

BZA Case No. 19823 - Wisconsin Avenue Baptist Church-Sunrise Senior Living, 3920 Alton Place NW

Submitted by Tenleytown Neighbors Association

The Five Houses on 39th Street, NW
sharing a property line with the proposed development at 3920 Alton Place NW

The development proposed by WABC-Sunrise would replace the existing church with a much larger facility.

The five homes below share a lot line with the proposed development. The proposal includes a truck ramp 8 feet from the property line to service the new development. The last picture in the survey below is the existing church.

Note that the WABC Lot was 7 single family lots when WABC bought it in 1954, a decade after the five houses on 39th Street were built.

Following the Survey is a biographical sketch of the architect who designed the five houses.

Joseph H. Abel, Architect, was described thus: Historian James Goode stated that Abel “was a pioneer in modernistic design in Washington,” and responsible for such notable apartment houses as the *Broadmoor* in 1928, the *Shoreham* in 1930, the *Irene* in 1964, and the *James*, the first apartment building in Washington to feature a rooftop pool when it was completed in 1960.”

District of Columbia
Tenleytown Historical Survey



RESOURCE INFORMATION

Square: 1779

Lot: 0816

Address: 4404 39TH ST, NW

Architect: Abel, Joseph H.

Builder: Homesite Realty Co.

Built: in 1942



RESOURCE INFORMATION

Square: 1779

Lot: 0815

Address: 4408 39TH ST, NW

Architect: Abel, Joseph H.

Builder: Homesite Realty Co.

Built: in 1942



RESOURCE INFORMATION

Square: 1779

Lot: 0813

Address: 4412 39TH ST, NW

Architect: Abel, Joseph H.

Builder: Homesite Realty Co.

Built: in 1942



RESOURCE INFORMATION

Square: 1779

Lot: 0814

Address: 3900 ALTON PL, NW

Architect: Abel, Joseph H.

Builder: Homesite Realty Co.

Built: in 1942



RESOURCE INFORMATION

Square: 1779

Lot: 0817

Address: 3901 YUMA ST, NW

Architect: Abel, Joseph H.

Builder: Homesite Realty Co.

Built: in 1942



RESOURCE INFORMATION

Square: 1779

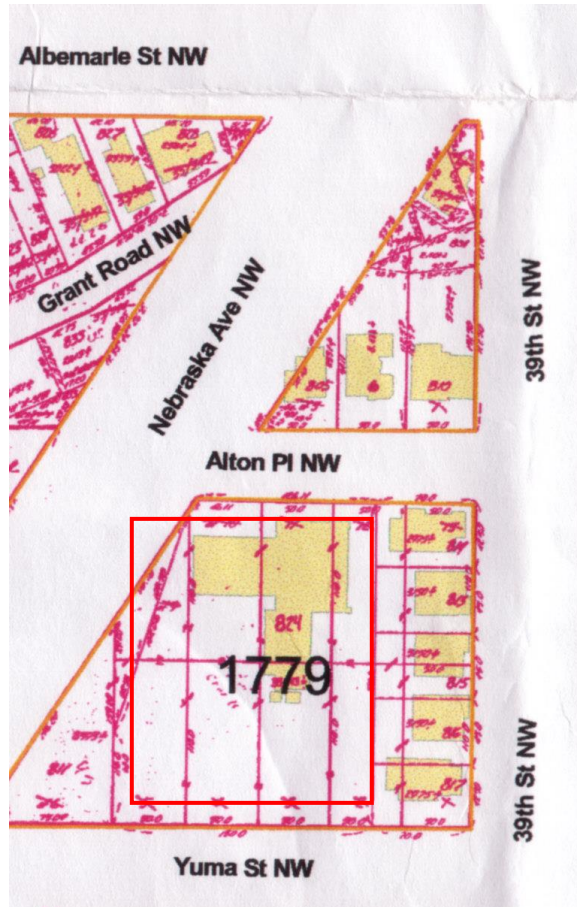
Lot: 0824

Address: 3920 ALTON PL, NW

Architect: Unknown

Builder: Unknown

Built: in 1954



Digital Image 2003

NOTE: The WABC Lot was 7 single family lots when WABC bought it in 1954, a decade after the five houses on 39th Street were built.

Survey Coordinated by Kelsey & Associates, Inc. washingtonghistory.com

Architect of the Five Houses on 39th Street, NW

Joseph Henry Abel

Dillon & Abel

Berla & Abel

Architect Joseph H. Abel was born in Washington on May 20, 1905, and following graduation from high school in 1923, entered The George Washington University architecture program. He eventually graduated with a B.A. in architecture ten years later, in 1932, but not because of a struggle with academics; in fact, he was designing many of Washington's residences and large apartment buildings while continuing his studies.

Abel recorded in his registration materials that he was employed as a draftsman by architect George T. Santmyers from 1923 to 1928, and by developer Harry A. Bralove from 1928 to 1931. At the young age of 22, he furnished the designs for the elegant apartment building at 2101 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., the first of over 100 apartment building commissions completed during his career.

The picture (not included) above shows the staff of Berla and Abel in its Connecticut Avenue office in 1948. Left to right are George Agron, Julian Berla, Joseph Abel, Nick Satterlee, and standing, Mayhew Swiss and Jessie Weinstein. Dillon and Abel were responsible for the *Governor Shepherd* apartment building, built in 1938 at 2121 Virginia Avenue, N.W., (demolished 1985).



Historian James Goode stated that Abel “was a pioneer in modernistic design in Washington,” and responsible for such notable apartment houses as the *Broadmoor* in 1928 (seen above), the *Shoreham* in 1930, the *Irene* in 1964, and the *James*, the first apartment building in Washington to feature a rooftop pool when it was completed in 1960. Developer Henry Jawish, who hired Abel to design 2929 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., wrote a letter of recommendation for Abel which stated that he knew him “to be a young man unassuming, quiet, and very efficient.”

Abel and Charles Dillon established their firm in 1935. In 1941, Abel took on another partner, Julian E. Berla, and changed the name of the firm to Berla and Abel. When Berla retired in 1972 following an automobile accident, he joined partner Jessie Weinstein to form the firm Abel and Weinstein. Abel retired shortly thereafter, and died in 1985.

In the Tenleytown Survey area, Joseph Abel, or the firm of Dillon & Abel, were responsible for the following designs (excerpt of the relevant 39th Street homes):

Square	Lot	Bld #	Street	Architect	Builder	Built	Notes
1779	0816	4404	39TH	Abel, Joseph H.	Homesite Realty Co.	1942	Included houses at 4404-12 39th & 3901 Yuma & 3900 Alton; Viewed only at NA
1779	0815	4408	39TH	Abel, Joseph H.	Homesite Realty Co.	1942	Included houses at 4404-12 39th & 3901 Yuma & 3900 Alton; Viewed only at NA
1779	0813	4412	39TH	Abel, Joseph H.	Homesite Realty Co.	1942	Included houses at 4404-12 39th & 3901 Yuma & 3900 Alton; Viewed only at NA
1779	0814	3900	ALTON	Abel, Joseph H.	Homesite Realty Co.	1942	Included houses at 4404-12 39th & 3901 Yuma & 3900 Alton; Viewed only at NA
1779	0817	3901	YUMA	Abel, Joseph H.	Homesite Realty Co.	1942	Included houses at 4404-12 39th & 3901 Yuma & 3900 Alton; Viewed only at NA