrial" buildings. Supplementing material gathered by ADSW, I drew from my research on retail and other forms of commercial architecture of the period.

Restoration began soon after the HPRB granted designation. The outcome was ideal in every respect, not the least of which is the continued use of a building that shows almost no signs of change.²

I think we all know this building. We pass by it innumerable times in our cars and on the train. When it was constructed in 1936-1937, Hecht's warehouse and service building was consciously situated along a major route into the nation's capital to provide ready access to primary rail lines and roadways, but also to stand as a landmark in the most literal sense of that term: to be an emblem of a retailer that had become a leading business in the metropolitan region; to be a symbol of confidence at a time when the economic climate was still unstable; and to be a new kind of monument in a city resplendent with monuments.

At the dedication ceremony, held on November 23rd, 1936, Chairman of the Board M. S. Hecht emphasized that the building was designed to contribute to an "ever growing, ever more beautiful Washington." Senator Millard Tydings of Maryland went further:

While it bears the commonplace title of warehouse, its builders have seen to it that its architecture is in harmony with comparable new Government buildings . . . [The] features which this building will portray all show not only keen business acumen but . . . the desire to beautify, as well as to promote the improving appearance of the great Capital City of the United States . . . the Hecht Company stands for something finer than just the sale of commodities.

Not all members of Congress may have been so enthusiastic; prejudice against modernism, especially modern architecture, remained strong in Washington's official circles. Yet praise for this design was

Because the building is widely appreciated locally, it seemed appropriate to begin by emphasizing familiar attributes.

widespread, at the national as well as the local level. For a utilitarian building, the Hecht warehouse was considered an exemplary solution.

The building is, of course, very big, with six stories and a basement that initially enclosed nearly 400,000 square feet of space. The original structure consists of a grid of concrete piers, spaced approximately twenty-five feet apart, supporting seven-and-three-quarter-inch thick concrete floor slabs. Most of the space at ground level was originally a staging area for deliveries to and from the building, by rail and by motor truck. Upper floors were devoted to storage and also to a variety of customer services such as furniture upholstery and refinishing. Work areas were placed near the perimeter—a linear area of about nine hundred feet per floor—where a nearly continuous band of glass block, six feet high, provided a more or less even diffusion of natural light without significant glare or draft.

Costing approximately \$1,000,000, the facility functioned as the new nerve center of the Hecht Company's distribution system. Merchandise purchased by the company first came there and was subsequently sent either to the retail store downtown or directly to customers who had placed orders. The large amounts of space, extending two hundred fifty-five feet square on each floor, enhanced the store's capacity both for volume purchasing and for efficient distribution. The direct benefit these improvements had on the consumer in terms of price, selection, and speed of delivery was underscored by a series of full-page advertisements placed in three of the city's newspapers shortly after the facility opened in June 1937.

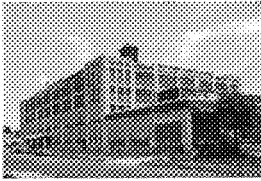
The extent to which the new building improved business operations is underscored by comparing it to previous examples of the type locally. Purpose-built warehouses for Washington department stores did not exist during the early twentieth century. This function was accommodated either in the store itself or off-site in lofts purchased or rented by the company.

These latter facilities tended to be quite modest in nature, as evident in what served as Lansburgh's [another major Washington department store] warehouse until the mid-1920s. Prior to completion of its new building, Hecht's rented space in several locations, the largest of which was an 1880s loft at 613 G Street, N.W., across the street from the store complex.

Purpose-built warehouses began to be erected for Washington department stores during the mid 1920s. The first among them were Lansburgh's on Eighth

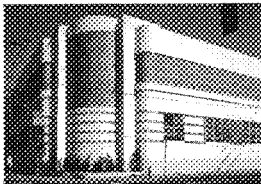
Relatively little was known locally about department store warehouses at that time, however, a fair amount of information could be gleaned from local period sources, including newspaper clippings, without undue difficulty. While the details of its operation might easily be overlooked or dismissed as being of minor importance, they were key to understanding the building's significance.

Street between D and E, N.W., in 1923 and Kann's at Delaware Avenue and C Street, S.W., in 1925—neither of which remains extant. None of these compared with Hecht's in size or character. Indeed the only examples of the type that began to approach the dimensions of Hecht's were warehouses constructed for major food and drug store chains during the inter-war decades. Among those examples, that built in 1923 by the Sanitary Grocery Company at Fourth and T streets, N.E., containing some 200,000 square feet of floor space, was probably the most ambitious (Fig. 18). By the early 1920s only the very largest urban department stores—the giants in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Los Angeles, for example—had shifted from onsite warehouses to big facilities removed from the city center. The claim made that Hecht's had the largest warehouse of its kind south of New York was not, in all likelihood, an exaggeration.



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When it was unveiled in January 1936, the original design for Hecht's warehouse was much like its forebears in larger cities in its massive, imposing, and frankly utilitarian character. The radical change in its exterior treatment that occurred over the next few months transformed both the appearance and its symbolic associations in a profound way. The revised plan redefined the meaning of "modern" from an unadorned, classicizing, and businesslike composition to a sleek, banded one suggestive far more of future promise than of traditional solidity. The new exterior design reflected a tendency known as streamlining, with which architects in the United States had been experimenting for some years, but which was just beginning to emerge as a significant force in executed work.



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The same basic subject was discussed in the Greyhound case, and while most members of the HPRB remained the same, five years had elapsed. I thought it important to reiterate key facets within this context.

Among the most widespread manifestations of this mode was found in industrial buildings—including factories, research laboratories, and warehouses—such as the more or less contemporary designs for Eastman Kodak in Rochester, New York, and for Owens-Illinois Glass in Los Angeles (Fig. 19). This imagery was potent in its suggestion of a better tomorrow achieved through science, technology, and efficient business practices. Streamlining was, of course, derived from principles of aerodynamic design, which, while irrelevant to static objects, nevertheless projected positive associations with the great strides made in transportation, especially in the design of motor vehicles and airplanes, during the 1930s.

The ambient newness of streamlining made it ideal for Hecht's, which was the youngest of Washington's major department stores.

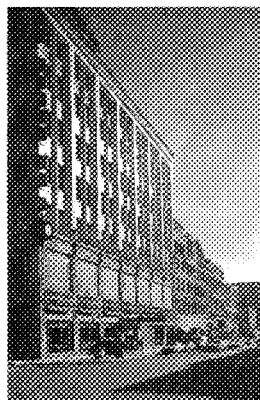
By the time Hecht's opened its doors in 1896, the

Palais Royal had been in operation for almost two decades. Woodward & Lothrop and Lansburgh's dated from the early 1880s, Kann's a decade later, and Goldenberg's from 1895. During its first two decades, Hecht's emerged as one of the city's largest emporia, but it was not until 1925 that it completed a new store commensurate with its hard-won stature (Fig. 20). The Palais Royal, whose big building was opened in 1893; Woodward & Lothrop, whose eight-story pile was completed in 1913; and Lansburgh's, whose six-story plant followed three years later, had been the standard-bearers in this respect.

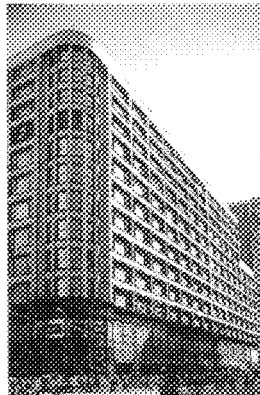
The 1920s was really only the beginning of Hecht's transformation. Business continued to expand significantly during the depression decade. Indeed, these years were crucial ones for Hecht's in securing a major share of the mass market. Thenceforth Woodward & Lothrop was Hecht's only serious rival among locally-based department stores. Three months after completion of the warehouse, Hecht's opened a three-deck parking garage, an early example nationally of one designed as an integral component of a major downtown department store. In 1941, the company completed a five-story addition to its complex, increasing floor space by 75,000 square feet. Then between 1945 and 1950 when Hecht's launched one of the most ambitious branch-store building campaigns of any major downtown department store on the East Coast. Macy's and Wanamaker's were among its few rivals in this sphere.

If Hecht's downtown store still seemed small compared to its New York and Philadelphia counterparts, the warehouse was quite another matter. The building's great size, composition, and some of its distinguishing elements suggested not so much a utilitarian facility as a department store in its own right. The rounded corner bay, rising the height of the building and capped by a crowning motif, the whole serving as a visual anchor to long expanses of window bands, had been a signature component of department store design virtually from its origins in mid-nineteenth-century Paris, a primary example of which was the Bon Marché of 1869-76. A number of examples could be found in the U.S. by the late nineteenth century, among the most famous being Louis Sullivan's Carson Pirie Scott & Company store in Chicago, erected in several stages between 1898 and 1906 (Fig.21).³ Although this arrangement was seldom used during the first decades of the twentieth century, when analogies to the Renaissance palace became preferred, the tables were turned by the mid-1920s. Now expressed in a new way by the avant-garde, the dy-

In this sequence, the existing ties between purpose, expression, and patronage were explained.



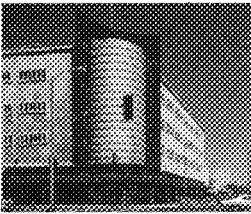
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dynamic, linear composition returned as an emblem of the large, fashionable retail outlet.

The key initial work in this realm was by Erich Mendelsohn of Berlin, whose Schocken Department Store buildings, particularly that in Stuttgart of 1926-28, became widely emulated throughout Weimar Germany and elsewhere in Europe as well. Mendelsohn brilliantly synthesized the dynamic abstraction championed by the avant-garde and the sumptuousness of materials and detail cherished by the previous generation of modernists who created Art Nouveau. His work became a standard-bearer in commercial design on several continents and continued to be influential after World War II. For a number of young American architects who were becoming advocates of modernism in the 1930s, Mendelsohn's commercial buildings were probably as great a source of inspiration as anything then found on this side of the Atlantic. Economic conditions precluded much retail-related work in this vein on a large scale. Hecht's warehouse was among the few exceptions, and although contemporary accounts cite unspecified Scandinavian designs as a primary source, it is almost certainly German examples to which the reference was being made. Another significant exception was the mammoth May Company Wilshire store in Los Angeles, designed by A. C. Martin and Samuel Marx and built in 1938-39. Enclosing some 270,000 square feet, the facility was by far the biggest branch department store in the country at that time and a benchmark in the shift to large-scale store development in outlying areas of cities after World War II (Fig. 22). Both the May store and Hecht's warehouse stand as singular monuments to a pivotal time in the development of large retail-related facilities.



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Although not much was then known about the firm, it was important to put the information at hand into a context that was useful for the case.

The Hecht's building also was a pivotal one in the history of Abbott, Merkt & Company, the architectural and engineering firm responsible for its design. Founded in 1922 by Hunsley Abbott and Otto Merkt, the office specialized in plans for utilitarian structures, including power plants and piers as well as warehouses and buildings used for industry. Much more needs to be learned about Abbott, Merkt, which soon gained a considerable reputation and was working on a large scale.

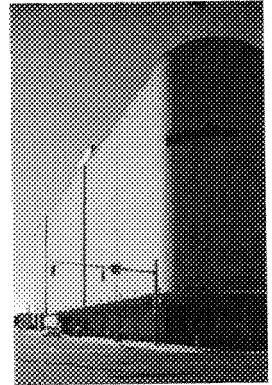
Occasionally, early designs by the firm were covered by the architectural press, such as the Port Authority Commerce Building in New York of the early 1930s, which contained over 2.5 million square feet—mostly of unencumbered space for lease to a wide range of commercial enterprises—and which allowed trailer trucks direct access to all fourteen of its floors.

In Washington, Abbott, Merkt designed the Kann's warehouse, an equally large facility for the Palais Royal in 1930, and, eight years later, after Hecht's, a warehouse of about the same size for Woodward & Lothrop.

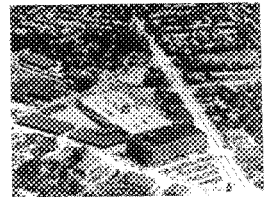
Abbott, Merkt's strongest ties to Washington were with the Hecht Company, which appears to have figured significantly in the firm's emergence as a well-known designer of large retail complexes by the mid 1950s. Abbott, Merkt prepared the plans for both the 1937 parking garage and 1940 store additions to Hecht's complex downtown. After the war, the firm designed Hecht's first branch (and the first full-fledged department store branch in the metropolitan area), which opened in Silver Spring in 1947 (Fig. 23). With another New York office, Kahn & Jacobs, Abbott, Merkt designed the huge Hecht complex called Parkington, of 1950-52. Situated near the Clarendon business district in Arlington County, [Virginia] this was the area's first shopping center targeted to a regional audience, and it attracted widespread attention nationally (Fig. 24).⁴ Abbott, Merkt continued to do work for Hecht's, including its 1954 store at Norwood Shopping Center in Baltimore, and, in a consulting role, at its 1957-58 store at Prince George's Plaza [Maryland]. By that time, Abbott, Merkt had designed at least several regional shopping malls and large department store branches in the New York [City] metropolitan area as well as service and warehouse facilities from Rochester to Los Angeles.

The extensive publicity Abbott, Merkt received from the Hecht's warehouse alone no doubt contributed to its reputation, especially among retailers. For over a decade after its completion, the building was cited as a model of its type. By the 1950s, the "Hecht's system" of centralized distribution of all goods from the warehouse to the parent store and branches alike became well recognized in the retail field. Even Hecht's advertising campaign that used the facility as an emblem of service attracted the attention of the *Dry Goods Economist*, a principal organ of the department store industry. The warehouse also was covered extensively by the architectural press, with articles appearing in both *Pencil Points* and the *Architectural Record*. The building was only one of six in Washington listed in the Museum of Modern Art's *Guide to Modern Architecture* [in the] *Northeast States*, published in 1940.

It is not hard to see why so much interest was generated in the design as well as the business realms. The elemental forms and composition of the building epitomized those characteristics that modernists so



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admired in engineering solutions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—the work they considered to be their most important legacy from the recent past. Furthermore, Hecht's warehouse was one of the few large, multi-story buildings in the country that was largely devoid of applied ornament and used the ribbon window as its leitmotif. The modernist fascination with this minimalist approach to designing commercial buildings had been nurtured for some years so that by the mid 1930s prototypical schemes such as Mies van der Rohe's studies of 1921-22 for glass buildings in Berlin had achieved the status of icons. If the Hecht's design seemed very stylish to the public and members of the retail trade, it seemed a harbinger of a new, "rational," function-generated discipline in architectural design to the avant garde.

Another aspect of Hecht's that attracted widespread attention was its use of glass block—reputedly the largest application of the material at that time anywhere. This was, and remains, one of the most striking features of the exterior, contributing both to its pervasive simplicity and textural intricacy. When Abbott, Merkt redesigned the building in the early months of 1936, use of glass block remained in its infancy.

Consisting of two equal parts, shaped like shallow square bowls, which are fused at a high temperature creating a partial vacuum of dry air between them, glass blocks had been created by hand in Europe for some decades.⁵ Examples were introduced to the United States as early as 1929, but it was apparently not until the enthusiastic public reception given to the extensive use of glass products at the 1933 Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago that American companies became interested in the manufacture of glass blocks. The challenge was to devise machine techniques that enabled efficient, inexpensive mass-production. Corning Glass Works unveiled a prototypical block by September 1935. Shortly thereafter, Owens-Illinois Glass Company introduced its Insulux Blocks—the ones used for Hecht's. Corning does not seem to have become a serious competitor until 1936 when further modifications were made to its blocks and a joint venture established with Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company to produce them. The decision to use Insulux Blocks at Hecht's was thus a bold one; little precedent existed for the material as a building element, let alone one applied on so grand a scale.

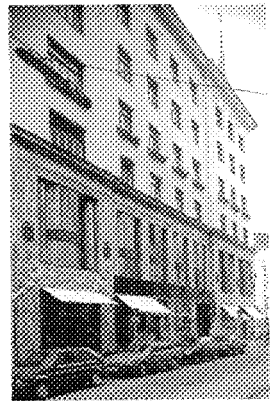
The properties of glass block gave it many advantages. When multiple blocks were assembled they combined a primary function of a window—admission of natural light—with the non-structural func-

Building materials often get noted in passing or not at all in discussions of a property's significance. Here it was important not only to emphasize what was then a relatively novel application, but to offer some historical background. Little was known about the history of glass block at that time. Sweet's Catalogues and architectural magazines of the period were the primary sources.

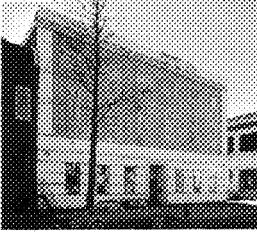
tions of a wall—thermal and noise insulation, privacy, and security. The block's surface patterns aided both in the transmission of light and in its diffusion, thereby reducing glare, to create an effect similar to windows of transparent glass with a northern exposure. Glass blocks reduced the effect of solar radiation as well as those of external cold and wind. The product was strong enough to be self-supporting and also had a considerable degree of lateral strength, permitting its use in long bands with only an occasional expansion joint. Glass blocks were easy to clean and relatively easy to replace. Moreover, they were cheap, costing roughly the same as the steel-frame sash or casements that were then standard for industrial buildings and often used for many other types as well.

On practical grounds alone, many parties were eager to make use of the material once it was mass-manufactured. Between 1936 and 1941, glass block became a ubiquitous signature of modernism in all its varied forms coast to coast. American manufacturing techniques also were exported to Europe. Yet, as might be expected, most initial applications were modest, even tentative in nature. The Hecht warehouse and a now demolished plant for the Capital Square Corporation in Columbus, Ohio, were among the very first realized projects where glass block was a significant generative force in the character of the design.

Aesthetics was as important a factor as practical attributes in the meteoric rise of glass block use. Architects had been experimenting with the potentials of translucent glass for several decades. Prism glass panels were put to a number of utilitarian uses such as lights for underground storage areas and transoms for stores in the U.S. For European modernists, however, prism glass seemed a key to developing new forms of expression.⁶ In the decade before World War I, a number of experiments were made in this realm, including such major works as Charles Rennie Mackintosh's addition to the School of Art in Glasgow (1907-1909) and Adolf Loos's Goldman & Salatsch store in Vienna (1909-1911) (Fig. 25). Perhaps the boldest of these ventures and one that would have a significant impact on thinking after the war was Bruno Taut's Glashaus at the 1914 Deutscher Werkbund Exhibition at Cologne, in which the entire setting was dependent upon the effects of natural light. The idea reached epic proportions during the 1920s when the pursuit of an architecture in which light played a dominant role became a passion among modernists abroad. A decade later, glass block allowed such pursuits to come much closer to reality. The product's strength and durability



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No matter how wide-ranging the geographic examples used to place the resource into context, it is important to end with local examples to drive the points of significance home.

lifted many of the constraints inherent in working with small panels comprised of fragile parts.

The Hecht warehouse thus stands as a monument in several spheres—technology not the least among them. Few buildings in the U.S. and nothing in Washington rival the way in, or the extent to which, glass block was used at an early stage. The closest one comes locally is the splendid office quarters of the Manhattan Laundry, also built in 1936 (Fig. 26).⁷

Among building types related to retailing, only a few properties in the nation's capital, such as the 1930 Park and Shop, are of the same import from a national perspective.⁸

Hecht's warehouse ranks equally high among local examples of streamline design. We still have the 1940 Greyhound terminal, thanks to the decisive action taken by this board, and also a few superb apartment buildings such as those by Joseph Abel.⁹ Others are gone, the greatest lost being Thomas Lamb's Trans-Lux Theatre of 1936. Many more have been extensively altered.

Likewise the legacy of Abbott, Merkt is disappearing. Parkington, Hecht's Silver Spring, [Maryland] and other postwar work in the metropolitan area has been or is being remodeled in quite different veins. Among the major local projects, the 1937-39 warehouse for Woodward & Lothrop is perhaps the only other major example that retains its original character.

In its design, materials, program and associations, Hecht's warehouse is indeed an extraordinary building. It has always been a Washington landmark—a beacon, a portal, a grand gesture no less than an efficient facility, an emblem of a great business and also of aspirations—in retailing, in design, and in the quality of the environment. Its merits are intrinsic, not relative; they transcend time and place no less than they embody a remarkable period in American architecture and in the history of our city.



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131 M Street, N.E.

Constructed 1937-1939, Abbott, Merkt & Company, architects/engineers

Landmark application filed, September 1991

Application heard before and approved by HPRB, November 1992

CHAPTER III

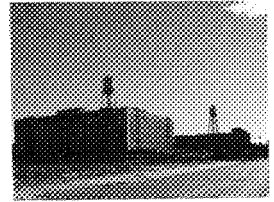
WOODWARD & LOTHROP WAREHOUSE: WHEN NOTHING IS OBVIOUS

The record crafted for the Hecht Company warehouse proved useful sooner than expected when I was asked by DCPL a year later to argue the case before the HPRB for the Woodward & Lothrop warehouse. Besides being of the same vintage, the two buildings have the same function, size, and designers (Figs. 27-29). The situation was not as smooth-going as it had been with Hecht's, however. In the eyes of some of those involved, this building did not possess nearly the same visual appeal. Furthermore, the developer, who had an alliance with the partnership that owned the property, strenuously opposed designation and hired a battery of consultants to build a case against it. DCPL's overtures to discuss alternative plans in which the warehouse could be retained and adapted to new purposes were steadfastly rebuffed.

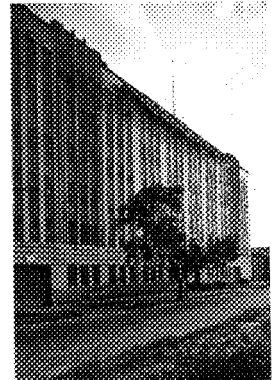
Despite basic similarities, the Woodward & Lothrop warehouse was not the same as Hecht's and required a somewhat different approach in its presentation. The challenge was to invalidate thinking molded on personal taste and to keep the debate from being that of a beauty contest. The building had to be understood on its own terms. Since the Hecht case, a number of new HPRB members had been appointed, so it was necessary to cover the subject in detail once again. Furthermore, I had found a considerable amount of additional information on department store warehouses in the course of research. The major source was *Women's Wear Daily*, one of the most detailed chronicles of the retail field.

Support for the case was strong. A survey of industrial properties in the District of Columbia commissioned by the Historic Preservation Department (HPD) had identified the building as one of the most important and the staff report recommended designation. Furthermore, none of the consultants hired by the developer had done research on the subject, locally or otherwise, prior to this case. Nevertheless, we assumed it would be an uphill battle given the vehemence of the opposition and the fact that the warehouse might not seem a "natural" for designation the way Hecht's facility did.

The opposition took so long in presenting its arguments that the hearing had to be continued two weeks later. This sequencing provided the advantage of time to prepare a de-



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tailed rebuttal. I did not hesitate to develop a lengthy one given the heated nature of the debate. Ultimately, the rebuttal proved necessary, I believe, to prevailing. The HPRB was not unanimous, but voted to designate.¹

The developer has since withdrawn his project, but not before a considerable lobbying effort. At one point, an initiative was spawned to exempt industrial buildings from the preservation ordinance. Misinformation abounded. At least one member of the City Council approached the chairman of the Committee of 100 asking why that organization was trying to landmark every warehouse in the city. Under the circumstances, having built a strong, detailed record for designation was especially important to protecting that designation, the organizations that endorsed it, and the HPRB.

Since the Hecht Company warehouse case was heard, I have found a rather extensive amount of information concerning the formative period of the department store warehouse as a specialized type, material which for the first time allows us to attain a clear picture of this type's salient historical attributes and of the reasons why such facilities were crucial to the ongoing growth of the department store as a major component of the commercial landscape in this country.

The Woodward & Lothrop warehouse is the sort of building many of us tend to take for granted, and indeed may dismiss as being of little consequence.

I plan to show that quite the opposite is the case. As an example of its type, and within this context, the design and architects as well as its client represent an account worth telling and a legacy worthy of passing down to future generations. To put the building into its proper historical perspective, some background is necessary.

The trend toward large-scale retailing had few conspicuous manifestations before 1900. The emergence of such purpose-built facilities belongs in large part to our own century and has profoundly affected the shape and character of metropolitan areas. The first of these manifestations occurred during the 1890s and, especially, the 1900s with the building of lavish and very large downtown emporia, the pace-setting examples of which were department stores. The second crucial development occurred during the 1920s, with the proliferation of modest-sized chain store units catering to routine needs. Third was the emergence sizable branches of downtown stores sited in outlying districts of cities, which became a pronounced tendency by the eve of the Depression. By that time, too, sustaining large-scale retail operations for all three types came to depend upon a fourth: the big, remote-

Up front, I wanted to let the Board know that my testimony was not going to be a rehash of that on the Hecht warehouse.

It is also better to confront prejudices at the outset than to try and ignore them. By suggesting that biases may be widespread, however, an accusatory tone is avoided.

site, purpose-built warehouse and service facility.

These warehouses lack the glamorous associations of the stores they served and received little attention in their own day outside the retail and building industries; however, they comprise a type that demanded considerable sophistication in planning as well as considerable investment of capital. The major prototype for such work lay with the enormous wholesale buildings constructed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Unlike these precursors, the department store warehouse was designed to hold a wide range of goods and house them in such a way as to facilitate small-scale deliveries to the store and to individual consumers rather than large-scale shipments to distributors or retailers. The department store warehouse also became as much a center for service—from reupholstering furniture to repairing pianos—as for storage. Finally, there was no need for these facilities to congregate in a single, closely-knit district, as befitted many wholesale operations. The criteria for site selection included relatively inexpensive land, proximity to a major rail line, and convenient access both to the parent store, generally no more than a mile or two distant, and to customers' residences. Ongoing improvements made to truck design were an important part of this equation, for these vehicles became essential means of transferring small quantities of goods on a frequent basis to households throughout the metropolitan area.

During the nineteenth century, storage, service, and delivery functions were generally contained within the department store itself. If additional space was needed for storage, it was often secured through renting loft space adjacent to or near the store. What led to the development of large, remote-site warehouses was the exponential growth of major downtown department stores during the first three decades of the twentieth century. When it was founded in 1896, for example, the Broadway Store in Los Angeles contained 12,000 square feet. Ten years later, the square footage stood at 48,000; by 1913 it was 142,000. When a new building was completed in 1916, it housed 457,000 square feet. The profile of Woodward & Lothrop, up through its acquisition of the adjacent Palais Royal [Department Store] plant in 1946, is similar (Fig. 30).

A rapid increase in size entailed very costly building programs that included ever more extravagant customer facilities on land that was itself quickly rising in value. Furthermore, until the late nineteenth century, most of these stores had primarily or exclusively dealt in dry goods. Now, as true department

Without the sleek appearance of Hecht's and a supportive owner to propel this case, it was important to begin by establishing a broad context that underscored the importance of the building type to modern retailing.

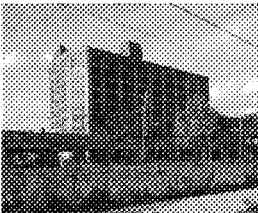
Here I would have used Woodward & Lothrop as the illustration, except that the request to testify came only about a week before the hearing and there was no time to undertake additional research. To quantify the dramatic increase, I relied on the figures I had available.



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stores, the range of products was rapidly increasing to include furniture and furnishings, flooring materials, toys, and other articles that consumed vast quantities of space. Unlike clothing and accessories, these bulky goods could be sold through the use of samples on the floor, with most of the inventory stored elsewhere until individual orders were filled. Combined, these factors made it ever more desirable to devote a maximum amount of space to selling, with support functions housed off site where land was much less expensive and where there might be even speedier access to customers' houses. The logistics of delivery also became an increasing encumbrance to the downtown plant due to the growing number of loading bays required and increasing amount of space occupied by idle delivery vehicles.

The key period when the purpose-built department store warehouse came into its own was between the Armistice and the Depression. During that decade, many department stores expanded to capacity on their respective downtown sites. Woodward & Lothrop is a good example. Existing space was converted to retail and new space was devoted primarily for that purpose. The fact that in many cities there was a rapid increase in the number of customers who drove downtown gave added impetus to moving the fleet of delivery vehicles away from the store. Between 1925 and 1930 a veritable boom in purpose-built, remote-site warehouse construction occurred in cities throughout the U.S., two examples of which were for Strawbridge & Clothier in Philadelphia (ca. 1925) and the May Company in Cleveland (1927-28) (Figs. 31-32). In a number of cases, delivery buildings were planned as separate facilities, as with Bamberger's in Newark (1922-23) or, again, Strawbridge & Clothier (1928-29).



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By the decade's end, the integrated facility—housing storage, service, and delivery functions—became more common, owing to the efficiencies it brought to construction, maintenance, and, especially, operation. Many of these were enormous facilities containing 400,000 or more square feet—as big as the store itself, such as with Lord & Taylor in New York (1928-29) and Horne's in Pittsburgh (1927-28). These buildings could become conspicuous landmarks in their own right—symbols of the company's size and sophistication in retailing practices. The program was a relatively complex one: each floor was planned to accommodate a specific set of functions that were related to one another both horizontally—across space—and vertically—from level to level.



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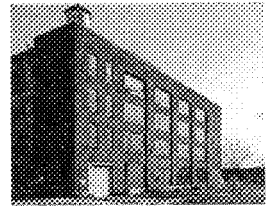
Now this phenomenon had relatively minor impact on Washington during the 1920s. The metropoli-

tan area was of course much smaller than a Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Detroit, or Cleveland. Furthermore, the downtown retail core was quite diffuse for a city of its size, extending on Seventh Street from Mount Vernon Square to Pennsylvania Avenue and on F Street from Seventh to Fourteenth—a linear distance of some fifteen blocks—so that the pressure to develop off-site facilities was not as intense at first as in some other places. Typically, Washington's department stores adhered to the nineteenth-century pattern of renting loft space adjacent to or near the main building, as occurred with the Hecht Company and Lansburgh's—both now gone.

When Lansburgh's expanded its store, it also erected what was probably the city's first purpose-built department store warehouse, a project of 1923 located right across from the emporium on Eighth Street and designed by Milburn & Heister, who prepared plans for the main building as well. A more ambitious program was begun by Kann's two years later, with a remote-site facility containing some 100,000 square feet at Delaware Avenue and C Street, S.W., Kann's hired a New York firm, which had been in business for less than three years, but which was already advertising nationally in retail trade publications and appears already to have acquired a reputation for buildings of this type. That firm was Abbott, Merkt & Company, about whom we will hear a good deal more later. In 1930, the Palais Royal commissioned Abbott, Merkt to prepare plans for its new facility on First Street, N.E., between L and M, which was slightly larger (Fig. 33). For almost another decade, the Kann's and Palais Royal warehouses remained the largest and most ambitious buildings of their kind locally. Goldenberg's rented the former National Guard Armory at 5th and L streets, N.W., in 1926—a building that contained some 70,000 square feet. Woodward & Lothrop rented a building constructed in 1917 by the Columbia Warehouse Development Company on First Street across from the Palais Royal building. Lansburgh's new warehouse, built in 1939 at S. Capitol and P streets, S.W., was of much the same genre.

Far larger and more imposing than any department store warehouse built locally before the Depression was that of the Sanitary Grocery Company at Fourth and T streets, N.E., in 1923-24. Designed by the Ballinger Company of Philadelphia, one of the East Coast's biggest architectural and engineering firms specializing in industrial plants, the building contained over 200,000 square feet to service what was then the metropolitan area's largest retail chain of food stores.

The situation changed dramatically after the worst



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It is important to cite as many local examples as possible to build the case of significance for the property under review.

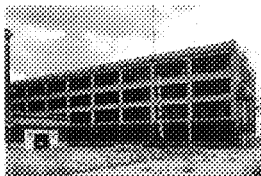
years of the depression when the city's two largest department stores, Hecht's and Woodward & Lothrop, each erected a warehouse that was not only much larger than local predecessors, but also unusually distinctive among examples of the type nationally. Each was a major landmark along the transportation corridor extending north and east from Union Station. Hecht's plans for a building of nearly 400,000 square feet were announced in January 1936; the facility was completed in June 1937. At that time, Woodward & Lothrop unveiled plans for an even larger facility (450,000 square feet), fronting M Street, N.E., between First and the railroad tracks. This plant was completed two years later, in the summer of 1939. The architects of both buildings were Abbott, Merkt.

For the first time, Washington had department store warehouses that represented the most advanced work in this sphere. Philadelphia was the only other East Coast city south of the Hudson River where comparably ambitious examples existed. Probably neither the Woodward & Lothrop nor the Hecht warehouses represented major advances in the type from a utilitarian standpoint; rather they stand as a continuation of what was still a new phenomenon that was reaching maturity just before the Depression. However, both buildings *do* represent a pronounced departure from convention in their exterior treatment. Equally important, the two designs are very different from one another in appearance, each manifesting a distinct image reflective of its owner.

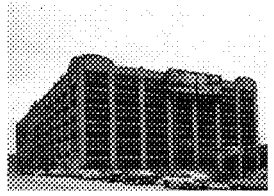
The most basic resolution of the warehouse exterior was to leave the reinforced concrete frame exposed, fill the openings with large window units, and provide little or no embellishment—an approach well evident in the Strawbridge & Clothier facility, which also is by Abbott, Merkt. This became a standard approach for the design of factories during the early twentieth century, an important example of which is Albert Kahn's Highland Park plant for Ford Motor Company in Detroit (Fig. 34). Yet, beginning with wholesale facilities of the late nineteenth century, the large warehouse often was deemed worthy of more prestigious expression, as can be seen with the vast Bush Terminal complex in Brooklyn, which was started in 1895. This approach generally entailed minor modification to the mass, arrangement of elements, and surface of the concrete frame to suggest that the whole had been thoughtfully composed according to academic canons of the period.

This latter approach continued to represent the mainstream in the design of large warehouses of all sorts through the 1920s, as seen in a later unit at Bush

It was important to emphasize the differences between the two buildings, without suggesting one was less significant than the other. I tried to do this by focusing on the meaning of that difference in the paragraphs below.



Terminal and also at Bloomingdale's warehouse in Queens, designed by Abbott, Merkt in 1927 (Fig. 35). The firm, like others specializing in utilitarian buildings, consciously pursued achieving a balance in expression whereby the building frankly bespoke its general function and at the same time read as an addition, an asset, to the urban landscape. Hunley Abbott, president of the company, wrote that Bloomingdale's "reflects its purpose. It is massive, strong, and simple, without unnecessary decoration or ornamentation, but the proportions are dignified and pleasing, and truly express the inner usefulness and function of the structure."

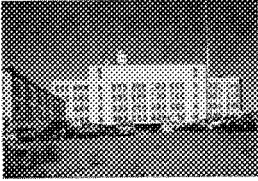


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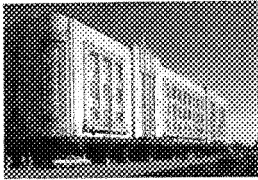
When Abbott, Merkt designed the Hecht Company warehouse nearly a decade later, their approach to exterior treatment had not changed. What led to the dramatic modification of that design over the next few months is not fully documented. Yet a primary reason appears to have been that the company anticipated using part of the building as a retail outlet if future residential development in the northeast part of the metropolitan area warranted.² The final design is indeed as suggestive of a department store of the period as it is of a strictly utilitarian facility. Then, too, Hecht's was an upstart among the city's department stores. During the Depression, Hecht's continued its aggressive expansion campaign. Under the circumstances, the use of slick, streamlined imagery, then popularly considered the very embodiment of newness, was a logical choice.

Woodward & Lothrop, on the other hand, was an older, larger, more conservative company, catering to a more well-heeled audience. It was generally viewed as the city's premier department store, rivaled only by Julius Garfinckel, which carried just clothing and accessories. This hierarchical order was extremely important not only to how department store executives viewed their respective operations, but to the image they projected to the public—in short, to their marketing strategies. Given this mix of ego and business pragmatism, the very last thing Woodward & Lothrop would have commissioned was a warehouse that looked like it was imitating the one just completed by Hecht's. Yet since Hecht's had set a new standard by creating a building of extraordinary presence, adhering to the industrial-looking norm would not have been desirable either, for it might suggest Woodward & Lothrop was slipping behind its go-getting rival. This was an especially touchy matter since Hecht's was now targeting many of Woodward & Lothrop's traditional clientele in an effort both to upgrade as well as to expand its market.

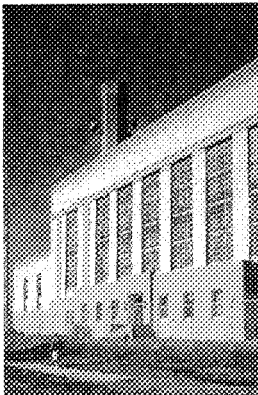
These comments are strictly deductions, of course. Often the factual evidence no longer exists, if it ever did in written form. It is important nevertheless to seek logical explanations for uncommon attributes in order to understand the full significance of the resource.



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This was another way to tie the building to the local context that had been generally overlooked, but which added to its interest to the community.

The solution was to pursue a form of expression that was not only distinct from Hecht's, but seemed rather the opposite in character—a scheme that would embody Woodward & Lothrop's ostensibly superior position in the retail field. Here the effect, achieved through both the surface materials and the way in which they are composed, suggests neither a utilitarian building nor a futuristic one. Rather it bears affinity to the modern classical office buildings then being erected in Washington for the federal government. Even the rear of the warehouse is composed in a manner similar to that of numerous monumental public buildings such as that for the District of Columbia government at Judiciary Square (Fig. 36). The exterior also carries associations with fashionable downtown retail outlets of the late 1920s. Simplified versions of this sort of abstracted, classically-inspired modernism—what we today often call Art Deco—continued to be popular for prominent retail facilities through the next decade, as seen in San Antonio with the Kress Company store of 1938 and the remodeled Joske's department store of 1939 (Fig. 37).

That image became closely tied to corporate identity is further evidenced by in the continuing differences found in the branch stores of the two companies after World War II, a period when their rivalry intensified. Hecht's embraced a sleek, wholly non-referential modernism; Woodward & Lothrop cultivated associations to a dignified past—as seen with preliminary schemes for Hecht's Silver Spring store by William Lescaze in 1945 and Woodward & Lothrop's Chevy Chase [Maryland] store prepared the following year by Arthur Davis—the latter design one that bears obvious relation to the warehouse. This dichotomy continued through the next decade, as seen with the Hecht store at Parkington [Arlington, Virginia] and Woodward & Lothrop's stores at Seven Corners [Virginia] and Wheaton Plaza [Maryland].

Woodward & Lothrop's pursuit of a dignified, conservative, classically-derived presence at its warehouse further reflects a broader tendency in local practices of the period. Throughout the District of Columbia, movie theaters of the late 1930s and 1940s assumed a similarly decorous character, one which so contrasted with practices elsewhere that they were referred to as comprising a "Washington style" among motion picture exhibitors. Much the same approach is manifested in the Buzzard Point plant of the Potomac Electric Power Company of 1933, with extensions made in the 1940s (Fig. 38). No regulation or central review authority stipulated treatment in most instances, but widespread sentiment existed among architects, civic lead-

ers, and some members of the business community during the inter-war decades that new "public" buildings should be appropriate to their setting in the nation's capital and to the matrix for monumental dignity established from the beginning by the L'Enfant plan.

When viewed up close it is very clear that the Woodward & Lothrop warehouse is not developed in the kind of detail then found on many government and commercial buildings; such treatment was probably not considered necessary. Rather the elevations provide a basic outline that gains its full impact when seen from a distance. That attribute is important because, unlike the Hecht Company warehouse, this building was never meant to be seen up close by the general public. It stands a long block south of New York Avenue and a long block east of North Capitol Street [the two closest arteries]. But it was clearly meant to be seen by motorists riding along these thoroughfares as well as by passengers in trains to the east. All three elevations that are primarily evident from these routes—north, east, and west—are composed as principal ones in a nearly identical form. It is from these more distant places that the true character of the scheme is manifest. Abbott, Merkt had already shown their adeptness at relating a design to the most appropriate vantage point with their leviathan Port Authority Commerce Building in New York of the early 1930s, a scheme that reads as a no-nonsense, utilitarian cliff up close and as an impressive sculptural mass from some blocks away and from the Hudson River (Fig.39).

That gets us to Abbott, Merkt, a firm that has unfortunately proven rather elusive. Founded in 1922, Abbott, Merkt quickly gained recognition for its designs of utilitarian buildings, particularly those done for retail companies. The department store warehouse was a key type upon which the firm created its reputation. By the mid 1920s it was designing well beyond the New York region, including the Kann's warehouse in Washington, the facilities for Strawbridge & Clothier and Bamberger's that I have shown you, and one for H. & S. Pogue in Cincinnati. Abbott, Merkt did several major examples in New York, including that already mentioned for Bloomingdale's and one nearby in Queens for James A. Hearn & Son (1928-1929). By the 1950s, their work in this genre could be found coast to coast. After World War II, Abbott, Merkt also made significant contributions to the design of retail buildings.

While this legacy is recent, much of it has disappeared or experienced major alterations. As local examples of the type and of the work of Abbott, Merkt,



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This was a key point in trying to persuade the HPRB that designation should not be based primarily on current views of the building's appearance.

the Hecht and Woodward & Lothrop warehouses are in a league by themselves. Both the similarities (size, function, date, designer) and the pronounced differences in character make each the more historically significant because of the presence of the other.

I know of absolutely nothing comparable to this pair in any other U.S. city, irrespective of its size. Washington is very fortunate to have two such important examples of the type, commissioned by the city's two largest retailers, and designed by a firm that was nationally recognized as a leader in this specialized realm. This legacy tells us much, not just about the utilitarian side of retailing, but about the architecture of commerce and the vital contribution it has made to the character of the metropolitan landscape.

The opposition's statement, which was more than 100 pages long, included reports from two historians, written under contract. Testimony presented by the opposition followed the content of that document closely. The opposition claimed that:

1. the "building is of no historical importance to the District of Columbia"—that is, it "was not considered significant at the time of its construction, on its own terms or even by comparison to the opening of other department stores warehouses . . . the other major department stores in the District had built warehouse/service centers long before . . ." The most important period for modern warehouse development was the early twentieth century, not the 1930s;

2. the "building is not historically related to railroads or to Union Station"—a point that could be inferred from the nomination but one I did not think particularly important to address beyond discussion of the siting in my testimony;

3. the "building is not part of an historic or cohesive district"—a point not worth debating;

4. the "building does not exemplify a distinguishing building type";

5. "Abbott, Merkt & Company are of only marginal prominence and this is not one of their 'notable' works, which were primarily retail buildings";

6. the "building does not embody a distinguishing architectural style"—i.e., is not a good example of Art Deco; and

7. the "building has lost both its structural and contextural integrity"—by virtual of removal of interior ramps and an extension of loading docks in 1968 and the loss of many of the buildings in the area in recent decades.

These arguments are commonly made, so much so that they can be anticipated in a contested hearing. Since rebuttals (when they are part of the procedure) are generally made on the same day as the presentation, it is worthwhile to consider ahead of time what might be said in opposing designation.

My approach generally is not to refute arguments one-by-one, which could sound like carping, but rather focus on what I believe to be the central issues—the factors that are the strongest for designation.

The opposition's attorney tried to have my rebuttal stricken from the record, arguing that it introduced new material. Such a motion may be considered a compliment, as it infers you succeeded in driving your points home. The HPRB chairman ruled that mine was a proper rebuttal and would stand. Under the local ordinance, the applicant can rebut, but the opposition may not in landmark and historic district designation hearings.

REBUTTAL

I have reviewed very carefully the testimony prepared by the consultants working for the opposing party in this case, and after going through this material, it brought to mind cases where I have been in a review situation similar to yours, where one reads the nomination and then one reads a \$30,000 consultant's report that debunks the nomination.

I am not always certain which end is up, especially when the opposition's report criticizes the nomination by claiming what is *not* significant without saying what is significant.

In this case, if all the claims made in the consultants' report were taken at face value, then the survey that was initiated, guided, and accepted by the Historic Preservation Division of this city as a basis for understanding significant examples of warehouses in the District of Columbia would be all wet. The staff report prepared for this case would be all wet. The applicant, DCPL, would be all wet. The two area-wide groups with preservation as a major field of activity, the Art Deco Society, and the Committee of 100, both of which strongly support this nomination, would be all wet. Richard Striner, who has done the pioneering research on Art Deco architecture in the metropolitan area, and who has written one of the best concise pieces we have on this realm of design generally, would be all wet [he wrote a letter supporting designation]. And yours truly, who has spent the last decade intensely researching retail developments in the United States,

I had no idea what the consultants' fees were, individually or collectively, but such high figures are by no means unprecedented when a valuable commercial property is at stake. Many reviewing bodies are not aware of this factor, and it can be worthwhile to bring it to their attention in a way that is not accusatory or otherwise provocative, especially when the proponents for designation are volunteering their efforts.

It is valuable to delineate areas of expertise without lapsing into ad homonym critiques.

In the paragraphs that follow I sought to restructure my previously presented material to build a sequence that would make it difficult, perhaps impossible, to deny the building met the threshold for designation.

focusing on the inter-war decades, would be all wet.

Now, we're all human, and we all make mistakes—I certainly do. But I think it is unlikely that so many knowledgeable and responsible parties in this city are so absolutely off the mark as the consultants' claims indicate, particularly since, although the consultants have done many things of note, none of them has ever focused, in a scholarly way, on the architecture of this city, or on commercial architecture, or on warehouses, prior to being commissioned to prepare their report.

I think it's very important to address for you, the members of the Board, the key points of historical significance, and I hope you will feel free to interject at any point and raise matters that you feel are important. What I'd like to do is to go over a few key facts based upon the points made in my testimony, and then address four key matters of interpretation pertaining to this case.

Matters of fact as I see them. First, as a specialized type—and by a "specialized type" I mean the department store warehouse as a large, remote-site, purpose-built facility combining the functions of storage, service, and delivery—these buildings were important to retail operations. There is an abundance of historical evidence in trade literature of the period—the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s—indicating how department stores could not continue to grow, or even function very effectively in the motor age without such facilities. So, fact number one, *the type is historically significant.*

Fact number two: *the Woodward & Lothrop warehouse is the most ambitious example of its kind erected in the District of Columbia until the expansion of Hecht's facility after World War II.* It was larger than the Hecht Company warehouse originally by over 50,000 square feet. The Woodward & Lothrop building is also one of the most ambitious warehouses of any kind ever erected in the city.

Fact number three: *as an example of this specialized type, the Woodward & Lothrop building is rare locally.* Kann's was the first, in 1925. The Palais Royal's was the second, in 1930. Then came Hecht's, then the object of our attention. Yes, there were a lot of other buildings used for these functions beginning at an earlier date, but not for all the functions combined. Earlier examples were not, by and large, purpose-built. They were never as big, and many of them were in rented quarters adjacent to or close to the parent store. As I tried to make clear in my testimony two weeks ago, these are very important issues in understanding the development of the type and its role in the retail field.

Fact number four: *few examples survive*. We don't have very much that's left of any sort. Kann's is gone. Lansburgh's early facilities adjacent to its store are gone; its 1939 warehouse, near the South Capitol Street Bridge, is still with us, but much altered. Goldenberg's, which in 1926 leased the old National Guard Armory, is of course, gone as well. The Hecht Company properties, which were leased prior to, and in some cases retained after, their big New York Avenue warehouse, are gone.

There is a whole list of these facilities in the consultants' report. It is certainly interesting as a list, but it doesn't indicate that almost all the examples, whether purpose-built or not, whether large or not, whether combining these various functions or not, have disappeared from the urban landscape. I have taken the liberty of marking a copy of that list, adding the pertinent information to underscore the point, and would like to share it with you. [Copies were presented to the Board.]

The primary examples left are (1.) the Hecht Company, of course, which is now a landmark; (2.) the Palais Royal; (3.) the 1917 warehouse not built for this specific purpose, but used by Woodward & Lothrop for a number of years; and (4.) the new Woodward & Lothrop facility.³ This is the surviving legacy of the type in the District of Columbia and, for prewar examples, in the whole metropolitan area.

Fact number five: *the exterior of the Woodward & Lothrop warehouse represents an exceptional, not a normative treatment for the type*. The norm was having the reinforced concrete frame used as a basis for expression, as with Abbott, Merkt's facility for Strawbridge & Clothier of the mid 1920s in Philadelphia. Or Bloomingdale's, by Abbott, Merkt once again, in New York, built in the late 1920s and representing pretty much the state-of-the-art for this kind of facility when its development was temporarily arrested by the Depression.

The Woodward & Lothrop building is unusual. It's one-of-a-kind in terms of its expression for any warehouse of any sort that I know of in the District or any other city in the U.S. I have spent a lot of time in industrial districts of New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago, L.A., and a number of other cities, and I think this building would stand out and deserve recognition in any of those places, no matter how rich their legacy of warehouses of various types.

Fact number six: *the exterior treatment, with its limestone and brick veneer, cost more than the norm; that is, it cost more than just leaving the reinforced concrete*

frame exposed and filling in the intermediate parts. Deviating from the general pattern and doing so at greater cost to the client is not going to be an accidental move, especially for a utilitarian building. Unfortunately we do not have the paper trail that explicitly delineates that intent. We very seldom do in this business, but as I tried to make clear in my testimony, I think that this was an important sign of a store expressing its identity.

With these six facts alone—and please, if you have a problem with any of them, I hope you will say so—it is my own belief, simply on this basis, that the building qualifies for landmark status under Criterion A.3, a building type that is a noteworthy example and important to the history of the city.

Now, I would like to go over four matters of interpretation, which are matters raised in the consultants' report. First: the Woodward & Lothrop warehouse is out of date with the purported heyday of warehouse design during the first two or two-and-a-half decades of the twentieth century and that the scheme is old hat, retardataire, or whatever you want to call it, by the time it was built on the eve of World War II.

Well, from a business standpoint, I think it very unlikely that the city's two largest retailers would each spend around a million dollars on such facilities if that was the case. It is unlikely that so much attention would be given to the Hecht Company warehouse, publicity that Hecht's helped generate, if the product was a throwback, if it was not considered state-of-the-art when it was constructed.

I think it's very important to consider not warehouses generally, but the department store warehouse. We don't consider all apartment houses generally, there are various kinds of apartment houses, for various segments of society and various contexts—in town, on the periphery, in small communities as well as in cities.

The large, remote site, purpose-built combination facilities for department stores do not come into their own until the second half of the 1920s. A careful review of a trade literature, independent of this case, makes it abundantly clear: retailers thought them to be a significant new development in their field.

Examples of the multistory department store warehouse continued to be built after World War II, and such facilities continued to be used as models, if you will, in texts on the subject into the early 1950s, by which time the single-story warehouse on an even more remote site was becoming commonplace for many industries, including department stores.

But, I don't think postwar shifts [discussed by the

Recently, the HPD had sponsored a survey of apartment houses in the city and a number of examples had come before the HPRB, so it was a type with which the members were especially familiar.

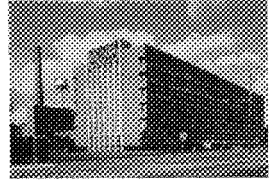
consultants] are particularly relevant to the case at hand. Furthermore, even if the Woodward & Lothrop building was considered a dinosaur in its own day, that status does not necessarily mean it lacks historical significance. We have a couple of examples a little to the south, in Richmond, the Model Tobacco Company, which has long been seen as a marvelous piece of design, visually (Fig. 40). But in terms of the multi-story manufacturing plant, it represented the last gasp when it was built in 1938-39. Or, just down the street from us, I'm sure many of you are familiar with the enormous amount of controversy that was generated by the building of the National Gallery of Art, and even more by the Jefferson Memorial at exactly the same time, on the eve of World War II. The claim was widespread that they were indeed dinosaurs, that they were utterly inappropriate as symbols of culture, as a memorial to a great president, and on and on. From our perspective, however, I doubt we would deny them historical significance on such grounds.

Perhaps the most telling point is that *the Board has already designated the Hecht Company warehouse, which is of the same type, period, and size as well as by the same architects.* If half the claims made by the opposition were true, that designation would have been unfounded.

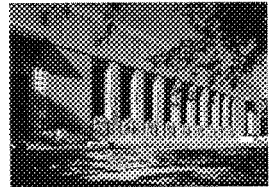
Now, a second matter of interpretation: the claim that the Woodward & Lothrop warehouse is not a good example of Art Deco or Art Moderne, or Moderne, or whatever you want to call it. The qualities of expression in this building have to be assessed within the context of the building type. Otherwise they make very little sense. No one is ever going to assert that there is the kind of formal design development found in Paul Cret's Folger Library of a few years earlier, or his Federal Reserve, or a major retail building downtown (Fig. 41). That's not the point. This is a warehouse. Furthermore, as I tried to indicate two weeks ago, one of the crucial things in the whole matter is that it was designed to be read effectively at a distance, not up close.

The differences between the Woodward & Lothrop and Hecht Company warehouses are pronounced. Again, that's something I tried to emphasize, and some people, as a matter of personal taste, may prefer the Hecht Company building. But that is *irrelevant* in terms of its historical significance. The existence of both of these buildings in the same city, for the city's two major retailers adds to the significance of each.

Then, about terms, terms, and more terms. Art Deco, Art Moderne—all such terms are perfectly harmless as long as they're not taken too seriously. If Art Deco has to be a narrow repertoire of motifs and noth-

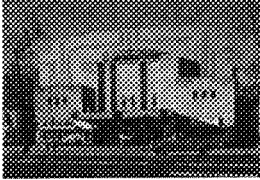


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ing else, then it tells us relatively little about design or culture, let alone about the program—the requirements—of a building. The narrower the definition, the more often it becomes a self-serving contrivance rather than an instrument for learning. Art Deco has become a term of common parlance, and that's fine as long as it is an umbrella that includes examples of modern classicism, such as Cret's Federal Reserve, and other forms of very restrained expression such as the Uptown Theatre in Cleveland Park, and more dynamic, streamlined forms as characterized the late, great Trans-Lux Theatre downtown, and the more angular forms common to a number of tall commercial buildings such as the Kennedy-Warren apartment house on Connecticut Avenue, as well (Figs. 42-43).⁴



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Buildings are not biological species nor are they produced *in toto* by machine. They are created by human beings who respond to a complex variety of cultural as well as practical factors. Recent studies have shown that such is the case even in the ostensibly simplest forms of vernacular architecture. As soon as we start saying such-and-such isn't a pure example of this that or the other "style" we begin to get into trouble.⁵

Now, a third matter of interpretation: the Woodward & Lothrop warehouse is not an important physical manifestation of the department store that built it. I don't think too many people are going to quarrel with the fact that it isn't as important as the store itself, which remains largely intact downtown, but this doesn't mean the warehouse is insignificant. Otherwise, the type could be summarily written off as being of no importance whatsoever. Certainly from a physical standpoint it's large, conspicuous and clearly meant to stand as a symbol of a company—just like Hecht's warehouse. From an operational standpoint, no, it did not introduce anything fundamentally new. Yes, delivery was well established. Delivery systems, first by horse and wagon, then by truck, are what allowed the department store to grow into a great mercantile institution to begin with. There was nothing fundamentally new in the operations of all of this, but that is not the point.



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The addition of such a facility greatly enhanced existing operations, and clearly too, put the company in a better position to expand into branches after World War II, the planning for which began about a half a dozen years after the completion of this building—just like Hecht's. Now, the current management of Woodward & Lothrop may not prize this building, but that is *irrelevant*. The May Company didn't think the Hecht warehouse was a big deal when we approached them over landmark status for the property. That changed,

fortunately, when the historical record was revealed.

But typically, many businesses consider their buildings to be simply utilitarian things. They don't think in historical terms, they don't think in visual terms. There is nothing wrong with that, they have businesses to operate, but it certainly can't be construed as a basis for a lack of historical significance in this or any other case unless history is not based on fact, but only on personal opinion.

The lack of publicity for this building at the time it was constructed does not necessarily correlate with its historical significance either. Woodward & Lothrop did not accord much publicity to its buildings. I searched for hours over a year ago to find a detailed account of the main store when it opened downtown. There wasn't any. The *Washington Post*, the *Evening Star*, or some other newspaper would have given Woodies a whole section if the company had wanted it because of the extent of advertising that the department store purchased. Unlike the Hecht Company, Woodward & Lothrop was not interested in giving very much publicity to its buildings.

Matter of interpretation number four: Abbott, Merkt were not important architects. I think we can argue until the cows come home on this one. They're not in the same league as Albert Kahn of Detroit, or Nimmons & Fellows of Chicago—firms that specialized in industrial and utilitarian buildings beginning in the early twentieth century and became giants in their field in the United States, but again, that's not the point. Most architects home-based in Washington were really not in that sort of league either if we look at the historical record.

But the fact is that Abbott, Merkt became closely identified with the department store warehouse at its inceptive phase of development. They designed examples for a number of leading retailers in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Detroit, Cincinnati as well as Washington and other places. The fact that the National Retail Dry Goods Association selected Hunley Abbott to write about the department store as a physical plant, not just the warehouse but the department store as well, and about the whole process of delivery, in a book commemorating the organization's twenty-fifth anniversary, indicates some standing in the field. Since the consultants' report cites, but does not include, this piece, I thought you might be interested in copies, which I have made from my own. [Copies were distributed to the Board at this point.]

The claim that the firm was more important after World War II because it branched into designing retail facilities I think is without foundation. If your primary

The opposition often claims that the property and/or its designer is not up to the highest standard. This assertion is tantamount to asserting that it is not nationally significant. That, of course, is generally not the issue. One way of reminding review bodies of this fact is to note that if the standard being held up by the opposition was applied across the board, most of the community's heritage would not be eligible.

interest is in retail facilities, then you're going to look at the firm principally from that later period. If you're interested in department store warehouses and a number of other building types, the prewar period is very important, and it's unthinkable, really, to prepare any kind of history of the department store warehouse without Abbott, Merkt playing a very prominent role. There is ample evidence in the trade literature that this firm was recognized within a few years of its establishment, not only within the New York metropolitan area, but nationally as well.

Even if none of this was true, even if we didn't know a thing about Abbott, Merkt outside of Washington, the fact that this firm designed the four major examples of the purpose-built department store warehouse, locally—for Kann's, for Palais Royal, for the Hecht Company, and for Woodward & Lothrop,—between 1925 and 1938, and did two of the metropolitan area's most significant postwar retail facilities, the Hecht Company Silver Spring and the Parkington development, both now altered, validates its importance within a local context beyond a shadow of a doubt.

That concludes the formal part, but I would like to end on a personal note, by emphasizing that I don't get involved in these initiatives unless I believe that preserving the property is going to be of long-term benefit to the community. A lot of people may not see it that way at the time the preservation effort is launched, but in case after case we have many wonderful success stories in the District of Columbia. It saddens me to see a community polarized over these situations. [At the first day of the hearing, the opposition had brought in a number of low-income persons residing near the property, allegedly informing them that designation would prevent jobs.] We heard in the Hospital for Sick Children [case] a few years ago that if you were for preserving that building then you were against poor babies with AIDS. No. That wasn't the case at all, and under the good offices of this City, the two parties came together, and if you haven't seen the Hospital for Sick Children in its new form, I advise you all to do so, because it is a monument to the constructive and positive influence that preservation can have.⁶

Preserving this warehouse is not going to preclude development of the site or any other kind of development of the site, and it's not going to preclude jobs. I think it can make a positive, enduring contribution to the community in the future, just as it has in the past.



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4500 Wisconsin Avenue N. W. (at Albermarle Street)

Constructed 1940-1941, John Stokes Redden, architect; John Gerard Rabe, designer

Store closed, January 1993

Landmark application filed, March 1993

Landmark designation heard before and granted by HPRB, May 1995

Reopened as Hechinger Home Service Center, June 1996

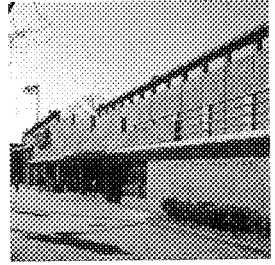
CHAPTER IV

SEARS, ROEBUCK STORE: SIGNIFICANCE BEYOND THE ORDINARY

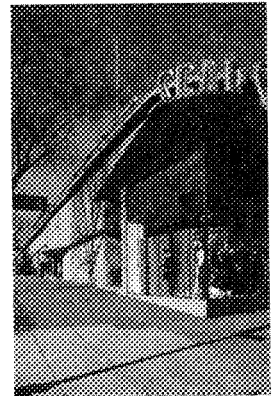
Saving the former Sears, Roebuck store proved to be a success story from start to finish, but the outcome might easily have been otherwise. Located amid prosperous middle-class neighborhoods in Northwest Washington, the store had long functioned as a retail magnet. Many people lamented Sears's closing in 1993, but hardly anyone considered the building itself to have merit, historical or otherwise. Concerns revolved around whether new functions could be found that were compatible and whether some prospective developer might push for greater density on the site since it lies directly above a Metro subway station. Some historic preservationists initially feared that an initiative to save the building might devolve into politics. Preservation, it was argued, could be cast as a stop-gap measure for new development. The building was so unlike what most residents considered landmark material that skepticism of any preservation effort was likely to arise (Figs. 44-46). Was the building that important? And, could a facility of this kind be effectively preserved in the contemporary marketplace? Would it not be better to let the matter pass?

On the other hand, I had been urging ADSW and neighborhood groups to pursue landmark designation for some years because my research in retail development of the interwar decades left no doubt that this was a property of unusual significance. About seven months before Sears announced its plans to vacate the store an ADSW volunteer prepared a nomination, but several of us who reviewed the piece urged that it not be used, for this landmark initiative would be controversial and the text failed to make a strong enough case. If the designation had to be filed quickly, as with the two warehouses, we could compromise on the matter, but there seemed no need to do so in this instance.

Then in January 1993 Sears announced it would vacate the premises. Within a week ADSW agreed to hire a consultant to prepare an entirely new nomination. Time was of the essence if the building was to be protected and if we were to have any negotiating position with potential purchasers. A former staff member of the National Register of Historic Places, the consultant was adept at preparing first-rate nominations quickly. In this case, too, the process could be accelerated because he could draw from the extensive information I had been gathering over the years on Sears and



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on retail decentralization before World War II. An architectural historian at the Smithsonian also made available a graduate research paper she had done under my direction some years before, which contained valuable information on the building. As a result, the nomination could be completed in a matter of weeks. The cost incurred was considerable, but the ADSW leadership believed it was money well spent. Without the investment, it would have taken much longer to prepare a nomination of comparable strength.

Equally important to the process was securing co-applicants for the nomination so that the initiative could not be branded an idiosyncratic action of a single group. The Committee of 100 agreed to join as did two key neighborhood organizations, the Tenleytown Historical Society and the Tenley and Cleveland Park Emergency Committee (TACPEC). Several years earlier, the latter organization had waged a protracted and fierce battle against a mixed-use project many residents considered over-scaled for the area. TACPEC's participation in our initiative sent a clear message that we were serious about the Sears building's future.

Not long after submitting the nomination, we heard rumors that the Hechinger Company, a major hardware and home supply retailer in the region, might be interested in the property. At that time, both John Hechinger, Sr., the company's chief executive officer and a distinguished civic leader, and I served on the board of the National Building Museum. I took the opportunity to approach him directly on the matter, stressing that landmark designation was being pursued to enhance progress, not thwart it. My experience was that when parties discussed their respective concerns and objectives at the outset, an effective solution often could be reached. Should his company be interested, the applicants were happy to meet. Soon thereafter a meeting was arranged at Hechinger's request. The exchange took place onsite so we could discuss matters in as specific terms as possible. Both groups concluded that their differences were relatively minor and could be resolved.

We enjoyed no such progress with other potential buyers or with Sears, however. Months passed without any apparent progress. Hechinger officials were not sure whether they would be offered an option on the site or even whether they could utilize so big a facility. Finally, in the fall of 1994, company representatives indicated they had taken the option and wanted to convert the store into one of its large Home Project Centers and asked us to review preliminary plans. Sears, as it turned out, had always favored Hechinger because the company had not seen historic preservation as a stumbling block to purchase—a viewpoint that probably stemmed in large part from our initial meeting. Most aspects of the scheme were acceptable or required only minor changes, but we feared an impasse over Hechinger's insistence that one of the building's major elements, a ramp to

the rooftop parking deck, be replaced by an entirely new addition accommodating entry space from both street and roof levels.

With the aid of Hechinger's preservation consultant, a veteran of numerous complex commercial rehabilitation projects, we were able to achieve a solution that changed the exterior little. Several historic features would be retrieved, and the deteriorated walls of exposed concrete would be repaired according to the highest standards. The interior would have to be gutted, as required by local code since the plaster was asbestos-laden, but the sales area always had been of a neutral character, designed as an unobtrusive backdrop to displays. Furthermore, reconstruction of the original interior would preclude Hechinger from using the spaces. Under the circumstances, we believed the gain of a new compatible retail facility housed in a well rehabilitated exterior outweighed the loss. Throughout the process we worked with the HPD staff to ensure all parties were in accord.

At Sears's request, we postponed a hearing before the HPRB until agreement was reached. Much like the Hecht warehouse case, the procedure was streamlined—presentation of landmark case, decision, presentation of proposed changes, decision, all rendered in a single session—because there was no opposition and because Hechinger was under a tight schedule if the facility was to open in a timely manner. With the endorsement of the HPD staff, HPRB approval was unanimous.¹

I presented the principal testimony arguing for designation and spoke briefly in support of the proposed changes. Again, as with Hecht's warehouse, I made a detailed presentation both for the record and to bolster owner pride. Preservation was an entirely new venture for Hechinger's, a course dramatically different from its usual one of constructing utilitarian buildings in large, open spaces on the urban periphery. The fact that the company was willing to go to great lengths to meet historic preservation concerns deserved our strong and enthusiastic support.

The former Sears, Roebuck Wisconsin Avenue store may not suggest a landmark in the conventional sense. Many area residents lament the closing of Sears, but I suspect few give much thought to the building itself. Particularly in its neglected state, the edifice may seem unprepossessing to the casual observer, and could easily become stigmatized as an eyesore.

Certainly, the store is not seen in the popular mind as a great work of architecture. It has not been included in local architectural guides or histories save in Hans Wirz and Richard Striner's eye-opening *Washington Deco*, published a decade ago. Sears also is unlikely to elicit notions of stature among retail concerns comparable to, say, John Wanamaker or Marshall Field. And

Here, much as with the Woodward & Lothrop warehouse, I was trying to meet preconceptions any members of the Board might have that this building was not of landmark caliber, and also to build a case for historical resources that may not seem prepossessing to many people can have considerable significance.

what about the building's age? It is not difficult to find people who remember when the store opened and many more who remember when it was still considered new. In all these respects the building embodies characteristics that are typical of numerous works of the mid twentieth century, which will increasingly come before this and other preservation review boards coast to coast. For preservation, buildings such as this are the wave of the future.

This case is especially important, for while the Sears building may defy normative concepts of those properties we need to preserve, it is in fact, from a national as well as from a local perspective, one of the most historically significant commercial buildings in the Washington metropolitan area. The building ranks among the most innovative stores realized during a seminal period of development by a company that has done as much as any to change the shape of twentieth-century retailing practices in the U. S. Within the local context, it represents a retail facility that radically differed from others, and one that also stood on the vanguard of modernism generally. My evaluation is based on studying commercial architecture of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries throughout the country over the past twenty-five years, on focused study of retail decentralization from the 1920s to the 1950s during the past eight years and, most recently, on material gathered for a detailed article on the development of Sears stores from the inter-war decades.

Part of the Wisconsin Avenue store's significance is associational; that is, as a prominent part of a major retailing system of the period. The building cannot be understood from the physical dimension alone because so many aspects of the plant were directly tied to the company's innovative merchandising practices. While Sears's legacy may not be well known today, from the time the firm entered the retail field in 1925 until at least 1950, and perhaps later, it was the catalyst and often the spearhead for changing basic concepts of what a major department store was—of its merchandising strategy, of its organizational structure, and even of its siting. Sears forever altered the department store field and the commercial landscape along with it. In both its nature and extent, the company's impact on retailing was not unlike the Model T's in the automotive field.

When the first generation of big Sears stores was built in seeming isolation along arteries far from the urban core, they attracted considerable attention because the overwhelmingly dominant center for retailing in Washington and almost every other U. S. city was downtown.

While Sears may be a household word, its importance to retailing is not generally known and thus deserves some explanation.

The principal players in this great concentration of commercial activity were the large department stores. These emporia drew the crowds, and by their draw they helped dictate the location and range of the specialty stores around them. The big stores had a hierarchical relationship that was understood among retailers and the consuming public as well. One or two stores were acknowledged the "best," that is the most stylish. In Washington, these were Garfinckel's and Woodward & Lothrop.

The lower a store was on this hierarchical ladder, the less prestigious it was. Goldenberg's occupied the bottom rung locally. The whole tone of downtown retailing was established by the upper-end stores. Their marketing objective was to get as many people as possible to "buy up," to spend more than they needed to or could perhaps afford. A Garfinckel's label carried prestige, just like a Nordstrom's label does today.

The low-end stores such as Goldenberg's often were in some of the oldest, least stylish buildings and located on some of the lowest-rent blocks of the city center. This does not mean they necessarily sold shoddy merchandise or treated customers poorly. They contributed to the unparalleled array of shopping choices available downtown, and they allowed many citizens to partake of consumer world otherwise unavailable to them. Nevertheless, these stores were affected by a top-down mold where notions of glamour and exclusivity carried the day.

Sears was instrumental in altering this picture. Capitalizing on the great success of its mail-order sales to a predominantly thrift-minded rural population, the company stressed inexpensive, practical goods of quality. The vast, unadorned selling floors of its first big stores afforded a striking contrast in appearance no less than in the goods sold to the ambiance of the leading downtown emporia. Sears gave no-frills merchandising a respectability it had seldom enjoyed before. The target audience was the enormous urban population of moderate means, prosperous blue-collar families and their white-collar counterparts, people who had some disposable income, but were cost-conscious; people who were upwardly mobile, but whose needs and tastes centered on everyday rather than luxury goods. Many thousands of consumers responded enthusiastically to Sears stores because they met widespread needs in a setting that was no-nonsense, yet seemed eminently respectable rather than cheap.

Sears also changed the retail climate by adapting operational methods pioneered by chain grocery and variety stores in earlier decades. As a mail-order house,

The historical context in which Sears's innovations developed needed to be introduced in order for the impact of those innovations to be fully understood.

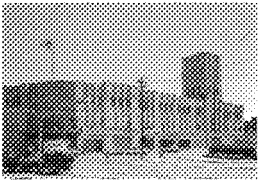
Local illustrations can help people understand the national context more clearly.



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Sears was already among the retail giants, having developed its own successful methods of volume purchases and sales. In 1922, its net earnings of over \$5 million were matched by only two big downtown store operations—Gimbel Brothers and the May Company—both of which had outlets in several major cities. No retailer exceeded this level save for F. W. Woolworth. This scale meant that when it expanded into retailing, Sears could purchase durable goods at unusually low prices, without a middleman, and pass the savings directly to customers.

Sears entered the retail field in a big way as well. Between 1925 and 1929, the company opened almost sixty full-line stores (“A” stores, they were called) in major cities—here in Cambridge and Cleveland—and several hundred units carrying a limited line of goods in smaller communities (Fig. 47). Net earnings soared to over \$30 million in 1929; net sales were more than \$415 million as opposed to \$160 million seven years earlier. On the eve of the Depression, Sears had a network of stores throughout the country that far exceeded even its closest rival, Montgomery Ward. In five years, Sears had redefined department store retailing as a truly national enterprise of enormous volume, focusing on basic goods for the mainstream population.



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Sears’s locational strategy is key to understanding the significance of its stores and thus warrants explanation in detail.

In the process, Sears also helped redefine the location and character of the store building. Rather than choose sites downtown or even in outlying business centers such as they existed at that time, Sears’s new outlets stood more or less in isolation, with few, if any commercial enterprises close by, as here, in the Detroit and Cincinnati stores of 1928-29 (Fig. 48).

This siting practice ran directly counter to conventions of the period. The prevailing view was that such locations were of marginal value—perhaps suited to a filling station, a hot dog stand, or even a modest taxpayer block, but wholly inappropriate for a major retail facility. Sears’s underlying criterion was that the store be conveniently accessed by its target audience. Put the store along a major artery, sometimes at or near a major intersection, the strategy went. Customers will drive there—not far from where they live—and find the trip quicker and much more hassle-free than driving or taking a streetcar downtown. Land prices were much lower than in a concentrated business area, a savings that permitted the store to spread horizontally rather than on multiple floors (cheaper to construct and better for selling). Furthermore, low land cost enabled at least half the parcel to remain open for parking—an unheard of amenity at that time—here examples in Los Angeles of 1927 and Detroit of a year

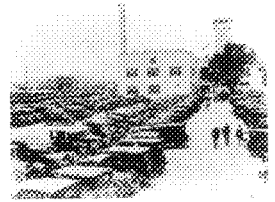
later (Fig. 49).

Virtually no precedent existed in the retail sphere for any of these elements when Sears introduced them. The model, it appears, was from the latest planning of industrial buildings, of which Sears's own mail-order plants were widely considered leading examples. Sears's "A" stores also looked somewhat like industrial plants, upgraded with a few compositional and decorative embellishments that perceptually related them to new retail facilities.

The impact of all these practices of retailing is too vast to enumerate fully here, but a few aspects will give some sense of the relationship. Sears's mass-market merchandising techniques began to influence those of major department stores and provide a model for many chain companies as early as the 1930s. During the postwar era, leading retailers were virtually unanimous in acknowledging that Sears was the single most important force in shaping their thinking. Even before the Depression, Sears's great success in outlying locations caused many downtown store executives to plan branches so as to remain competitive. Some of those branches were similarly sited—lone-wolf stores, they were called—beginning with Bullock's Wilshire in Los Angeles of 1928-29. After the war, the strategy of "creating location," as the real estate developers call it, by choosing an uncrowded site easily reached by car from a large number of residential areas, became the standard for the location of regional shopping centers. Finally, by the late 1950s and 1960s, a number of other major department store companies were following Sears's model of becoming a true chain; that is, having a network of more or less equal stores throughout a region or a larger trade area rather than a parent store downtown and smaller branches in satellite locations.

Sears entered the Washington market in 1929 with a big store on Bladensburg Road just north on Benning Road, a site easily reached from the many surrounding residential areas and from points further afield to the north and east as well. The store was located several blocks to the east of the outlying business center along H Street, N. E., then arguably the most important one next to downtown for Sears's target audience (Fig. 50). Sears's new "A" stores of the 1920s averaged around 100,000 square feet at a time when 5000 square feet was considered large for a store on H Street or in any outlying area. Many motorists would reach Sears before H Street, and might be tempted to stop there first and perhaps go no further. H Street was close enough for comparison shopping, but the Sears store was sufficiently removed to have its own identity.

Within the local context, the store was an espe-



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These paragraphs might, at first, seem like a digression, but it was useful to demonstrate that Sears's impact locally extended beyond the Wisconsin Avenue store.

cially pronounced departure, for it was the only large-scale retail outlet situated beyond the city center until the Wisconsin Avenue store opened in October 1941.

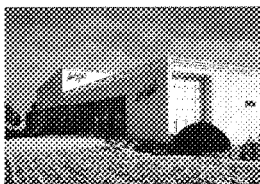
The Wisconsin Avenue store possessed all the innovative siting characteristics of its predecessors from the 1920s. Here was a location easily reached from Montgomery County [Maryland] as well as from nearby neighborhoods. The area was then congestion-free, removed from all but scattered, small-scale retail activity—not even near a concentration of stores like those on H Street. The building also was at the forefront of some significant changes that reveal the company's dynamic approach to store development. The Wisconsin Avenue store indeed is part of a decisive turn in company merchandising and design practices. Not surprisingly, Sears built far fewer new "A" stores during the pre-World War II years than it had during the expansive 1920s. Those realized were less standardized, responding to the particulars of location, and also more experimental, introducing new features that might prove their value to widespread application in the future.

To combat the impact of the Depression, Sears began to enlarge its market, targeting women more and also strengthening its appeal to a broader segment of the middle class. This shift explains the siting of the Wisconsin Avenue store in an area where the population was predominantly white collar and not far from enclaves of the well-to-do. This new audience, in turn, appears to have had an impact on store design. If the buildings were to have greater middle-market appeal, they must look less like factories and more like conventional notions of "store." To achieve that end, Sears remained true to character by defying conventions. Rival Montgomery Ward took a more mainstream approach, adopting a decorous historicism then popular and suggestive of a rise in stature—here the Gratiot Avenue store in Detroit of 1939 and a smaller example in San Mateo, California, of about the same time (Fig. 51). By contrast, Sears pursued an increasingly modernist vein, culminating in several stores of which that on Wisconsin Avenue is among the most fully developed, characterized by a sleek abstraction of horizontal forms inspired by avant-garde example. This kind of modernism was still very novel for retail facilities, but was soon adopted by some of the most fashionable firms such as Lord & Taylor (Fig. 52) at its Manhasset, Long Island, store of 1940-41 or Bullock's at its Pasadena store of 1945-47.

At the same time, Sears remained true to its origins. Its use of a modernist vocabulary avoided associations of a resort hotel or country club that Bullock's



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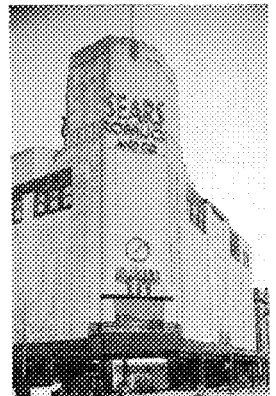
cultivated, for example. Sears was a place to buy appliances and hardware as well as clothing and accessories; it was not a place for evening gowns and diamonds. Sears's ambiance was of a more practical nature—a middle ground between the elegant fantasy world of consumerism and the real world of hardworking families struggling to better their lot after the worst financial downturn the country had experienced.

To implement these changes Sears chose a new team of designers. The firm headed by George Nimmons, a national leader in the design of industrial buildings who was responsible for almost all of Sears's mail-order plants and new "A" stores erected through 1938, was replaced by an in-house team—John Stokes Redden and John Gerard Raben—from the Store Planning and Display Department. The Wisconsin Avenue store was one of their premier demonstrations in charting a future course for the company's retail outlets.

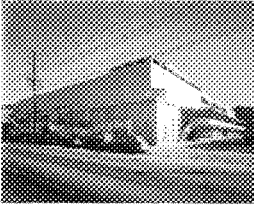
Raben, who was hired by Sears not long after the department's founding in 1932, had worked for the Los Angeles designer Jock Peters on the remarkable interiors of Bullock's Wilshire, among other projects, then on creating [movie] sets for Universal Pictures. His charge at Sears was to rethink interior layout, giving increased attention to the arrangement and display of merchandise so that the sales floors would seem less "barny." Soon Raben proposed a related innovation in the planning of a new store on Chicago's south side: eliminate all exterior windows save those at ground level used for exterior display. With advances in air circulation systems and now, central air conditioning, the arrangement made sense. Interior lighting could be more controlled, emphasizing displays, and not harming merchandise. Doubts existed, however, as to whether the public would accept such an exterior face. Raben prevailed. The "windowless" store at 63rd and Halsted streets attracted national attention. It set a precedent followed in all subsequent Sears stores and eventually in department stores across the board (Fig. 53).

The scope of the Store Planning Department broadened in 1938 with the hiring of architect John Stokes Redden, who had worked for Holabird & Root, then one of the nation's most prominent commercial firms—here their Chicago Board of Trade Building of 1928-30 and North Dakota Capitol of 1931-34. Almost at once Redden and Raben began to work on a new prototype, the Pico Boulevard store in Los Angeles of 1938-39 (Fig. 54). Their objective was to start with display, circulation, storage, and other internal needs,

These individuals are now unknown to all but a handful of specialists and yet are central to the significance of the property; hence the detailed background on them.



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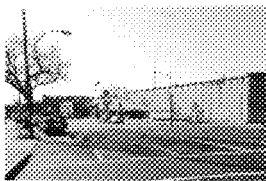
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planning the entire facility around them, rather than to assume that a vast rectangular box configured like a industrial plant, was all that was necessary. The shift was most apparent to the consumer on the outside. The monumental exteriors that remained hallmarks of Nimmons's stores, such as that at Highland Park in Detroit, begun a year earlier, were completely gone. It was replaced by a building of lower profile, more dynamic in form, where every part seemed to have a clear, logical purpose instead of contributing to a neutral package.

Redden and Raben preached utilitarianism. "Architecture" had been cleansed from the Pico Boulevard store, they claimed; only elements essential to the building's efficient functioning remained. Whether false or not, such modesty elicited positive reaction. The architectural press no less than the organs of retailing depicted their functionalist methods as the very essence of good design and cast the building as a new model for stores. Between 1930 and 1950, scarcely any retail building received more publicity.

The enormous success of the Pico Boulevard store led two other Redden and Raben designs before the war: in Birmingham, Alabama and in Washington, D.C. The Birmingham store was Sears's first to have the entire selling area on a single floor, a feature not often repeated owing to land costs. Washington's, by contrast, was unusually compact, due to site limitations and also to neighborhood concerns that the building not be intrusive.

Beyond its associational significance, the building has a number of important physical attributes that make it among the most sophisticated and innovative of the dozens of "A" stores built by Sears during the inter-war decades. Not the least of its distinguishing characteristics is the success with which Redden and Raben were able to respond to neighborhood demands that the building not overpower or otherwise seem to encroach upon the nearby residential blocks. This was among the largest of Sears's stores to date, with nearly 200,000 square feet of floor area. This space not only encompassed sales, storage, and office functions, but also the auto service facility, a feature introduced at Sears stores in 1932, but which always was housed in a separate structure elsewhere on the property. Here, in keeping with concerns for neighborhood decorum, the service area was minimally articulated on the exterior (Fig 55). Similarly, the loading bays, located at the rear on the west elevation, were recessed into the building so as to minimize intrusiveness.



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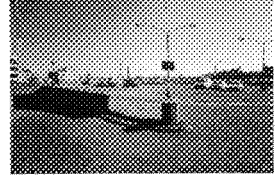
Off-street parking presented another challenge on this comparatively small site. Unlike every new "A"

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store built previously, no space existed for on-grade parking. To compensate, the design team utilized a rooftop deck, introduced at the Pico Boulevard store to supplement the constrained ground-level lot. Holding up to 150 cars at a time, it was among the most ambitious features of its kind then found in the United States (Fig. 56). The technology had been developed some years earlier for parking garages, however the high structural costs and a persistent reluctance among many building owners to allocate money for onsite parking led to few applications for retail buildings of any sort. The Pico Boulevard and Wisconsin Avenue stores stood as pioneers of a concept many observers thought would be widely used in the future.

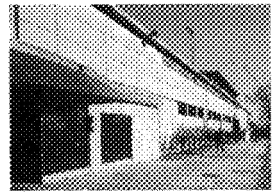
The impact of the building is mitigated in part by placing half of it below grade, where much of the floor area was selling space and most of the rest used for storage. The intricacy of the floor plan, accommodating diverse functions on a site as irregular as it was constricted, also underscored how much a departure the building is from the box-like containment of undifferentiated space characteristic to earlier, Nimmons-designed stores.

Equally important to the overall effect of the building is the skill with which exterior forms and details are manipulated. Taking advantage of the angled configuration at the principal corner, Redden and Raben designed an enormous display window, far larger than those found on most retail stores, accentuating it by recesses at each end and a curvilinear overhang above. Other parts of the two main elevations—facing Wisconsin Avenue and Albermarle Street—are less theatrical, but hardly uniform. Throughout, the composition emphasizes horizontality while unifying the diverse parts so that the overall effect from a distance is subdued rather than agitated (Fig. 57). Yet up close, from the pedestrian's perspective, the aspect is constantly changing, which subtly breaks down the scale of the wall's great linear dimensions. Beyond form and composition, texture is marshaled to enhance the effect. Like all the new "A" stores, this one is of reinforced concrete construction. And like all those erected after 1936, this has exposed concrete exterior walls as an integral part of the structure. The site configuration, however, resisted any conventional arrangement of expansion joints. Again, a constraint was turned into an opportunity by making the whole wall surface a tapestry of concrete patterns, alternating in the alignment of their formwork imprints. Again, too, this textural richness is not conspicuous from afar, but offers a lively play of detail, and sometimes of light and shadow, from the sidewalk.



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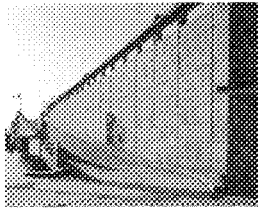
The formal design attributes of this building are likewise key to its significance. They tend to be subtle; thus it was important to "walk" the HPRB around the exterior, using slides to explain the various means used to make this a far more sophisticated design than it might at first seem.



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The concrete had deteriorated over time, and extensive repairs were necessary. I sought to underscore the importance of the concrete's texture and patterns so as to encourage the best possible treatment in the building's rehabilitation.

Since Hechinger's had earlier wanted to eliminate the ramp in order to increase sales space, it was important to reiterate this point at the hearing and explain in further detail why we had insisted this feature be retained.



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Like many buildings, this one is not easily pigeon-holed into the simplistic style labels used for preservation in recent years. Does calling this design Art Deco or International Style help to explain its qualities? On the other hand, non-specialists can get a reasonable sense of a building's expressive qualities if they are explained in a straightforward manner, which is what I sought to do here.

An equally stunning example of how the building's essential fabric becomes its decoration, and its character, is the treatment of the ramps to the parking deck. The most prominent lies at the juncture of Wisconsin Avenue and River Road, conspicuously advertising the availability of parking (Fig. 58).

The idea of a fully exposed vehicular ramp bisecting the main front of a building, especially a store building, was unheard of at that time; however, besides its functional role this element plays a key formal one. The ramp is essential to breaking up the mass of the Wisconsin Avenue-River Road elevations, which, meeting at an oblique angle, could otherwise render the effect formless and unrelieved. On the other hand, the second entry ramp, facing Albermarle Street and an elementary school beyond, is tucked behind the exterior wall as unobtrusively as is the auto service entrance.

The parking deck itself was a great convenience, but also something of an adventure, if Washingtonians responded to the experience in anything like the ways Angelenos did to the Pico Boulevard store. Although the elements were few, all were treated with the same attention to detail as found on the elevations. The deck is punctuated by two penthouses, one greatly modified, but the other intact, where basic functions are housed in a way that dramatically underscores the ambient newness of driving onto the roof of a store, thence descending into its spaces on escalators.

Utility, Redden would incant in the ongoing coverage of his work by the architectural press, shaped every aspect of this and his other designs. Yet it is clear that both formal esthetic considerations and popular perceptual ones figured prominently in his goal. Fulfilling a primary modernist dictate, all three attributes are integrated no less than parking facilities are an inextricable part of the design. In this way Redden and Raben's functionalist design is more forthright than that of many members of the avant garde at that time. The Wisconsin Avenue store would not have been the same without the pioneering examples of LeCorbusier. Richard Neutra and others heralded as the standard-bearers of what was simply called Modern Architecture.

But Redden and Raben's work also possesses a forceful utilitarianism, gained perhaps from years of experience working for commercial clients. The closest parallel, and a likely source of inspiration, was the work of Roland Wank, chief architect for the Tennessee Valley Authority. More or less contemporary, these projects were widely covered by the architectural and popular presses. Wank was insistent that his "archi-

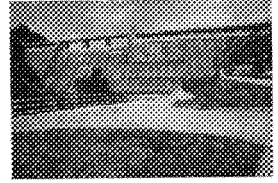
ecture" grow out of the utilitarian requirements of the dams, generator plants, cranes, observation decks, and other features of the scheme, as at Norris and Fontana dams (Fig. 59). Both the attitude and the product bear obvious similarities. The Wisconsin Avenue store is likewise a great machine-age "tool," out of whose dictates the designers have developed art.

When it was built, the Sears Wisconsin Avenue store was unlike anything else locally in its design—irrespective of function. The prevailing modernist idiom was the abstract classicism popularized by Paul Cret with his Folger Library, but often expressed in less sculptural ways, as with Gilbert Stanley Underwood's appropriately somber pile for the War Department of 1939-40. In the commercial vein, streamlining was the most common modernist vocabulary, expressed with great élan in the Hecht Company warehouse of 1936-37.

For Washington, Sears was equally novel in its siting, and it is likely that the new store, lying on what had become a major axis of growth for middle-class residential areas influenced conservative downtown companies to consider expansion into outlying areas. Julius Garfinckel led the way with its more modest lone-wolf store in Spring Valley [not far from the Sears store] of 1941-42. Right after the war, Woodward & Lothrop hoped to do the same with stores in Chevy Chase [Maryland] and Arlington [Virginia], both of which became stillborn as a result of neighborhood opposition. After Sears, the first really large store to open beyond the city center was the Hecht Company in Silver Spring [Maryland] of 1946-47, which, despite appearances, was no larger than the Wisconsin Avenue building in floor area.

Sears's own new buildings changed once again after the war. To my knowledge Redden and Raben never again teamed up to design a facility themselves. Instead they directed the company's renewed expansion program, working with a number of architects. These buildings followed a shift in retail architecture generally whereby minimal expense, indeed minimal attention, was given to the exterior. At first some embellishment remained, albeit of a frankly superficial nature, as with the Santa Monica store of 1946. Within a few years, however, the outside became little more than a large box, as with the Wilmington, Delaware, store of 1950 (Fig. 60).

The distinctness of the Wisconsin Avenue store is matched by the unusually good condition of its original fabric. Particularly for a retail building, this facility has sustained remarkably little alteration, as views taken in 1941 and 1993 reveal. Company-generated



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modifications are few: several display windows were enclosed at some time before 1970. The main penthouse was enlarged, and much of its original fabric removed, in the 1950s or thereabouts. The other noticeable change was necessitated by the introduction of a Metro station entrance in the 1970s. While prominently located by the store's main entrance, this modification retained basic aspects of the elevation, if not all the details, as views of 1970 and 1993 indicate. Seen from a distance, it is not readily apparent to the casual observer that this area has been altered.

Many Sears stores have not fared as well, particularly with the wave of closings in recent years. The Pico Boulevard store shut its doors in 1989, and while most of its fabric remains intact, its character has been conspicuously altered. Changes to the Baltimore store, which opened in 1938, are more basic and irretrievable. There have been some successes, including the landmarking and exterior restoration of the 1928 Indianapolis store, but the losses are more numerous, such as the dynamiting of the Philadelphia mail-order house and retail facility last fall [1994]. Washington's store on Bladensburg Road likewise was demolished several years ago.

The rarity of the Wisconsin Avenue store in the region was an important aspect to emphasize.

The city's third and only other "A" store, on Alabama Avenue, of 1950-51 now lies vacant, awaiting an uncertain fate. [It was demolished soon thereafter.] Smaller Sears stores built in the Washington area during the 1930s and 1940s, which never approached the physical distinction of the "A" stores, are also a thing of the past. The one in Clarendon [Virginia] of 1940 is being altered. Silver Spring's [Maryland] of 1949 is long gone. Outside the Wisconsin Avenue store, examples built prior to World War II do not remain in recognizable form along the eastern seaboard between Philadelphia and Atlanta.

The Sears Wisconsin Avenue store thus possesses significance in a number of spheres. In its size, location, and ultimately in its appearance, it embodies a company that helped revolutionize retailing and forever changed the consumer landscape. Its architects were key figures in the saga of that company's development at a crucial juncture. The building itself possesses strong formal design characteristics that make it an important one of the period for any location and one of exceptional significance locally. It was on the first wave of change that transformed the Washington area from one of the most centralized retail structures as late as 1941 to one that, like everywhere else, is highly decentralized. The building is an increasingly scarce survivor of a vanishing breed. It now has the chance to gain a new life, as a retail facility again, in

the hands of a venerable Washington firm that is going out of its way to ensure minimal change and to restore the building fabric according to a high standard. Most people still don't realize how significant this building is. Through its preservation they will have the chance to learn and to gain insight on a whole era of our city's development that will soon pass from living memory.



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3901 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.

Apartment house constructed 1927-28, George Santmyers, architect

Community garden developed as a Victory Garden, ca. 1942

Converted to a largely ornamental garden, ca. 1946

Landmark application filed, July 1995

Revised landmark application filed, November 1995

*Landmark application heard by HPRB; apartment house designated,
garden denied, March 1996*

Garden destroyed by landlord, March 1996

CHAPTER V

COMMUNITY GARDEN AT 3901 CONNECTICUT AVENUE: ASSESSING THE VERNACULAR LANDSCAPE

The apartment house at 3901 Connecticut Avenue, known simply by its address, lies along a residential corridor developed in large part between the early 1920s and the early 1950s, that is rich in its array of multi-unit dwellings.¹ 3901 would have been included in the Cleveland Park historic district, designated in 1986, had it not been for properties then considered non-contributing, which lay on adjacent land. The initiative to seek landmark status for 3901 was taken by a group of its residents who feared that an impending sale of the property would bring about changes that would compromise its character. The building itself was vulnerable in this regard, but the large amount of open space lying to one side and to the rear, adjacent to wooded park land, was considered particularly at risk. Under normal circumstances, landmark designation is given to a property, not just to the building(s) or other objects on it. In this case, however, the apartment house occupied one parcel, the open space two others. Designating all three had to be justified on historical grounds.

Much of the undeveloped land was occupied by a community garden, which possessed no small degree of historical significance in its own right (Fig. 61). From the start, the resident group believed a case could be made for the entire tract. The Committee of 100 sponsored the nomination, which was filed in July 1995. I became involved several months later when it became apparent that the building's designation was not going to be controversial, but that a stronger case had to be made for the garden.

The challenge was to establish the legitimacy of a kind of resource that is new to historic preservation. The garden was a vernacular, rather than a professionally designed, landscape and one that was added, rather than original, to the property. Such work is generally not considered by preservationists, who would probably cast it in sociological terms if they gave thought to the matter at all. Nevertheless, the resident group had gathered enough information on the garden, establishing its World War II origins and its historical

integrity to indicate that a solid, convincing case could be made. My energies focused on putting this work in a broader context, historically and intellectually, so that its significance could be understood. The case was an important one because vernacular landscapes and the history they represent are too often ignored, or even destroyed, by preservation efforts. It was time to set a more constructive precedent.

Unlike the buildings discussed in the previous chapters, I entered this case with virtually no knowledge of community gardens. Several good historical studies as well as a detailed, though ahistorical, local survey provided ample information in this regard.² Equally important is the approach one brings to such work. The community garden must be examined as more than an instrument for reform, a source of creative recreation, or an object of nostalgia. When common patterns of activity and of shaping the land are sustained over an extended period of time, they become important historical phenomena even though they may continue to be practiced in much the same way today. Few people would challenge this premise with a function as widespread as apartment dwelling; it was important to underscore the concept's applicability to less ubiquitous activities as well.

Testimony was delivered by a number of individuals. Carolyn Pitts, a 3901 resident and a National Park Service architectural historian for the National Historic Landmarks program, introduced the property. James Goode, author of a detailed study of the metropolitan area's apartment houses, discussed the building as an example of its type. Kathleen Sinclair Wood, a founder and former president of the Cleveland Park Historical Society, discussed how the property related historically to its environs. Stephen Dennis, another 3901 resident and former director of the National Center for Preservation Law, analyzed how the existing use of the land conformed with the provisions of the city's Comprehensive Plan. I concluded the presentation focusing on the garden, which was not only the most controversial aspect of the case, but the most strongly contested by the owner.

Despite our efforts, the garden failed to receive designation. The HPD staff member assigned to the case seemed to have little grasp of, or interest in, the salient issues and gave a negative report on the garden. The HPRB turned down this part of the application without comment. The episode underscores the challenges inherent in bringing new kinds of historic resources to the preservation realm. Perhaps most unfortunate, the landlord had the garden bulldozed less than a week after the hearing, destroying a unique part of the city's heritage in the process.

This is not the kind of resource that normally comes before review bodies such as yours, in part be-

cause very few examples have existed for more than a generation. In this case, however, we have a setting, created as a Victory Garden ca. 1942, which has not experienced substantial changes since shortly after World War II's end. Furthermore, while this is not a conventional type of landscape, I will demonstrate that it should not be divorced from the rest of the property under review and that it has no small degree of historical significance in its own right. By itself, the garden meets:

Criterion A.1—it is the site of a movement—the Victory Garden and the community garden more broadly defined—that contributed significantly to the heritage and culture of the city;

Criterion A.2—for the same reasons, it exemplifies the significant social and historical heritage of the city;

Criterion A.3—embodies a significant form of landscape design;

Criterion A.6—reveals a significant pattern of use of the landscape as well as the continuum of cultural attitudes, norms, and values;

Criterion B—it possesses sufficient integrity; and

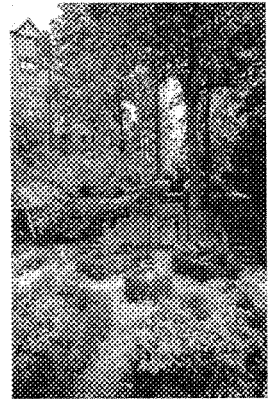
Criterion C—sufficient time has passed to assess the property within a historical context.

Before we get to the case at hand, there are some conceptual parameters that are very important to establish. First, while the Committee of 100 has long been concerned with the conservation of open space, land use issues aside from those intrinsic to historic preservation are not ones I will address today. My focus is strictly on the historical attributes of this resource.

Second is the kind of landscape this garden represents. It is not a designed landscape in the formal sense of that term. It was not laid out by a professional landscape architect, planner, or horticulturalist. Instead, it is vernacular in the full sense of that term—it embodies common patterns of shaping the land that have been practiced by a people over time. It is, in other words, part of a broad based, popular tradition.

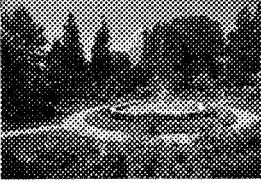
Third is the time sequence. This garden was not an integral part of the original conception. 3901 Connecticut was not laid out with embellished open space all around it as was Tilden Gardens across the street or the Westchester, to cite two of the most elaborate local examples of the period (Figs. 62-63). Instead, like most other apartment houses of the pre-Depression decades, 3901 Connecticut had a frontal orientation; space at the rear originally was used for utilitarian purposes. The community garden was an addition to the complex, which substantially modified the rela-

I wanted to dispel at the outset any assumptions that land-use issues were the basis of my discussion.



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Equally important was the need to state up front that this resource was indeed different and that conventional expectations should be put aside.



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It was important to emphasize that the garden has been an integral part of the apartment complex for most of its existence.

I thought it was worthwhile to make an analogy with which the HPRB would be more familiar, noting that they had designated significant additions in the past.

tionship between the building and its grounds. This addition was made when the building was less than twenty years old. The garden has been a part of the ensemble for over half a century, more than twice as long.

Now put all these facets together, and then imagine, for the moment, that I am discussing a *building*. The building was constructed in the late 1920s. After about fifteen years, the owner created a substantial addition that by all estimates enhanced the character of the premises. Fifty years later, I doubt whether anyone familiar with the policies and practices of the national preservation program would have difficulty designating the property as a whole, or would condone the removal of the addition, as is born out by the record of this Board in designating landmarks with significant additions. The community garden at 3901 Connecticut is in no way a different kind of case, only a different kind of resource.

A community garden is a coordinated enterprise with multiple parties responsible for its cultivation. The land may be owned by those parties collectively, leased from or lent by an outside party, or informally appropriated for the purpose. Normally each participating party has its own plot, although a few support functions such as the water supply are shared. The participating parties operate according to some ground rules, explicit or otherwise, which may include what can, or cannot, be grown; treatment of borders; responsibility for upkeep of paths.

Community gardens are a century-old phenomenon in the U.S. whose historical importance has been documented by U.C. Berkeley geographer Thomas Bassett.³ This broader context is key to understanding the significance of 3901's garden under criteria a.1, 2, 3, and 6. The first examples were started during the depression of the 1890s to aid the plight of unemployed blue collar workers in cities. Similar initiatives were launched during the early 1930s, but on a more limited basis. Far more prolific were the community gardens developed in cities during the 1970s and 1980s. An outgrowth of both the Civil Rights and environmental movements, these gardens were primarily created by and for poor minority groups on land left fallow by the depopulation of blighted inner-city areas. In Washington, this phenomenon has attracted middle-class participants as well. The Newark Community Garden, created ca. 1976, lies adjacent to the McLean Gardens apartment complex off Wisconsin Avenue. Friendship Community Garden exists in the middle of a single-family house district in American University Park. Other examples include the Fort Stephens,

Emory, and Peabody community gardens in a predominantly single-family house area off Georgia Avenue near Piney Branch Road. Such tracts may be considered an important historical phenomenon in the future, for they have done much to foster a sense of togetherness in their neighborhoods. And, as the distinguished urban historian Sam Bass Warner has emphasized, these gardens revive a long-standing practice in the pre-industrial city where space was routinely used for growing plants to sustain the household.⁴

The most widespread development of community gardens, however, came during the two world wars when gardening was championed as a patriotic duty to ensure adequate supplies of food for U. S. and allied troops as well as for workers on the home front. It is to this momentous period that 3901 Connecticut's garden owes its origins. Franklin Roosevelt declared in 1942 that "food is no less a weapon than tanks, guns and planes."⁵ Gardening became a national past time. A Washingtonian, Charles Lathrop Pack, organized the Liberty Garden initiative in 1917 and also coined the term "victory garden," which became the official name of World War II counterparts. The National Victory Garden Program, as it was called, was directed by a federal agency, the War Food Administration. In 1944, the program's third year, some 20 million Victory gardens were yielding 40 percent of the nation's fresh vegetables.

Many Victory gardens were undertaken by individuals on whatever space was available—in flower boxes and on tiny parcels of land as well as on house lots. Apartment dwellers contributed to the effort primarily by creating community gardens, to which the abundant public open space permeating many of Washington's residential districts lent itself. The two major surviving examples on public land are the Sedgwick Community Garden, across the street from 3901 Connecticut, and the Glover Park Community Garden at Tunlaw Road and 42nd Street, N.W (Fig. 64). Public land was similarly used by residents of rowhouses, as in the case of another rare surviving example, the Whitehaven Community Garden at 39th and W streets, N.W.

The great majority of Victory gardens disappeared after the war. They were never intended to be permanent. Often, the property reverted to a previous state or was developed. The continually changing residency of an apartment house posed additional challenges for maintaining a community garden on or near the premises.

For all these reasons, the survival rate of Victory gardens is very low. Among the more than thirty com-



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As always, it is important to put the resource under examination in a clear local context.

munity gardens existing in Washington, the great majority are less than twenty years old, and only six are known to have originated during World War II. The garden at 3901 Connecticut is of historical interest on these grounds alone, but there are additional aspects that contribute to its historical significance as an extremely unusual landscape in the District of Columbia.

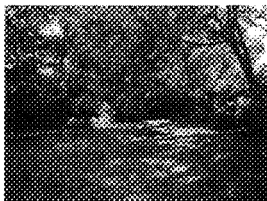
First, this garden is an exception in originating as a Victory garden on privately-held land that is part of an apartment complex. The one other known example is at the Kennedy-Warren, and there is perhaps a second, now neglected, at Cathedral Mansions. Both are smaller than that at 3901 Connecticut and are quite marginal to the spatial patterns of their respective complexes. The Kennedy-Warren's is tantamount to a secret garden, in that it is almost impossible to find even when one knows it exists. By contrast, 3901's functions much like the garden of a single-family house. It is a completely private space, shielded by foliage from public view at the rear of the apartment building. At the same time, it has always been a conspicuous space for building residents, and one that has been routinely a part of many of their lives. This relationship is also entirely different from that at Sedgwick and Glover Park gardens, where the plots lie in more-or-less full public view beside the street.

3901's garden is further distinguished by the fact that for most of its life—since World War II—it has been cultivated primarily for ornamental rather than utilitarian purposes. For most of its life it has been a flower garden, not a vegetable garden.

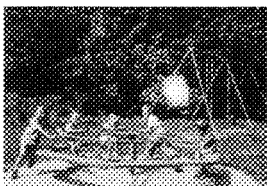
Finally, related recreation spaces form an integral part of the ensemble, including a lawn for picnics, sitting, and other passive activities, and a terrace for outdoor cooking (Figs. 65-66). These facets render the ensemble a much more visually coherent whole than most community gardens, where the size and configuration of plant materials tend to emphasize the individuality of separate allotments.

The siting of 3901's garden helps give it a very important role in the complex as a whole. The garden effectively transforms the rear from a service space common to apartment complexes of this period along Connecticut Avenue and in similar locations, to an actively used space. The garden has always functioned as a gathering place—a place to talk with neighbors, a place to take friends, a place in which to have one's picture taken, as these period photographs show—as well as a place for individual contemplation, enjoyment, and exercise. Unlike the manicured grounds of the Westchester, for example, it is a place in which the

No literature on community gardens deals with such issues, which are key to the case. My analysis derives from close inspection of examples citywide. The value of such fieldwork should not be underestimated.



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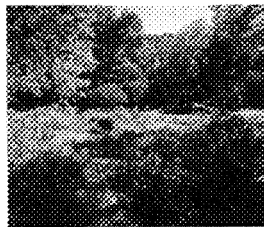
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residents take the essential role. It is a personal creation, not an institutional one, and in this respect its significance is social, not just physical.

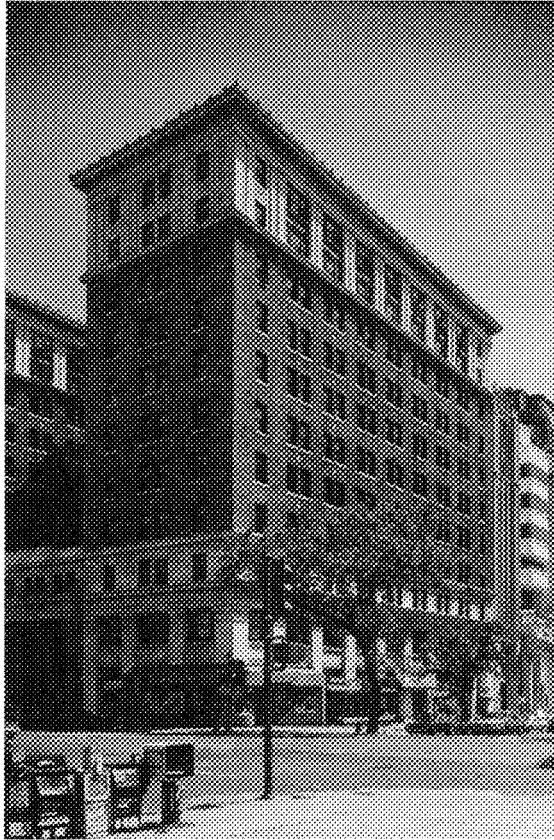
The differences between 3901's community garden and others of the period do not make one or the other type intrinsically better, but do underscore the importance of 3901 as a virtually unique historic resource in this city. Unlike all the others, it combines the attributes of a community garden with those of a private garden (Fig. 67). In so doing, it has completely changed the living patterns of many 3901 residents over the past half century. Since the mid-1940s, the physical modifications have been small and gradual. The basic form, composition, and character of the garden remain much the way they were two generations ago, a fact documented by historic photographs and interviews with long-term residents. Hence the garden meets Criterion B as well as C.

To take the garden away from 3901 Connecticut is no different from taking the back yard away from a house. The building is not altered under those circumstances, but the character of the place and the routines of its occupants have been irrevocably changed.

The garden at 3901 Connecticut is of unquestionable importance to those who live there, but it is an important object lesson for preservation, too. Such places are all too easily ignored because we take them for granted. We do not understand them and may not take the time to get beyond superficial appearances to examine the very important traditions they may represent. This garden is a unique historic resource in Washington and an important one to understanding our city's past. It deserves full protection under the law.



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1426 H Street, N.W. (at Fifteenth Street)

Constructed 1910-1911, Harding & Upman, architects

Fifteenth Street Historic District application (with the Woodward Building as a contributing property), filed August 1980

Application heard before HPRB, April 1981

Designated by HPRB, July 1981

Designation took effect following determination of eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places, as required by local law, October 1984

Application to demolish heard before and denied by HPRB, October 1986

Application heard by Mayor's Agent, March 1987

Application approved by Mayor's Agent, February 1988

Suit filed against decision, September 1988

Decision overturned by D.C. Court of Appeals, March 1990

CHAPTER VI

WOODWARD BUILDING: DISMISSED AS MEDIOCRE

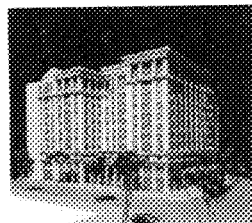
The Woodward Building ranks among the most ambitious commercial ventures undertaken in Washington during a major surge in downtown expansion that occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century (Figs. 68-69). In 1981, it was included as a contributing property to the Fifteenth Street Historic District. Five years later, the building's longtime owner proposed replacing it with a new office block of the same configuration and of negligibly larger size (Fig. 70). The plan was justified on the grounds that the Woodward could not be profitably rehabilitated to provide Class A office space. Another, apparently equally important factor, though one the owner downplayed, was that the new building could incorporate underground parking for its tenants and for those of the same owner's Southern Building (1910-1911) across the street, a property then undergoing rehabilitation.

The Committee of 100 spearheaded a drive to defeat the proposal. The Woodward was not only a major contributing part of the historic district, it was in good repair and operating at a profit. If the rationale advanced by the owner prevailed, we maintained, the historic preservation ordinance had little real value. Bolstered by a negative staff report and testimony from a number of individuals and groups, the HPRB rejected the new scheme outright. The real test, however, was before the Mayor's Agent. The precedent established by Mayor's Agent's rulings up to that point fell clearly in favor of new construction. Findings relied on what we believed was an ever looser interpretation of "special merit," a vaguely worded exemption clause in the local historic preservation ordinance. We saw the case as a potential benchmark that might either curtail the trend or reveal that outside corrective action was warranted by the preservation community. To support the initiative, we were able to enlist neighborhood groups from almost every historic district in the city as well as a number of other civic organizations.

The owner did not reveal how his scheme purportedly had special merit until shortly before the hearing. Two components were introduced in writing, but not shown on the plans: a day care center and residential units on the uppermost floors. Even the owner seemed to realize that these made a weak case and sought to bolster his position by having the architect for the new building and a consultant assert that the Woodward was not a very significant building in the first place and that the new design would enhance the historic district—both fatuous claims in our view.



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I provided the lead testimony for the Committee of 100, which was augmented by important statements from Joseph Passonneau on parking and transportation issues, Donovan Rypkema on economic issues, de Teel Patterson Tiller on building materials, and Mario di Valmarana on design issues.

The objective of my testimony was to take the initiative by demonstrating that: (1.) the building was more significant than the owner claimed and far too important to consider demolishing; (2.) the new scheme was not superior to the old; and (3.) no substantive special merit existed in the proposal.

Despite an all-out effort, the Mayor's Agent ruled in favor of the applicant. The Committee of 100 trustees decided the issues at stake were sufficiently important to contest the ruling in court. That case, again supported by a number of local groups as well as by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, National Center for Preservation Law, National Alliance of Preservation Commissions, and Preservation Action was decided by the D.C. Court of Appeals in 1990. While not second guessing previous decisions on the building's significance, its contribution to the historic district, or what constituted special merit, the judge nevertheless ruled in our favor, thereby establishing a major precedent for special merit cases. At the heart of his decision was the stipulation that building developers had to provide extensive documentation proving that what was promised would actually be realized.

Subsequently, special merit has been used far less often and with greater judiciousness. The change can in part be attributed to the dramatic downturn in commercial building activity during the 1990s, but even before the decision was rendered other developers grew leery of provoking what could become a protracted conflict. Indeed, had the Woodward's owner been advised at the outset by his architect and by some members of the preservation community who sanctioned his scheme that such a course was an unacceptable one, the whole affair might never have arisen. As it was, the owner did not pursue the case after the court's decision. Instead, the property was renovated, a program that included restoration of the lobby. The Woodward continues to fulfill a useful function, providing commodious office space for tenants who do not need or cannot afford Class A accommodations in the city center.¹

As I understand it, the salient thrust of the applicant's argument is that the Woodward Building is not of great historical significance; it is not among the best buildings in the Fifteenth Street Historic District. The architect's proposed new design is presented as a "better" alternative, one that will not only better serve his client's financial interest, but that will be more

appropriate to the historic district than the existing historic building. I would like to address these matters as the law demands; that is, from a historical perspective, which includes both tangible and intangible realms. I find it difficult to separate architecture as a physical entity from the forces that shape it. I will not focus on design criticism, or on my personal opinion about the building's appearance, as has the project's architect.

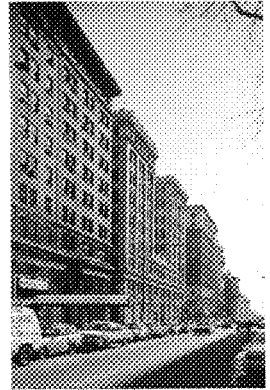
In order to assess this proposal, examining the context is essential. The new design cannot be treated in isolation and, indeed, the applicant's case is quite clear on this matter. Nevertheless, because my views differ substantially on almost every count, I would like to begin with that context, first with some remarks concerning the importance of the historic district; then with some key points concerning the Woodward Building; and finally with an analysis of the proposed scheme as it relates to the aforementioned factors and as a design in itself.

First, the historic district. I shall not repeat the substance of the district's nomination, which is basically on target, as to the reasons why this area is significant and deserves protection. However, I want to emphasize the fact that this district is a rare thing and a very significant legacy, not only for the nation's capital, but for the nation as a whole. Most of the buildings in the district were constructed during the early twentieth century, at a time when the primary objective in architecture was to have the urban landscape as a whole of greater consequence than the sum of its parts (Fig. 71).

Order, unity, dignity were held as paramount virtues, not only for the individual buildings, but for their precincts. Each building could have its own distinct attributes, its own personality, so to speak, but conversation with its neighbors was considered at least equally important.

Another implicit maxim was that some buildings could and should stand out as true landmarks, while others—the majority—should be less conspicuous. Only then can the ensemble attain cohesiveness. These values are especially prominent along Fifteenth Street because the city's height ordinance was passed before the corridor became a prime location for office development. This sequence meant that most of the buildings constructed reached the height limit, resulting in more or less uniform cornice lines.

Now, a number of other cities enacted height restrictions around the turn of the century, but very few have kept them, or at least kept the original limits. As a result, almost no other major commercial districts of the United States retain the salient qualities found here.



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Rely as much as you can on what has already been established in the record. At the same time, it can only help a case to introduce new supporting material, as is done in the sentences that follow.

In dealing with a property within a historic district, it is important first to address the salient attributes of that district, then how the property in question relates to that context, and finally the distinctive qualities of the property itself.

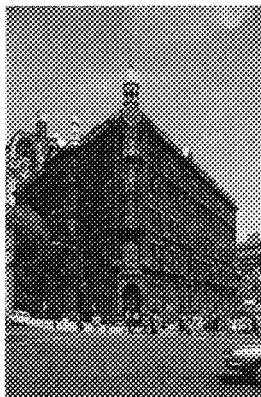
And it is almost equally rare to have a major commercial precinct that has experienced so little change. Many cities with large parts of their commercial cores developed during the first decades of the twentieth century—San Francisco, Kansas City, Omaha, Baltimore, Boston, to name some well-known examples—have experienced enormous changes in the last two or three decades.

Is all of this significant? From a visual standpoint, I think it is. From an historical perspective, I know it is. Fifteenth Street is an embodiment of the reform era's agenda to improve city centers with wide boulevards—Washington was blessed with them to begin with—modern office buildings, elegant accouterments, plenty of natural light and air—all this a twentieth-century American adaptation of what was seen as the primary virtues of the enormous reconstruction campaign that occurred during the mid nineteenth century in Paris. Fifteenth Street is a significant manifestation of what Daniel Burnham and other leaders of the City Beautiful Movement envisioned for the modern business center, just as the Mall in Washington is an embodiment of their ideal of a great civic space.

But this raises a very important point. When one describes some of the key underlying physical qualities of any historic district, it does not mean that all components must or even should conform to them. Quite to the contrary, deviating from the supposed norm often lends an essential vitality, not to mention historical richness. This occurs in several ways along Fifteenth Street. The American Security and Riggs banks, whether intentionally or not, provide a sympathetic response at a key juncture to the horizontal mass of the Treasury Building across Pennsylvania Avenue. On the other hand, the NS&T Building, begun in the 1880s, violates many canons of good taste as they were held by the early twentieth century (Fig.72). From our perspective, however, its different qualities of composition, expression, motifs, materials, and the like add a very welcome sense of variety and, more to the point, a reminder of an essential phase in the historic district's evolution.

Even among the height-limit buildings erected between the 1910s and the 1930s, there are considerable differences in composition, scale, materials, and emphasis; and a number of buildings in the historic district are not outstanding individual works of design. Using the survival-of-the-fittest concept advocated by the architect of the proposed scheme [i.e., that only properties judged to be the "best" by some canon that he did not define], an approach that completely ignores current preservation practices, much could be

Repeated references to Burnham are made in the testimony because not only are the appropriate to the subject at hand, but also to counter the applicant's contention that the Woodward was inferior to his adjacent property, the Southern Building, which D.H. Burnham & Company designed.



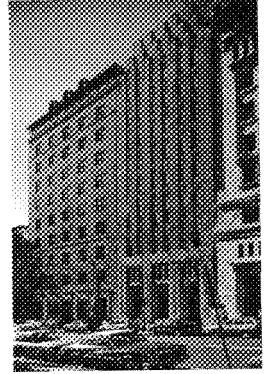
eliminated. The American Security Annex and Walker Building could certainly be easy targets, as might the Washington Hotel, and perhaps others (Fig. 73). No, much of the essential richness in visual terms and in historical terms derives from the complete assemblage, an assemblage that conveys how the prewar banking and office center in the nation's capital has appeared for several generations.

How does the Woodward Building fit into all of this? The applicant contends that it is not a major component; indeed, it is conspicuously inferior to many of its neighbors. This view is perfectly acceptable as one's personal sentiment, as one's emotional response looking at the building. But it is also a highly relativistic practice. I have been asked, for example, by European visitors when they first see the White House, "Why does the President live in the cottage; why doesn't he live in the palace [the Executive Office Building] next door?"

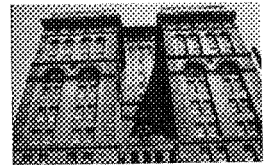
But such views have no foundation in historical fact, and for that reason I find the statements and inferences made in the consultant's report [that the Woodward Building is not a very important example of the type locally] to be extremely strange. Merely thinking about large commercial buildings that exist or have existed in Washington from this period, one would not be inclined to dismiss the Woodward lightly.

Prior to the 1920s, the building ranked among the largest, the most elaborate and elegant facilities of its kind in the city. The Woodward's modified "U"-shaped mass was in a form developed in the late nineteenth century to give many more offices an outside view and higher rent schedules, in addition to much needed natural light and air. One of the pioneering examples was McKim, Mead & White's New York Life Insurance Building in Kansas City of 1887-90 (Fig. 74). For properties with greater frontage, the "U" was often modified to an "E", as with the Equitable Building in Denver, designed by a prominent Boston firm a few years later. The Woodward's "E" faces H Street, perhaps so as not to repeat the rhythm of the Southern Building's "U" on Fifteenth Street. But this northern orientation also provides the offices on the inside of the "E" with a minimum of exposure to sun during the hot summer months.

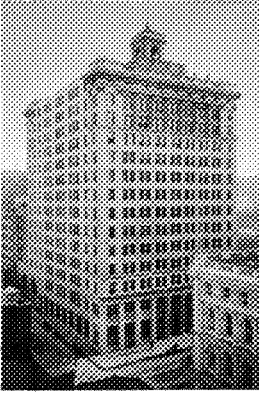
The composition of the Woodward—base, shaft and capital—reflects then current tendencies not only in its simplicity but in its elegant, taut, unified character. The effect very closely parallels much of the work done by the nation's then leading architects in commercial buildings, D.H. Burnham & Company. Indeed, the resemblance between the Woodward and such



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The Mayor's Agent, an attorney, had already praised the consultant for the "thoroughness" of her report, although this evaluation may have been based more on the length and ostensibly neutral tone of the contents. I believed the report showed fundamental weaknesses in both research and analysis, and that it was necessary to reveal these shortcomings without resorting to ad homonym assaults.

well-known Burnham designs as the Merchants' Exchange in San Francisco, the largest and most prestigious office block in that city when it was built in 1904, may be more than coincidental (Fig. 75).

The care and attention that went into designing the Woodward is no less evident when examining the details. Harding & Upman's [the architects] style is restrained, lacking the ebullient characteristics of some of the Burnham firm's work. But the Woodward is clearly a building by architects who are accomplished in working at a large scale and with the subtleties of the classical language. As the details remain subordinate to the overall effect, so they possess a clarity, precision, and confidence in their proportional relationship that is an essential contributor to that effect. This point is important to keep in mind, as it will be raised again when I discuss the proposed new scheme.

Even a casual look at the entrance also suggests that this was not conceived as a second-class office building. Contemporary accounts are quite explicit on the matter. Shortly before the building opened in November 1911, the *Washington Post*, featured illustrations of the Woodward and Southern as, "Two of Washington's magnificent new office buildings." Several months later, the *Post's* Prosperous Washington Edition presented the Woodward, Southern, and Wilkins buildings along with what is now the facade of Metropolitan Square on the second page as premier examples of the great new wave of commercial development then occurring in the city. About the Woodward, the account states that "This is the largest and finest of the four structures which make 15th and H Streets the most imposing business corner in Washington." That same year, 1912, the Woodward was published in two architectural journals with national circulation, the *American Architect* and the *Brickbuilder*. The *American Architect* citation is in the *Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals*; the *Brickbuilder* is not, but it took me five minutes to find it. None of these references were so much as noted in the consultant's report, which emphasized how little attention the building ostensibly received when it was constructed.²

The praise accorded the Woodward is not surprising, for it possesses architectural qualities that would have made it an important addition to almost any city at that time. The building represents a high standard of design, which a number of firms specializing in commercial buildings sought to achieve. This caliber of work was especially significant in Washington because until the first decades of the twentieth century the city lagged conspicuously behind major metropolises such as New York, Chicago, Boston, and Philadelphia in the

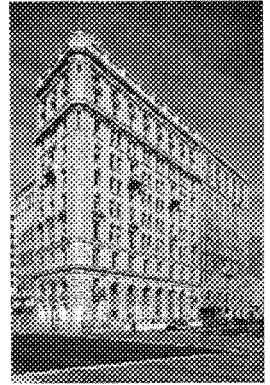
commercial sphere. Washington's earliest tall buildings, such as the National Union and Atlantic, built round about 1890, are small and rather old-fashioned in comparison to work done even in places such as Detroit, Saint Louis, and Seattle. I by no means want this comment to be construed as evidence that they should be torn down. I am simply offering a comparative analysis.

The first really large commercial building locally was the Riggs Bank of 1891. But this remained an exceptional development for some years. The new wave of commercial buildings, begun around the turn of the century added more office facilities comparable in size and updated in expression, including the Star Building of 1899, the Westory Building of 1906, and the McLachlen Building of 1910 (Fig. 76). Other examples could be cited, but they were for the most part only a fraction of the Woodward's size, and for the most part they were also isolated amid much smaller buildings. Only in a few places did large-scale new work occur in clusters. As a result, the urban center's character was not so much metropolitan as it was that of a small city—and here again, I do not mean that assessment in an inherently pejorative sense.

Pressures for development and hence land values were still such that a sizable number of buildings remained at the three- and four-story level.³ The Woodward, Southern, Union Trust, and other office blocks then being erected along Fifteenth Street thus presented a very dramatic contrast, not only because they stood in proximity to one another but because they were much larger than most of the commercial facilities in the city. For the first time, a small segment of Washington began to assume the appearance of commercial centers in much larger cities.

The building's owner, Samuel Woodward, appears to have been concerned not only with making a handsome profit from his investment but also in contributing to a new standard of work for the city. The same is evident in his Woodward apartments of 1909, also by Harding & Upman, along Connecticut Avenue (Fig. 77). And it is also evident in the numerous additions made to his department store, Woodward & Lothrop, first by Chicago architect Henry Ives Cobb, then by others, including Frank Upman, after the Harding & Upman firm was dissolved.

Much ado has been made [by the applicant] about the quality of the Woodward's materials; that is to say, its exterior veneers. The marble facing on the lower three stories does not seem to be an issue, nor does the terra cotta facing on the upper two stories. What seems to lie at the heart of the matter is brick. The remarks



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Among other drawbacks, the consultant's report provided little context on which its evaluation of the Woodward was based. It was therefore essential to discuss how the building related to others of its kind locally.

Always assume that others may try to use statements you make to counter purposes in some future case, so it is best to be explicit that in making comparisons you are not dismissing the examples used.



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[deriding the buff color and rough texture of the brick as being inconsistent with the classical design of the exterior] seem to be based on personal taste, on ignorance, or on both.

The applicant's judgment on this matter is certainly not founded on fact. A cursory perusal of professional and trade literature of the period reveals that the development of various brick colors and textures was an intentional part of the firing process. It was a development that was celebrated because when one adhered to academic principles of design, varying the particulars of composition, materials, and details was considered important to avoid monotony from one scheme to another and in the urban aggregate.

The *Brickbuilder* was founded to advance the use of varied types of that material as well as of terra cotta. Brick manufacturers catalogues published into the 1920s emphasized the broad scope of textures and colors and effects possible with their products. In the same issue of the *American Architect* that illustrated the Woodward, there is a long essay about "The Qualities of Brick." It chastises the High Victorian penchant for uniformity in brickwork and the subsequent pursuit of novelty at any price, leading to "The return to saner conditions." It cites McKim, Mead & White's Madison Square Presbyterian Church in New York of 1906 for those textured qualities also found in the Woodward and praises precisely the kind of brick used on the Woodward (Fig. 78). Then it asserts that "Brick is also more fireproof than stone. It is a matter of record that costly stone and marble facings have been shattered by fire, while brick walls have stood unscathed." Now, this claim may be debated; however, it does reveal the kind of thinking that went into the design and the planning of the Woodward Building. This was not considered a cheap, second-rate material, but a fine one, fully compatible with the others used on the exterior. Brick of this sort was extensively employed in early twentieth-century classical buildings as well as those drawing from other traditions.

The preposterous assertion made in the consultant's report that this sort of brick was identified primarily with the work of the Arts & Crafts Movement and is thus incompatible with the classical vocabulary of the Woodward appears to have been pulled out of thin air. Familiarity with the literature of the period would show that quite the opposite was the case; and simply looking at buildings from this period demonstrates differently as well.

One other argument has been raised; namely that the Woodward is just a speculative office building and thus is somehow of a lower order than those built as



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corporate headquarters. This makes no sense. The Southern Building was also built on speculation. So were many of the most architecturally significant skyscrapers in the nation. The fact of the matter is that no differences existed in the architectural treatment of corporate headquarters and speculative office buildings during the late nineteenth and first three decades of the twentieth centuries.⁴ Indeed, the great majority of the former group had relatively little space occupied by the owner; most of the floor area was leased to others. The assertion that speculative office buildings are somehow of a lesser order reveals a basic lack of knowledge in this sphere.

The Woodward was considered a very important building in Washington at the time it was constructed by virtue of its size, appearance, and accommodations. Even if the Woodward stood alone, removed from the Fifteenth Street historic district, it would merit landmark status in Washington and in many other places for that matter. It is a fine representative of its period and type and it marks a significant stage in the city's commercial development.

What if the Woodward is demolished? One would lose a very sizable and very prominent portion of the historic district, and a fine building in its own right. What would one get in return? Where is the special merit? Based on the evidence that has been submitted by the applicant, we would, in my opinion, gain only a second-rate surrogate, something that would look kind of old and indeed include some old pieces, but also something that would not look old at all. Instead, this scheme suggests an old building that has been over-rehabilitated in a rather insensitive way.

Now, I am not opposed to new buildings making references to those of past periods in fresh ways, as does Hartman-Cox's 1001 Pennsylvania Avenue; nor am I opposed to new work that continues in the spirit of that to which it is added, as with Hyman Myers's splendid new additions to the National Gallery's interior. Nor am I opposed to new classical work that is designed in strict accordance to classical principles, as in the case of Allan Greenberg's new offices for the Secretary of State.⁵ But this proposal doesn't have that spirit. It is a pastiche, grotesquely enunciated by the suggested window treatments. These units are in complete discord with the concept of unity and order. They dominate the wall surface as crude and intrusive features, not ones that contribute to a larger whole.

Other details are no better. The cornices, for example, also seem more like caricatures, perhaps following in the footprints of profiles found in classical pattern books, but here are rendered as bloated dia-

Here, of course, the nature of the testimony shifts from historical analysis to design criticism, which is the only way to assess the visual attributes of a proposed replacement.

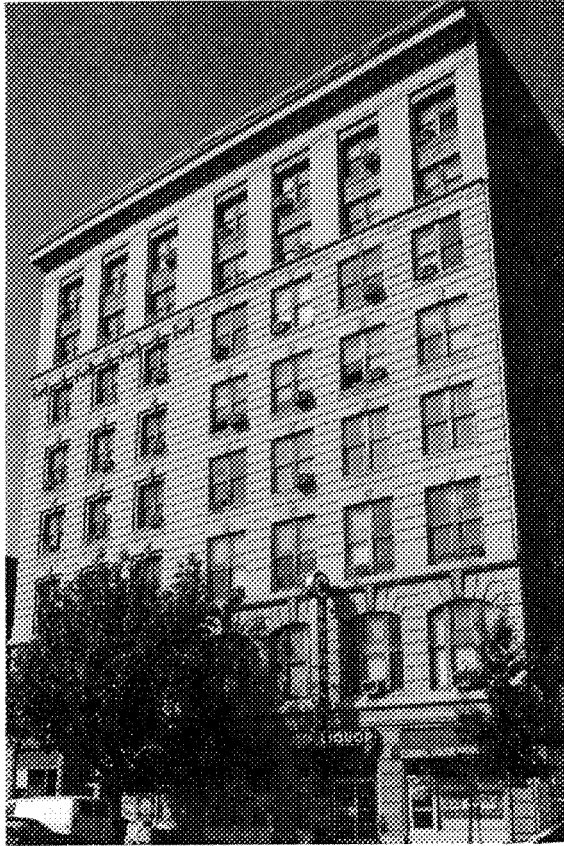
grams, lacking any sense of the subtlety and grace needed to make a contribution to the order and unity of the overall composition. The truly remarkable thing is how the architect and his associates have gone out of their way to lambaste the historic building and then turned around and—I will not say imitate in the strict sense of the word—but create a design that is going to cause many people to remember the thing that was there before and wonder why it was replaced by such a crude reiteration.

Harding & Upman were not luminaries in the realm of early twentieth-century architecture. But they were very competent men at what they did. If the architect of the proposed scheme wants to understand classical architecture, if he wants to use the classical language well, he could learn something from their example.

Even if the Woodward Building did not exist, if this property was a parking lot, I would be adamantly opposed to the proposed scheme. It would seriously compromise the salient character of Fifteenth Street as a historic district, standing as an egregious application of half-baked ideas, but too prominently sited to be ignored.

The Fifteenth Street Historic District is significant to Washington and to the nation. The Woodward Building is a very important contributor to that district and is a significant building in its own right. What we are offered in its place is a denatured echo, a parody that exudes trendiness with little substance.

On the eve of the General Assembly of the International Council of Monuments and Sites, when architects and conservators from around the world will convene in Washington this October [1987], is this the kind of thing we wish to display as an example of how we treat the irreplaceable cultural legacy in the heart of the nation's capital? Is this the sort of thing we want to show to our children and their children as evidence of what our generation has done? Do we have to live with this sort of thing ourselves?



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724 9th Street, N.W.

Constructed 1909-1910, Appleton P. Clark, Jr., architect

Rear addition 1911 by Clark

Extensive street front addition 1925-1926, Waddy B. Wood, architect

Landmark application filed, October 1990

Application heard before HPRB, March 1992

Landmark designation granted by HPRB, April 1992

Application for partial demolition and new construction heard before HPRB, June 1992

Application approved by HPRB, August 1992

Application heard before Mayor's Agent, February 1993

Application denied by Mayor's Agent, April 1993

Revised application heard before and approved by HPRB, September 1993

Revised application heard before Mayor's Agent, September 1993

Revised application approved by Mayor's Agent, November 1993

CHAPTER VII

VICTOR BUILDING: ADDITIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Victor Building was constructed in 1909-10 to house a prominent patent law firm headed by Victor Evans. A matching section was added to the original structure in 1911. Fourteen years later, Evans commissioned another architect to add a third section, extending four bays laterally and two stories vertically across the front (Figs. 79-81). DCPL nominated the building for landmark designation, which was granted in 1992. The initiative was nominally supported by the owner, who had only recently acquired the property.

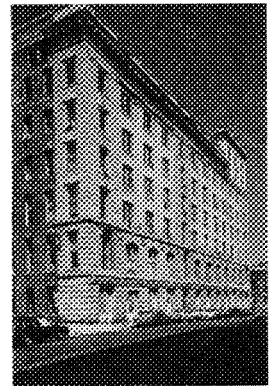
Two months later, the owner returned to the HPRB, which in the interim was reconstituted with several new members, proposing to demolish the 1925-26 portion of the building. This addition was cast as markedly inferior to the original, which would be "restored" inside as well as on the exterior. The main part of the project consisted of a large new, and entirely separate office building on the site of the 1920s extension and on the adjacent parcel of vacant land extending the rest of the block to the north. The HPD staff recommended, and the new HPRB agreed, that the scheme, and thus the drastic level of intervention it represented, was consistent with the purposes of the local ordinance, despite DCPL's protests. Primary factors in reaching this decision were the "pluses" of the purported restoration and the caliber of the new building's design (Fig. 82).

After the HPRB rendered its decision, DCPL requested the Committee of 100 join forces in a campaign to appeal before the Mayor's Agent, who had to review the case since it involved demolition. The overriding concern was that allowing so great a transformation of a listed property seriously undermined the law. We considered the proposal an aberration, running counter to acceptable preservation practices. Other local groups and the National Trust for Historic Preservation agreed and offered statements of opposition.

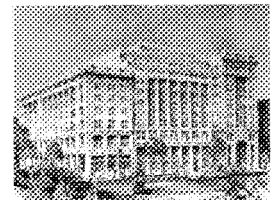
I delivered the principal testimony for those against the proposal before the Mayor's Agent. We had an advantage, I believed, in that a new Agent had been appointed. He was very concerned that the preservation ordinance's validity be upheld and also that decisions not be overruled in the courts as had occurred in the Woodward Building appeal. A key objective, then, was to demonstrate how far the proposal strayed from normative preservation practices. Equally



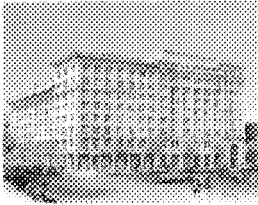
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important, was to establish a record to deny esthetics—personal taste—as a governing factor in such decisions. From a legal standpoint, we maintained, the applicant had no basis save personal opinions. On the other hand, we had to persuade the Mayor's Agent that our arguments were sufficiently compelling to overturn the HPRB's decision and to counter those of the architects and consultant working for the owner.

The Mayor's Agent not only ruled in our favor, but established guidelines making it more difficult to demolish any portion of a listed property than theretofore had been the case. The strength of this decision, in turn, enabled us to approach the owner to seek an alternative solution. A scheme both sides found acceptable was reached in short order, overcoming the previous adversarial relationship. The configuration retained the street and alley elevations of the Victor Building and the structure of all but the four-bay extension of the 1920s. The new office block was still treated as a separate entity on the exterior, but now was actually an addition to the original structure (Fig. 83). We returned to the HPRB, which approved the new design, then to the Mayor's Agent, who questioned how it differed in substance from the scheme that he had ruled against. Our challenge was to delineate fundamental differences, building a record that was satisfactory not just for the particular circumstances of this case, but for subsequent ones as well. The Mayor's Agent ruled in our favor.¹ The project has since changed hands and is soon to be realized, with slight modifications.

This approach is, of course, very different from the one taken in landmark designation hearings. The basic research necessary for making a reasonable determination on the proposed changes to the building had been conducted by those who had prepared the landmark nomination. Instead, the key matter on which to focus was how that record argued against the HPD/HPRB position.

Let me begin by stating that I have not conducted any substantial original research on the Victor Building because doing so is not pertinent to the matter at hand. The reason: no determination has been made that the 1925-26 addition does not contribute to the building. Beyond my extensive professional background in the field, I am basing my analysis almost entirely on what has thus far been submitted for the record, beginning with the landmark application, and also on careful examination of the exterior of the building itself.

I will show that the part of the Victor Building proposed for demolition is of major significance to the whole; that the arguments made in support of demolition are not only ahistorical in basis, but anti-historical in effect; and that, far from being consistent with the purposes of the act, this proposal runs directly counter to generally accepted practices of preservation as mandated by this law and as exercised nationwide.

The principal grounds upon which the owner's proposal is being made has little to do with history—

architectural history, business history, urban history, or any other kind of history that forms the basis upon which historical significance is determined for preservation purposes. Rather the justification rests with taste, with personal esthetic predilections—and not those of the early twentieth century, but current ones of the scheme's proponents. This taste is presented as if it were canon—an immutable truth—completely ignoring the breadth of contemporary esthetics—a breadth that is probably far greater than in any previous era.

To underscore this latter point as it applies to architecture, I show just two local examples. They are both high style, both "cutting edge", if you will, by two of the most internationally renowned architects to have worked in Washington over the past decade: Frank Gehry and Allan Greenberg. Is Gehry's pavilion for an exhibit at the National Building Museum, awkward, unrefined, confrontational, egocentric? Is Greenberg's reception rooms for the Secretary of State showy, pompous, unimaginative?² Is Gehry's bold, innovative, spirited? Is Greenberg's fresh, imaginative, elegant, and very suave? I could go on, but the point is that all these things and many more have been said about the two designs. The role of the historian is not to add just one more voice to the critical fray, but the try to get beneath the surface and assess the meaning of a work, why it was done in a certain way and the impact that solution, singly and/or as part of a larger pattern, may have had on the culture that produced it. The nature of the design itself is important to this equation, but it is by no means the only factor.

On the other hand, architects must have a very strong sense of esthetic values if they are to be successful at anything beyond the technical and other utilitarian aspects of design. The last thing we want them to do is like everything, to have no strong opinions on the built environment, to feel that they can do no better than what has been done before, to believe they cannot improve the world around them. One may agree or disagree with their particular viewpoint, but that is not the issue. I am not here to argue over the personal taste of the project architect or of anybody else because it has no bearing on the determination of historical significance any more than my personal taste or your personal taste. One may despise the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, but that has no bearing on his stature as a great architect; conversely, his historical importance does not mean that one personally has to like his buildings. Taste is our own; historical significance is founded upon a much broader body of knowledge and understanding.

With a new Mayor's Agent, I thought it was imperative to articulate the historian's proper role clearly. This may be a fundamental matter but one that sometimes needs to be reiterated before review bodies and other decision makers.

For this latter reason perhaps more than for any other, there is absolutely no basis in the law for taste as a criterion. Yet it is upon this premise that the owner's representatives and the HPD staff have argued the relative merits of one aspect of the building over another. "Architecture" they claim, in this case is more important than historical association—that is, ties with the client, Victor Evans and his firm. But "architecture" as thus presented has nothing to do with architectural history, only the subjective realm of personal preference. From the historical perspective, the physical attributes of the whole building are at least as important as the intangible or associational ones in this case.

Is the addition in itself "better" or "worse" than Appleton Clark's original portion? The matter is irrelevant because Waddy Wood's design for the addition was not conceived as a separate entity. Would the addition merit landmark status on its own? Again, absolutely irrelevant for the same reason. The significance of additions is not assessed on particulate grounds, but rather on their contribution to the whole. Often the same principle used in assessing historic districts applies: the *tout ensemble*, the whole, is greater than the sum of its parts.

Is this scheme among the "best" of Wood's commercial designs? Once again, irrelevant. In its intent, provisions, and interpretation over the fourteen years of its life, D.C. Law 2-144 is not a Noah's Ark—not an exclusive club admitting only the oldest, rarest, biggest, fanciest, or what have you. It is a comprehensive listing of historical resources meeting the criteria.

Is Wood's work here something of significance; is it a major contributing part of the building? Absolutely, by virtue of what it reveals about the process of adding to a building, if for no other reason. Without question, were I to undertake an article or monograph that addressed Wood's commercial work, this project would figure prominently for the insights it affords about his approach to design. Even if the addition was by an unknown—let's call him Hugo Storch—it is so central to that building's history, so central to its appearance and character that it cannot be called anything less than a major contributing portion. To remove it and take the thing back to 1911 would be analogous to writing a history of the Evans's law firm that intimated everything came to an end on the eve of Sarajevo.³

Now, [let's examine] the building. If you were walking down the street and gave a casual glance at this building, I suspect you would think of it as a whole building, not as an aggregate of dissimilar parts. I say

The superlative argument is one often made by parties against designation, retention, etc. As with the National Register of Historic Places, most local ordinances carry no provision mandating that protected resources be only the best, and it is important that this fact be emphasized.

that because even though I specialize in studying work of this type, that was my first impression some years ago. Without knowing the building's past, even those of us in the business of architectural history have to look twice.

Once one does look carefully, the differences become clear, though they are still not pronounced. The spacing between the 1909-10 and 1925-26 portions is the most obvious indicator (Fig. 84).

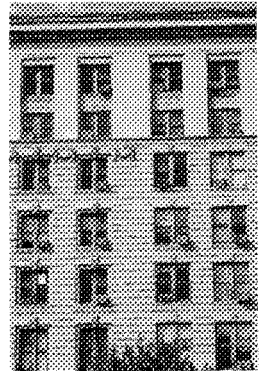
I emphasize initial impressions because I think they are central to understanding what this edifice was intended to be and how it has in fact been perceived for the great majority of its life. We of course do not know what either the client or his architect specifically had in mind when the project was commissioned in 1925. No documentation on the matter has been found. Yet seldom does the historian work with the benefit of a complete record. One of the historian's primary jobs is to seek a variety of less direct, less overt evidence that can either validate or modify written accounts, or, in the absence of such documents, itself lead to a sound interpretation of the past. Unless one seeks to gain insight on the intentions of a design and the degree to which they were realized, a major component of the work's meaning is lost.

When I began by saying I did no significant research of my own on this building, I did do a little—about an hour's worth. In the first fifteen minutes I found an announcement in the *Washington Post* concerning the addition—a piece that somehow eluded the consultant's probes.

Such pieces can be quite useful because, among other things, they were generally prepared by the project's owner and indicate at least some of the ways in which that party wanted to have the building perceived by the public. This piece does not say very much, but the headlines accompanying both the copy and the illustration do present the scheme as a new building, not as an appendage.

Accompanying the piece is a cut of Waddy Wood's presentation drawing of the Ninth Street front, the main elevation, which emphasizes the same thing, and when you compare the image to the reality, they are much the same. If we do not know Wood's specific objectives, we do know that he was a confirmed classicist, and like any such architect of his generation, he thought of classical design not primarily as this or that decorative motif, but as a system guided by interrelated principles that could imbue a strong sense of order, unity, and purpose to design. These principles affected both the massing of the building and the composition of its elements. They included: (1.) symme-

Emphasize common sense, whenever possible. The more closely you can engage decision makers in the progression of your thoughts, the more likely they are to agree with your conclusions.

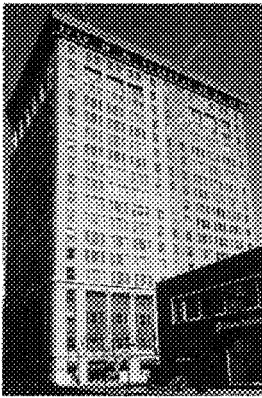


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It never hurts your case to find pertinent material in short order that has eluded the purportedly systematic search by the opposition.

Again, it is important to analyze the intent of a given tendency in design in order to understand the meaning of the work in question.

Explaining the addition requires correlating circumstantial evidence related to the project with the basic tendencies of design at that time and, equally important, with physical evidence found on the building itself.



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try, or at least a strong sense of balance; (2.) containment or closure—conveying the sense of a beginning and an end, of having clear boundaries; and (3.) hierarchy, whereby parts were emphasized according to their relative importance. All these principles were fundamental to Wood's approach—so fundamental that it would have been assumed that he or any competent architect could successfully realize them as a matter of course.

But that realization when one is adding to a building can be a challenge to say the least unless what already exists is completely redone. Wood did not so alter Clark's work, perhaps because of his respect for it, perhaps because Evans still liked it, and almost certainly because it would have been a large and unnecessary expense. Budget does seem to have been an issue. As the owner's representatives have shown, Wood's addition was not a very costly one for its size.

To expand the building in a coherent way while retaining the original portion, Wood relied on a device that had been standard since the Renaissance and was a very common solution in his own time: replicating the elements of the original across the new front. Considerable care was taken to minimize the appearance of the new work as an addition, down to details such as using brick that was as exact a match as could be found and removing the end bricks of the original section so that no surface joint between the two parts exists. Such measures were more the exception than the norm in realizing the basic objective of unity, as seen in the clear division between the two parts of the more or less contemporary Citizens Fidelity Bank, one of the largest and most prestigious office buildings in Louisville, Kentucky, when it was erected (Fig. 85).

Wood's design is, of course, not an exact replication. There are several differences which appear to have been predicated on practicality. The windows are bigger. They admit more natural light and air, which made the office space behind more desirable. There are no decorative roundels on the second floor and no garlands on the sixth, probably due to cost. The wall area is greater at the juncture than between any of the other window bays because of the structure required for the addition.

These differences are not great; to most people they would go unnoticed. But Wood further minimized their impact, while giving the building, in effect, a new identity. This opportunity came because, as the record shows, the addition could be two stories taller and because the original portion was structured so as to accept the additional load as well. Wood could have continued to replicate Clark's design, with more win-

dows of the same kind and a reassembled cornice and parapet two stories higher. That sort of thing was done, but in the case of the Victor Building, the front was now more than twice as wide as well as a quarter again as tall. Clark's two-part composition was never intended for such a large surface and continuing it unchanged would have made the whole seem unresolved according to classical canons.

What Wood did instead was to "complete" the composition with a third part, a "cap," as it were, that made the full analogy, as then was popular, with a classical column: base, shaft, capital. So that the facade as a whole would impart an appropriate sense of closure and hierarchy, this third section is emphasized through a composition derived from a classical colonnade. This treatment was popularized around the turn of the century, foremost through the work of D.H. Burnham & Company. But, unlike what was then the norm, Wood's scheme—driven, I suspect, both by budget and esthetics—was to have the cap simpler, not more ornate, than the zone beneath it. To ensure that the results formed an appropriately strong visual terminus, and also one that would distract from the differences in the two sections below, Wood relied on another convention of classicism, one used as early as the third quarter of the fifteenth century by Leon Battista Alberti in completing the medieval facade of Santa Maria Novella in Florence. He made the scale grander and the elements more conspicuous through their comparative simplicity.

The compositional devices used, the attention paid to detail throughout the scheme, coupled with Wood's orientation as a classicist and his competence as a designer all indicate that this scheme was intended to be seen as a new building, modern in its image, unified in its appearance.

We have another clue, and that lies with the client, Victor Evans. It is clear that from the start Evans wanted an ornate building that would be a conspicuous statement, reflecting his stature and that of his business. While not nearly as big as some office buildings recently erected or under construction in 1909, the original work ranks among the most ornate of its kind then in the city.

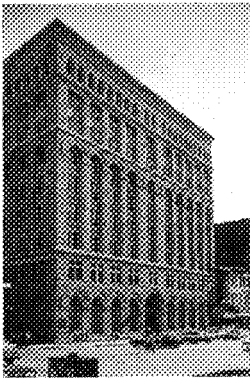
Wood's design shows that appearances still very much counted fifteen years later. The exterior treatment was hardly the most expensive, but a far cry from the cheapest either. There is certainly not the stringent sense of budget consciousness conveyed by Wood's now-demolished Transportation Building, completed the previous year and one of his largest projects of the decade, or of his likewise demolished quarters of the

Normally, I would not turn to European examples of previous eras to the degree that I did in this case. The use of these examples was based on the my belief that they would be appreciated by the Mayor's Agent, who had had a classical education in Jesuit schools nearly a half century ago and who asked all those present that he be "educated" in the field of preservation. Secondly, the architect of the proposed scheme is an accomplished classicist and long familiar with these examples—all major monuments in the history of Western architecture. I wanted to indicate to him the firmly-rooted basis for my arguments.

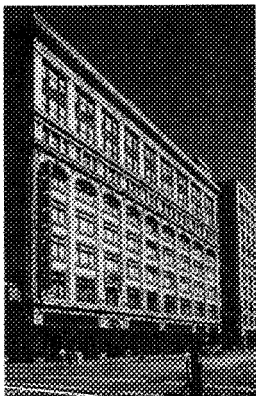
After going to some length to build a case, it is worthwhile to summarize the key points succinctly.

Always discuss significance within the local context no matter how many other comparisons are introduced as well. Often this framework is developed as fully and as effectively as possible when basic relationships are not taken for granted.

Neither example had been used by the historian speaking on behalf of the owner. Instead this individual had focused on more elaborate as well as more well-known examples of Wood's work in an attempt to show that the Victor addition was of an inferior sort. My point was to reveal the lopsided nature of these comparisons.



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Brookings Institution, designed in 1921 for a prestigious location on Lafayette Square.

Assertions by the owner's representatives and the HPD staff that his work for Evans is a poor stepchild of the original building simply have no foundation in fact. Evans paid for, and no doubt wanted, a new building that would loom prominently in the urban landscape.

One more important point on this matter. How does the Victor Building relate to similar work of the period? A conventional approach to additions at that time, when the addition was the same height, was strict replication of elements and detailing, as with two nearby examples: the 1891 Washington Loan & Trust Company, the right-hand portion of which is an extension of the 1920s designed by Arthur Heaton; and Lansburgh's Department Store, built in 1916 and added to in 1924 from plans by Milburn & Heister (Fig. 86).

But when the scheme also, or even just, included adding to the top of the building, it was quite another matter. A common solution during the latter decades of the nineteenth century, both in North American cities and in those abroad, was making no attempt to disguise the fact that additions were being made. Here are two examples—these are landmarks or contributing properties to historic districts—a bank in Montreal and the very remarkable Powers Building in Rochester, New York. Early twentieth-century examples can be just as emphatic in their distinction between the parts. Here, the Brooks Building in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and the McKenize Hotel in Bismarck, North Dakota.⁴ By the 1910s and 1920s, coherence was often more evident, especially in prestigious work such as major office buildings or department stores, as with Crowley's in Detroit (Fig. 87). Even when compared to this emporium, it should be evident that the Victor Building embodies no small degree of concern in making the parts an integral whole.

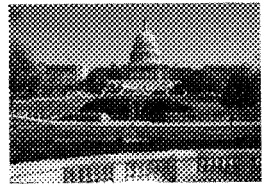
Given all these circumstances, the Victor Building must be understood within its own time as a transformed building, essentially a new building, just as the *Post* headlines intimated, and not a piecemeal composite.

The picture given to us, throughout the record, by the owner's representatives and the HPD staff is quite a different one, one that deviates from accepted historiographical practices and instead grounds itself in connoisseurship. As an example, I simply do not know where the preoccupation with "purity" [arises]. We talk about purity of minerals, of water, and of air—all things that can be measured. But to talk about purity

in buildings is as inappropriate as talk about the purity of the culture of which they are a part, or of the social, or ethnic, or what have you purity of the people who created them. The historian does not analyze buildings as pure, or impure, or half-breeds, or the like—not in books, not in articles, not at scholarly meetings, and not in public lectures—because it is unseemly and irrelevant.

A medievalist would dismiss such pretense, for much of the work he or she studies is the product of several building campaigns, often where one stage quite ignores that taken by its predecessors, as with the north transept of the cathedral at Reims. So would a Renaissance or Baroque scholar, for while unity became an underlying objective of architects in these eras, many projects necessitated working with established components. A very obvious example is Carlo Maderno's extension of the nave of St. Peter's in Rome, which had to be built upon, but stood at cross-purposes with, the centralized plan designed by his predecessors and in large part executed by Michelangelo. Even in the nineteenth century when buildings were more generally finished in a single campaign, there are many examples, among which there is none more prominent than the Capitol, where Thomas Ustick Walter's mid-century wings were quite different from those of the original building, and where, too, the dome is a complete departure from anything that could have been conceived in the 1790s, but serves as an essential unifying element for the enlarged building (Fig. 88).

Any student of the modern city and its architecture is likewise going to find that major changes made to buildings afford key evidence of economic, political, technological, and aesthetic shifts, some of them quite abrupt, just as the student of vernacular architecture often focuses on such changes for what they tell us about the culture that created them. Whether one personally likes or dislikes the changes in question is simply not the issue. Nor is the relative stature of the Victor Building to a St. Peter's or a Reims. The historiographic methods for analyzing and understanding all these properties, however, are basically the same. The relative significance of change is measured by its impact, what it meant at that time, and also by the cumulative effect such changes may have had on the urban fabric. In the case of the Victor Building change meant transformation, but in a way that retained most of the original work, and reflected a continued concern for a prominent physical presence. To remove the 1925-26 portion goes beyond amputation; it destroys the building as it has been known for the vast majority of its life—67 out of its 83 years.



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To my knowledge, this matter had not been emphasized before the Mayor's Agent hearing. It is, however, of fundamental importance. I chose to introduce it not at the beginning of my testimony, but toward the end, after building the case for the addition's significance.

It was important to underscore the fact that allowing the proposed addition would be a highly unusual, perhaps unique, departure from preservation practices locally and elsewhere in countering the applicant's presentation that this course was a reasonable, logical one to take. Decision makers may be less likely to approve of an action when they realize there is little or no precedent for it.

Most incredible of all, this proposed destruction of over 60% of the building's front as it has existed for approximately 80% of its life to date is advanced as being consistent with the purposes of the act. This cannot be the case if the part in question is a major contributing segment of the building. I know of cases—there are not too many—in various parts of the United States where buildings have been de-designated or partially designated—always for political reasons; but I do not know of a single other case in Washington or anywhere else, to make the claim that wholesale destruction of a designated property is consistent with the purposes of any preservation act.

Let me shift for a moment to emphasize that I believe the arguments made for this proposal are ones of special merit and thus have no applicability to this hearing. That point understood, I think it is very important to discuss the proposal from the perspective of historic preservation practice.

The salient issue in this dispute—the current tastes of architects versus the significance of the historical record—is hardly a new one. Disagreement over the matter arose as early as the sixteenth century in northern Italy. Such cases were nevertheless more the exception than the rule. The controversy became much more widespread during the mid nineteenth century over campaigns to upscale England's medieval heritage, by making it more medieval than it ever had been and thus heavily editing any sense of the past in the product. By the early twentieth century, opponents of this approach gained the upper hand, and the philosophy of anti-scrape, as it is informally known, has been a guiding force in England, indeed, in much of Europe, since. The same approach was advocated in the U.S. as early as the 1910s by William Sumner Appleton, director of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, the most organized and sophisticated preservation group in the country at that time. Few others on this side of the Atlantic then agreed. Well into the mid twentieth century the standard practice here remained "faking it," as the English refer to the process. Additions to buildings, no matter how important, were routinely "scraped" away, while the original was restored to the period when it was first built, often without adequate documentation.

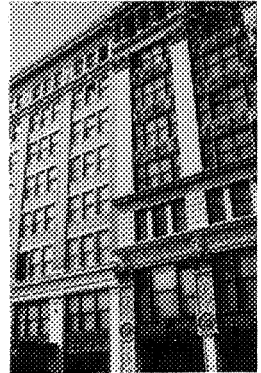
In recent decades, however, things have changed, especially since the passage of the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act, which has integrated local efforts with national policy and standards. The great growth of preservation activity, too, has made us less insular, less parochial. Now retaining significant changes over time is a bedrock of preservation prac-

tice nationwide, even when those changes may be constructed as “awkward” or “discordant” by some self-appointed arbiter of taste. Restoration has not been rejected as a course, only limited to those cases where the importance of the work in some previous state is transcendent and the changes that have occurred since generally acknowledged to be of negligible consequence.

The destruction proposed for the Victor Building would be bad enough were it confined to this one instance. However, if the determination that this scheme is consistent with the purposes of the act is upheld there is no end to the damage it can cause. Since the determination has been made on purely subjective grounds, virtually anyone can make any kind of argument to demolish a part of a building. The 1920s addition to the Woodward Building, for example, could be assailed as merely a “weak echo,” and one that detracts from the symmetry of the original design as well. Or what about those “plain and rather ordinary, mechanical” additions to the lavish original part of the Woodward & Lothrop department store (Fig. 89)? We don’t have to remain downtown to find examples. Take the “weak and unthinking, repetitious” treatment of the addition to Eastern Market (Fig. 90).

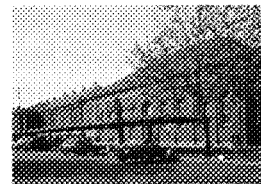
Why limit the matter to additions? Surely there are parts of original buildings that are of a lesser order, parts that could be cleansed so that the record can stand as “pure.” Indeed, whole buildings can be assailed when the rules are those of a beauty contest. The Woodward Building was characterized as a weak, mediocre design by representatives of its owner only a few years ago. When decisions cannot be substantiated by anything more than personal opinion, they can, and no doubt will, be challenged.

Clearly there are times when changes have obscured or otherwise detracted from what is historically significant about a property. Clearly, too, there are instances where compromise has to occur if the building is to be economically viable in the future. But here the record shows not one shred of evidence that any economic or other factors outside those of personal taste are involved. The arguments made are based on ostensibly outstanding design; they are the arguments of special merit, but this is not a special merit case. Far more important than the Victor Building itself is the validity of the law that protects it.



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These are all landmarks or major contributing buildings to historic districts. They are all well-known, and the idea of demolishing substantial parts of them would seem preposterous to the lay-person and the specialist alike.



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RESPONSE TO THE REVISED PROPOSAL

It is a special pleasure to appear before you this morning because a situation that only a few months ago seemed deadlocked has been resolved to our full satisfaction. Indeed, it is now a scheme we can enthusiastically endorse given the particular circumstances of the case. Our resolution would not have been possible, or at least not gained in such reasonably short order, without your decision regarding the previous proposal that was rendered last spring [1993]. I am certain that I speak for many preservationists in Washington when I say how grateful we are for the very thorough and thoughtful treatment of the issues in that decision. You have significantly bolstered our efforts to work with the greatest effectiveness possible under the provisions of an outstanding ordinance.

Among the immediate beneficial effects was establishing a framework conducive to our approaching the owner to explore alternative solutions. My initial conversations with the owner's representative were cordial and productive. On 18 June [1993] all interested parties met to address the matter [representatives of the owner, of the HPD staff, of the Committee of 100, of DCPL, and the architect].

We had an open and very frank exchange, during the course of which it became apparent that some compromise was necessary on both sides if a viable project was to result. Much of our time thus was spent exploring what the best compromise would be from a preservation standpoint and whether that compromise would indeed be one we could support in good conscience.

Here I think it is important to note that the Victor Building is not like the Woodward Building—it is not a property that can stand as sound commercial space over a sustained period of time in its current state. Deferred maintenance over many years demands extensive work to make the Victor Building attractive to a critical mass of tenants. The cost of this investment, if the job is to be properly done rather than temporary patchwork incurring yet greater costs later on, is very substantial. The Victor Building is large enough to require considerable capital outlay, on one hand. Yet, on the other hand, the building's floor-plate—the size and configuration of its office floor area—is far smaller than the current norm, thus severely limiting the range of tenants for whom the space is attractive.⁵ This combination of circumstances makes charting a rehabilitation course by which the Victor Building can have a sound economic future and thus be preserved as some-

The Mayor's Agent challenged us to show how the solution we now endorsed differed from that we had opposed. I was prepared to do so in any event because it is important to establish a clear, detailed rationale for the record. Otherwise, the specifics of the solution could be misapplied to other cases.

thing more than a vacant hulk a tricky one indeed. Let me add here that the current owner did not get the Victor Building into the state in which we now find it, but rather only recently gained title.

Given the circumstances of the case, we discussed at length the implications of what would be lost and what would be saved under various feasible options. The cost of "restoring" the interior of the 1910s portions—as proposed in the scheme presented to you last fall—was to be born by having the new building of ten occupied stories, something that could not be done if any portion of the four-bay addition from the 1920s remained, owing to a difference in floor-to-ceiling heights.

Now restoring an interior of a historic building is a positive step in the abstract, but the real question we had to face was the degree to which this action would be desirable under the particular conditions of the case. More important to our thinking than the fact that the interior was not specifically designated [as part of the landmark] were the intrinsic merits of the work in question: the historical significance of the interior, its current condition, and the extent of intervention—or change—necessary to achieve a restored state.

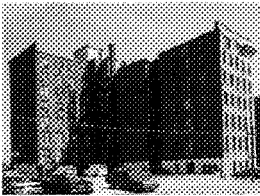
In its original form, the Victor Building interior was a good representative example of its type and period. Much of its original fabric is said to remain. These conditions argue for an effort to save that fabric. At the same time, the interior is of little significance in its current state. The spaces have experienced numerous expeditious, inexpensive modifications over the years. Any restoration program would entail a major retrieval of an interior that has long since ceased to exist.

So extensive a restoration is justifiable if the significance of the space warrants it, and if sufficient documentation can be found to ensure the restoration is accurate, and if the many new changes that are almost always necessary to such a project do not make the restoration seem contrived. We weighed these matters long and hard before insisting that the Greyhound Depot interior be restored. Not only was it a very scarce example of its kind nationally and a vital part of the public experience of the building in its original form, but we had extensive documentation through period photographs and working drawings. Furthermore, the modifications required to make the building suitable for current use were fully compatible.

In the case of the Victor Building, little historical documentation exists of the interior beyond the fabric itself, which, again, has been much altered over time. The interior could not really be restored, as the Na-

tional Park Service defines that term, but rather rehabilitated. The previous proposal would have in all likelihood been a handsome and sensitive interpretation of an early twentieth-century office building interior, but it would be a very different process—and in the final analysis, a very different product—from one of saving an office interior of the period that survived intact. The fact that some very fine office building interiors in Washington have been destroyed in recent years [an argument made by the applicant] does not justify our pulling all the stops on one that has been so altered and never was as significant in its own time.

With all these circumstances carefully considered, there was no question in our minds that the loss of the office interiors, which have not approximated their original state for many years, is not nearly as great as the loss of the building's external identity, which has sustained little change for almost seventy years. I want to emphasize that we do not condone the gut rehabilitation that is proposed in this scheme across the board. Such wholesale removal of building fabric is to be discouraged as a matter of principle. However, this level of intervention can be acceptable if the interior is not that significant to begin with and if no other viable solution exists. For these reasons substantial interior changes can occur as a part of preservation practice, especially with commercial buildings, which must perform in the marketplace if they are to remain with us for long. This, then, is a major part of our compromise.



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When the solution is not optimal from a preservation perspective, it is important to emphasize that fact, to be explicit in the nature of the compromise, and to delineate why the compromise is acceptable. Too often, such resolutions are simply proclaimed preservation successes, which may set unfortunate and unnecessary precedents for future work.

The other part of our compromise is the removal of all building fabric behind the street elevation of the four-bay addition of the 1920s (Fig. 91). We believe that the cases are very few when this practice of facadism is acceptable. Our acceptance of it in this case stems from the fact that the floor-plate of the four-bay addition is small and its structure of such configuration that would render it extremely difficult to incorporate in the larger project proposed. Equally important is the fact that the results will be quite different from the facade projects that have abounded in downtown Washington. Only a small portion of the historic property is being treated in this way and none it will appear to be just a facade. The Victor Building's historical identity will remain completely intact on the exterior.

The owner has compromised in this process as well, relinquishing an entire floor in the new addition so as to incorporate it with the historic property. But the owner also gains in this proposal because that integration makes the floor-plate of the whole more attractive from a marketing standpoint. And I think all

parties gain from the caliber of the proposed addition. The architect's scheme lets the Victor Building read as a distinct entity, holding its own in the urban landscape. The new exterior is, at the same time, fully compatible with the historic portion. The two parts complement, rather than compete with, one another. These characteristics, combined with the intrinsic design merits of the new exterior, make it an admirable solution from a preservation standpoint. Indeed, I consider it to be of a higher caliber than many such schemes to be found in major cities coast to coast. One would be hard-pressed to find better in Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Saint Louis, or San Francisco.

Let me again emphasize that this proposal was developed as a direct result of an initiative taken by the private-sector preservation community, working with the full cooperation and spirit of good will of the owner, the architect, and the HPD. The solution was not advanced by the applicant, nor by the applicant's attorneys, in an effort to appease a previously hostile preservation coalition. This was a fully cooperative effort, one to which the Historic Preservation Review Board has now bestowed its approval.

We have arrived at the solution presented to you not just from personal experience locally, but with knowledge of sound preservation practices across the country over the past several decades. Each case has its own governing circumstances. Flexibility of thought and of act is essential. No formulas exist in this field. But it is just as important to be consistent in principle. Ultimately the worth of preservation projects derives from the extent to which the past is presented with fidelity and accuracy—in spirit and in detail. At the same time, preservation almost always entails change, and therefore a corollary is that results possess a sense of purposefulness and dignity within the present context.

If the current Victor Building proposal is realized, no one will be able to tell by looking at the exterior that anything has been done save cleaning, repair, and replacement of some lost or damaged parts. It will appear as its own building. The precinct will be enhanced with an addition that is harmonious with and does not overpower its historic neighbor. It is a solution that conveys the past with accuracy and respect as well as one that acknowledges the realities of the present. It is a compromise, without question, but it is one in which we can take pride. We are delighted to appear again before you, less than a year after the previous hearing on this case, with a scheme we can endorse and hope that you will share our enthusiasm for a victory hard won.

APPENDIX

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATING HISTORIC LANDMARKS AND DISTRICTS

124.1 Historic and prehistoric buildings, building interiors, structures, monuments, works of art or other similar objects, areas, places, sites, neighborhoods, networks, and cultural landscapes shall be designated as Historic Landmarks or Historic Districts if:

(a) They possess one or more of the following values or qualities:

(1) They are the site of significant events or are associated with persons, groups, institutions or movements that contributed significantly to the heritage, culture or development of the National Capital or the Nation;

(2) They exemplify the significant military, political, economic, social, scientific, technical, educational, historical, archeological, architectural or artistic heritage of the National Capital or the Nation;

(3) They embody the distinguishing characteristics of architectural styles, building types, types or methods of construction, landscape architecture, urban design or other architectural, aesthetic or engineering expressions significant to the appearance and development of the National Capital or the Nation;

(4) They have been identified as notable works of craftsmen, artists, sculptors, architects, landscape architects, urban planners, engineers, builders or developers whose works have influenced the evolution of their fields of endeavor, or the development of the National Capital or the Nation;

(5) They contain information about or evidence

of historic or prehistoric events, processes, institutions, design, construction, settlement patterns, or other facets of earlier cultures that is known or established likely to be important to knowledge or understanding of such cultures; or

(6) In the case of natural forms or settings, or substantially natural forms or settings, they reflect significant patterns of settlement or use of the landscape as well as the continuum and evolution of cultural attitudes, norms, and values towards the land; and

(b) They possess sufficient integrity to convey, represent or contain the values and qualities for which they are judged significant; and

(c) Sufficient time has passed since they achieved significance or were constructed to permit professional evaluation of them in their historical context.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

¹ For discussion, see Richard Longstreth, "Taste versus History," *Historic Preservation Forum*, 8 (May-June 1994), 40-45.

² A number of buildings are included in my testimony for comparative purposes. These references are retained in the text, even though cost prevented illustrating all of them, to show the *kinds* of examples and the ways in which I have used them. Thus whether the reader is or is not familiar with Erich Mendelsohn's Schocken department store in Stuttgart (Chapter II) is not important for the purposes of this text. Instead, the point is that when certain salient features of a resource represent national or international tendencies, it is valuable to discuss and to illustrate them.

³ The Committee of 100 has historically addressed a wide range of environmental issues, including land use, open-space conservation, housing, parks, water and air quality, transportation, and zoning as well as historic preservation. It is a volunteer group, with neither office nor paid staff. Under the circumstances, the Committee generally lends assistance through the expertise of its members to other organizations. In cases where the issues are important, but left unattended, sometimes the Committee will take the initiative. For background, see Richard Striner, *The Committee of 100 on the Federal City: Its History and Its Service to the Nation's Capital* (Washington: by the Committee [P.O. Box 57106, Washington 20037], 1995).

CHAPTER I Greyhound Depot

¹ For background on the case, see: Benjamin Forgey, "Rerouting the Bus Station," *Washington Post*, 31 March 1984, G1, G3; Richard Striner, "The Case of the Greyhound Terminal," *Trans-Lux* (Art Deco Society of Washington), 2 (May 1984), 2; Michael Leccese, "Three Sleeping Beauties," *Preservation News*, June 1984, 1, 8; Carol Dubie, "Great Greyhound at Bay," *Society for Commercial Archeology, News Journal*, 2 (April 1985), 1; Marcia McAllister, "Greyhound Station Sold to Developer," *Washington Post*, 5 September 1985, E1, E2; "Greyhound Memories," *Washington Post*, 6 September 1985, A22; Ann Mariano, "Greyhound Sniffs Out Gold in Old Bus Stations," *Washington Post*, 12 October 1985, F1, F12; Wendy Swallow, "Preservation Sought for 'Slipcovered' Bus Terminal," *Washington Post*, 3 May 1986, F1, F3; Richard Longstreth, "Greyhound Terminal: More than a Facade," *Washington Post*, 12 May 1986, A13; Richard Striner, "Greyhound Terminal: The Quest for Decent Solution," *Trans-Lux* (Art Deco Society of Washington), 4 (Spring 1986), 1-2, 5; Jacqueline Adams, "Marchers Want to Save Art Deco Bus Station," *Washington Times*, 3 November 1986, 7B; Tom Sherwood, "Can Openers Symbolize Preservation," *Washington Post*, 4 November 1986, B5; Thomas Fraser, "Fight Over Future of Bus Terminal," *Business Review*, 3-7 November 1986, 1, 33; Richard Striner, "The Fight to Preserve the Greyhound 'Super Terminal' of Washington D.C.," *Postcard Journal*, 3 (Fall 1986), 1-2; "Greyhound Bus Terminal Declared Historic Landmark by Preservation Review Board," *District of Columbia Real Estate Reporter*, 8 (January 1987), 6; Olivia Lelong, "Greyhound Station Gains Historic Landmark Status," *Washington Times*, 23 January 1987, D1;

Wendy Swallow, "D.C. Greyhound Station to Be Saved for Its Hidden Art Deco Architecture," *Washington Post*, 24 January 1987, F1, F6; Thomas Fraser, "Preservation Board Votes to Designate Greyhound Terminal a District Landmark," *Business Review*, 26-30 January 1987, 28; Richard Striner, "Terminal Cases," *Washington Post*, 8 February 1987, C8; Heidi C. Daniel, "Past, Future Clash at Greyhound Station," *Washington Business Journal*, 16 February 1987, 1, 17; M[ichael] L[ecesse], "D.C. Designates 'Slipcovered' Bus Station a Landmark," *Preservation News*, March 1987, 6; Richard Striner, "ADSW Opposes Preliminary Greyhound Site Proposal: Negotiations under Way," *Trans-Lux*, 5 (Summer 1987), 4; Nell Henderson, "Greyhound Sets Final Day for Terminal," *Washington Post*, 16 July 1987, C4; Henry Allen, "Bus Station: An Urban Elegy," *Washington Post*, 4 August 1987, D1, D4; Nancy Tracewell, "Greyhound Terminal Next for Fast-Track Developer," *Washington Business Journal*, 10 August 1987, 1, 21; "Preservationists OK New Greyhound Scheme," *Preservation News*, September 1987, 8; Millie Riley, "Economics is Bone of Contention in Fight to Save Old Greyhound Station," *Novascope*, November 1987, 6-7; Richard Striner, "Greyhound Terminal Designated a D.C. Historic Landmark," *Trans-Lux*, 5 (Winter 1987), 1-2; Alex Montague, "Second Time Around, Hadid Near Sale of Old Greyhound Station," *Washington Business Journal*, 4 April 1988, 3; Benjamin Forgey, "Boxing Out the Greyhound Terminal," *Washington Post*, 16 April 1988, C1, C7; Anne Veigle, "Dwarfing of Old Bus Terminal Rejected," *Washington Times*, 21 April 1988, C3; David S. Hilzenrath, "Redevelopment of Bus Terminal Put on Hold," *Washington Post*, 23 April 1988, E3; "Board Says No to Greyhound Terminal Plan," *District of Columbia Real Estate Reporter*, 9 (April-May 1988), 807-808; and "We've Come a Long Way: A Design Chronology of the Greyhound Terminal," *Trans-Lux*, 6 (Autumn 1988), whole issue.

² For accounts of the scheme, see: Richard Striner, "The Greyhound Terminal: Triumph at Last!" *Trans-Lux*, 6 (Summer 1988), 1-3; Mark Jenkins, "Leave the Preserving to Them," *City Paper*, 22 July 1988, 7; Ann Veigle, "Board OKs Bus Terminal Plan," *Washington Times*, 22 July 1988, C3; David S. Hilzenrath, "Compromise Ends Greyhound Dispute," *Washington Post*, 23 July 1988, F1-F2; Alex Montague, "Preservation Board OKs Pared Bus Depot Plan," *Washington Business Journal*, 25 July 1988, 4; Rachael Cox, "Greyhound Plan Gets Final Okay," *Preservation News*, October 1988, 6; Anne Simpson, "Bus Terminal Sheds Modern Image," *Washington Post*, 1 February 1989, B3; "D.C.'s Deco Hound," *Washington Business Journal*, 13 February 1989, 8; "... Preserving the Past for the Future," *Metropolitan Washington Business Properties*, 3 (March 1989), 10-12; "Greyhound Uncovered," *Trans-Lux*, 7 (Spring 1989), 1-2; "Projects Benefit from Landmark Sites," *National Real Estate Investor*, 32 (January 1990), 72-73; "When (a Little) Less Is (a Lot) More . . .," *DC/AIA News*, January 1991, 15; Henry Allen "Terminal of Endearment," *Washington Post*, 13 September 1991, C1-C2; Jerry Adler, "What a Swell Ride It Was," *Newsweek*, 118 (14 October 1991), 73; Thomas W. Sweeney "'A Rare and Successful Alliance' . . ." *Historic Preservation News*, November 1991, 14; "Landmark Approvals," *Architecture*, 80 (November 1991), 97-99; Carl L. Nelson, "Marble, Granites and Agglomerate Unify Old and New," *Stone World*, (July 1992), 42, 44-47; "Washington Office Rents: The Highs and Lows," *Washington Business Journal*, 11-17 March 1994, 34; and Robert Schmidt, "Greyhound Station Lures Lawyers to Fringe Area," *Legal Times*, 4 April 1994, S27.

³ For good illustrations, see Alex Roggero, with Tom Beadle, *Greyhound: A Pictorial Tribute to an American Icon* (London: Osprey Automotive, 1995). Concerning Loewy, see: Raymond

Loewy, *Industrial Design* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 1979); and Angela Schonberger, ed., *Raymond Loewy: Pioneer of American Industrial Design* (Munich: Prestel, 1990).

⁴ See James Goode, *Capital Losses* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1979), 378-381.

⁵ The Baltimore depot has been preserved. Among the most successful projects is the late 1980s conversion of the Columbia, South Carolina depot, by George Brown, into the Lexington State Bank. Several examples are illustrated in Roggero, *Greyhound*.

CHAPTER II

Hecht Company Warehouse

¹ *Washington Deco: Art Deco in the Nation's Capital* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984).

² For background on the case, see: Richard Striner, "Emergency Landmark Application Filed for Hechts Warehouse," *Trans-Lux*, 9 (March 1991), 1-2; Amy Worden, "A Beacon Offers Ray of Hope to Its Neighborhood," *Washington Post*, 27 February 1992, D.C. 7; "HPRB . . . Designates Hecht's Warehouse," *District of Columbia Real Estate Reporter*, 13 (March 1992), 5-6; Anthony Wilner, "May Co. to Restore Hecht Company Warehouse," *Trans-Lux*, 10 (June 1992), 1-2; Amy Worden, "Washingtonians Mend the Moderne," *Historic Preservation News*, July-August 1992, 8-9; Thomas D. Sullivan "Cleaning up Wear and Tear on D.C. Warehouse," *Washington Times*, 11 October 1992, D4; Lorraine Woellert, "Crowning Achievement: Hecht's Warehouse Regains Its Sleekness," *Washington Times*, 14 October 1992, B1; Benjamin Forgey, "A Hecht of a Comeback," *Washington Post*, 17 October 1992, D4; Glen Leiner, letter to the editor,

Washington Post, 9 November 1992, A20; and Derek H. Trelstad, "The Hecht Company Warehouse," *Building Renovation*, July-August 1993, 29-33.

³ For illustrations of this work and of examples cited in the text below, see Meredith Clausen, "The Department Store—Development of the Type," *Journal of Architectural Education*, 39 (Fall 1985), 20-29; and idem, "Department Stores," in Joseph A. Wilkes, ed., *Encyclopedia of Architecture: Design, Engineering & Construction*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, II: 207-210.

⁴ For background, see: Richard Longstreth, "Silver Spring: Georgia Avenue, Colesville Road, and the Creation of an Alternative 'Downtown' for Metropolitan Washington," in Zeynep Celik, et al., eds., *Streets: Critical Perspectives on Public Space* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 253-254, 256; and idem, "The Mixed Blessings of Success: The Hecht Company and Department Store Branch Development After World War II," in Elizabeth Cromley and Carter Hudgins, eds., *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, VI (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 244-262.

⁵ More systematic research has been done on the subject since this testimony was written. See Dietrich Neumann, et al., "Glass Block," in Thomas C. Jester, ed., *Twentieth-Century Building Materials: History and Conservation*, New York: McGraw Hill, 1995), 194-199.

⁶ Again, a valuable piece has been written on the subject in recent years. See Dietrich Neumann, "'The Century's Triumph in Lighting': The Luxfer Prism Companies and Their Contribution to Early Modern Architecture," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 54 (March 1995), 24-53.

⁷ See James Goode, *Capital Losses*

(Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1979), 155-156. The building had been damaged by fire and was feared to be a total loss at the time of publication. Subsequently, the complex was designated a landmark and rehabilitated as offices.

⁸ Concerning the Park and Shop, see Richard Longstreth, "The Neighborhood Shopping Center in Washington, D.C., 1930-1941," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 51 (March 1992), 11-17.

⁹ Concerning Abel's prewar work, see James Goode, *Best Addresses: A Century of Washington's Distinguished Apartment Houses* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988), 340-342, 347-350, and 394

CHAPTER III

Woodward & Lothrop Warehouse

¹ For background on the case, see: Mark Jenkins and Bill Rice, "Woodies at Landmark," *City Paper*, 11 December 1992, 9; and "HPRB Cases Turn to Social Issues," *District of Columbia Real Estate Reporter*, 14 (December 1992), 5-6.

² I learned this information, subsequent to designation of the Hecht Company warehouse, from a retired senior executive of the retail firm. It proved crucial to explaining why the exterior of that building was conspicuously more decorous than most examples of the type.

³ Within about a year of designation, the former Palais Royal Warehouse, which had long functioned as an adjunct to that of Woodward & Lothrop, was demolished.

⁴ See Hans Wirz and Richard

Striner, *Washington Deco: Art Deco in the Nation's Capital* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984).

⁵ For further discussion, see Richard Longstreth, "The Problem with 'Style,'" *The Forum*, Bulletin of the Committee on Preservation, Society of Architectural Historians, 6 (December 1984). The matter is well addressed as it relates to Art Deco in Richard Striner, "Art Deco: Polemics and Synthesis," *Winterthur Portfolio*, 25 (Spring 1990), 21-34. Copies of both pieces were distributed to the HPRB as this point.

⁶ For background, see: Allen Freeman, "Preservation and Pediatrics," *Preservation News*, April 1990, 3, 23; Thomas Bell, "City Puts Brakes on Demolition Plan," *Washington Post*, 26 April 1990, DC9; and Benjamin Forgey, "The Operation Was a Success," *Washington Post*, 19 December 1992, D1, D5. Initially, the case was among the most bitterly contested locally in recent decades.

CHAPTER IV

Sears, Roebuck Store

¹ For background on the case, see: Kara Swisher, "Sears to Cut 50,000 Jobs in Shake Up," *Washington Post*, 26 January 1993, A1, A10; idem, "Sears's District Employees, Shoppers Mourn Store's Fate," *Washington Post*, 27 January 1993, F1-F10; Sam Smith, "Tears for Sears," *Washington Post*, 31 January 1993, C5; Kara Swisher, "Sears Site Attracting Interest," *Washington Post*, 1 April 1993, C5; Lauren Adkins, "Tenleytown Sears Store Nominated for District Landmark Status," *Trans-Lux*, 11 (July 1993), 3-4; Hamil R. Harris, "Tenleytown Gets a Boost," *Washington Post*, 9 February 1995, DC-1-DC-5; "District Reviews Landmark for Sears Roebuck Store," *District of Columbia Real Estate Reporter*, 17 (May 1995), 8; Christopher Belles, "Old Sears Becomes Landmark," *Northwest Current*,

31 May-13 June 1995, 1-21; Margaret Webb Pressler, "The Emblem of Hechinger's Hopes," *Washington Post*, 28 May 1995, C9 C11; idem, "Hechinger Gets Go-Ahead for New Store," *Washington Post*, 30 May 1996, D11; and Linda Lyons, "Hechinger Opens in Renovated Tenleytown Sears Location," *Trans-Lux*, 13 (July 1996), 1-3.

CHAPTER V

Community Garden at 3901 Connecticut Avenue

¹ See James Goode, *Best Addresses: A Century of Washington's Distinguished Apartment Houses* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988).

² Ruth H. Landman, director, "Community Gardens in Washington: An Anthropological Study," Washington, American University, Spring 1989; idem, *Creating Community in the City: Cooperatives and Community Gardens in Washington, D.C.* (Westport Conn.: Bergin & Garvey, 1993). Other sources are cited in the notes below.

³ Thomas J. Bassett, "Vacant Lot Cultivation: Community Gardening in America, 1893-1978," Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1979; idem, "Reaping on the Margins: A Century of Community Gardening in America," *Landscape*, 25: 2 (1981), 1-8.

⁴ Sam Bass Warner, *To Dwell Is to Garden: A History of Boston's Community Gardens* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1987). See also: "Community Gardening," *Plants & Gardens*, Brooklyn Botanic Garden Record, 35 (May 1979), whole issue; Susan Naimark, ed., *A Handbook of Community Gardens* (New York: Scribner, 1982); and Tom Fox, et al., *Struggle for Space: The Greening of New York City 1970-1984* (New York: Neighborhood Open Space Coalition,

1983).

⁵ In addition to work cited in n. 3 above, see: E.L.D. Seymour, *The New Garden Encyclopedia* (New York: Wm. H. Wise & Co., 1943), Victory Garden Supplement, 1349-1380; Joachim Wolschke-Bulmann, "From the War-Garden to the Victory Garden: Political Aspects of Garden Culture in the United States during World War I," *Landscape Journal*, 11 (Spring 1992), 51-57; and R. E. Gough, "Gardening for Victory," *Country Journal*, 20 (May-June 1993), 22-24.

CHAPTER VI

Woodward Building

¹ For background on the case, see: Heidi C. Daniel, "Is the Woodward Building Worth Saving?" *Washington Business Journal*, 20 October 1986, 1, 22; Benjamin Forgey, "The Woodward Question," *Washington Post*, 8 November 1986, D1, D7; "From the President," and "Infill," *D.C. Preservation League* (newsletter), Winter 1986, 3, 8; Jonathan Walters, "Whither Woodward?" *Preservation News*, September 1987, 3, 9; David S. Hilzenrath, "Plan to Raze D.C. Building Spurs Outcry," *Washington Post*, 26 March 1988, "Woodward Razing Okayed," *Preservation News*, May 1988, 3; Richard Longstreth, "Save the Woodward Building," *Washington Post*, 22 May 1988, C8; Anne Veigle, "Citizens Decry Plan to Raze Old Building," *Washington Times*, 16 September 1988, C3; and "Legal Challenges to Proposed D.C. Demolition," *Forum Newsletter* (National Trust), 2 (November 1988), 3; Anne Simpson, "Preservationists Sue to Prevent Woodward Building's Demolition," *Washington Post*, 2 February 1989, DC-1, DC-2; Barton Gellman, "Court Bars demolition of Woodward Building," *Washington Post*, 9 March 1990, C4; "Historic Preservation 'Special Merit' Up for Re-examination," *District of Columbia Real Estate Reporter*, 11 (March 1990), 6-7; "Project of Special Merit' Exception Restricted in

District of Columbia," *Preservation Law Update*, 1990-17 (1 May 1990); and "Woodward Building Wins," *Preservation News*, May 1990.

² Subsequent research uncovered many more newspaper items pertaining to the Woodward when it was built, material that was gleaned from a few hours of microfilm scanning.

³ For discussion, see Richard Longstreth, "Building for Business: A Century of Commercial Architecture in the Washington Metropolitan Area," in C. Ford Peatross, ed., *Washingtoniana: 200 years of Architecture, Design and Engineering Drawings in the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Collection*, forthcoming.

⁴ Since this testimony was given several historical studies have addressed the subject, the most detailed of which is Carol Willis, *Form Follows Finance: Skyscrapers and Skylines in New York and Chicago*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1995.

⁵ See: Christian K. Lane, "New Architecture in Washington, D.C.," *Metropolitan Review*, 1 (Summer 1988), 26-27; *Arbitare*, 266 (July-August 1988), 206-207; and *Hartman-Cox: Selected and Current Works* (Mulgrave, Australia: Images Printing Group, 1994), 114-123. Concerning Greenberg, see Chap. 8, n.2.

CHAPTER VII

Victor Building

¹ For background on the case, see: Mark Jenkins, "Victor Victorious," *City Paper*, 24 April 1992, 14; "New HPRB Board Approves Victor Building's Conceptual Design," *District of Columbia Real Estate Reporter*, 13 (August 1992), 5-6; Mark Jenkins and Bill Rice, "Mr. Wilson's New Neighborhood," *City Paper*, 7 October 1992; *Historic Preservation News*,

January 1993, 19; "Debating Policy and History Over the Victor Building," *District of Columbia Real Estate Reporter*, 14 (March 1993), 6-7; "New Design Scheme Preserves Architectural & Historical Significance of Landmark Victor Building," *D.C. Preservation League Reporter*, Fall 1993, 9; and "Victor Building at Final Design Review," *District of Columbia Real Estate Reporter*, 14 (November 1993), 7.

² Concerning Gehry's work, see: Benjamin Forgey, "Adventures in Sheet Metal," *Washington Post*, 30 January 1930, C1, C7; Paul Goldberger, "Frank Gehry Fashions a Cubist Castle of Metal," *New York Times*, 3 April 1988, 35; and Andrea Oppenheimer Dean, "Deconstructivist Construction . . .," *Architecture*, 77 (June 1988), 64-67. Concerning Greenberg's, see: Paul Goldberger, "Allan Greenberg's Rooms in the Department of State," *Antiques*, 132 (July 1987), 132-143; Thomas Fisher, "Classically Speaking," *Progressive Architecture*, 68 (September 1987), 110-113; and *Allan Greenberg: Selected Works*, Architectural Monographs No. 39 (London: Academy Editions, 1995), 30-49.

³ The reference, of course, is to the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in 1914, which triggered World War I. However, at the time of the hearing, the fighting between Serbs and Muslims at Sarajevo had begun, and I considered the reference apropos to the wholesale disfigurement of a landmark building. The Mayor's Agent was in his sixties and would certainly be aware of my reference as well as inference.

⁴ These are examples gathered during travels over the course of a number of years. I took the photographs, as examples of the ways in which buildings are changed over time, to use in graduate preservation classes. Even without such material at hand, examples may be found nearby or be procured from a preservation organiza-

tion in the area.

⁵ Wishing to avoid being influenced by the owners or creating the appearance of such influence, we did not ask them to share their data on the feasibility of rehabilitation, but rather arrived at our own, independent conclusions. Richard Wagner generously provided us with invaluable insights on the matter.

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