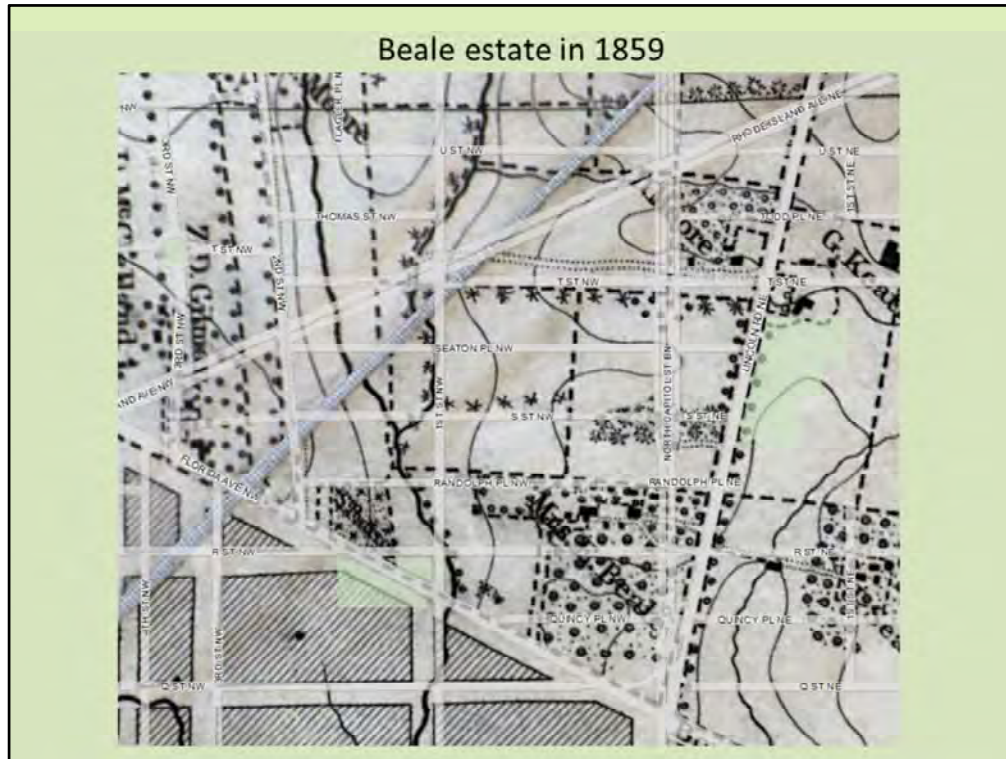


This map shows the City's original boundary at Florida Avenue (then Boundary Street), and the area that would become Bloomingdale, right outside the boundary. Note Seventh Street Road and Lincoln Road (unlabeled). Beyond lay rural estates and cemeteries – established in the early 1850s.

Streams came together to form the main branch of Tiber Creek near today's First and S.

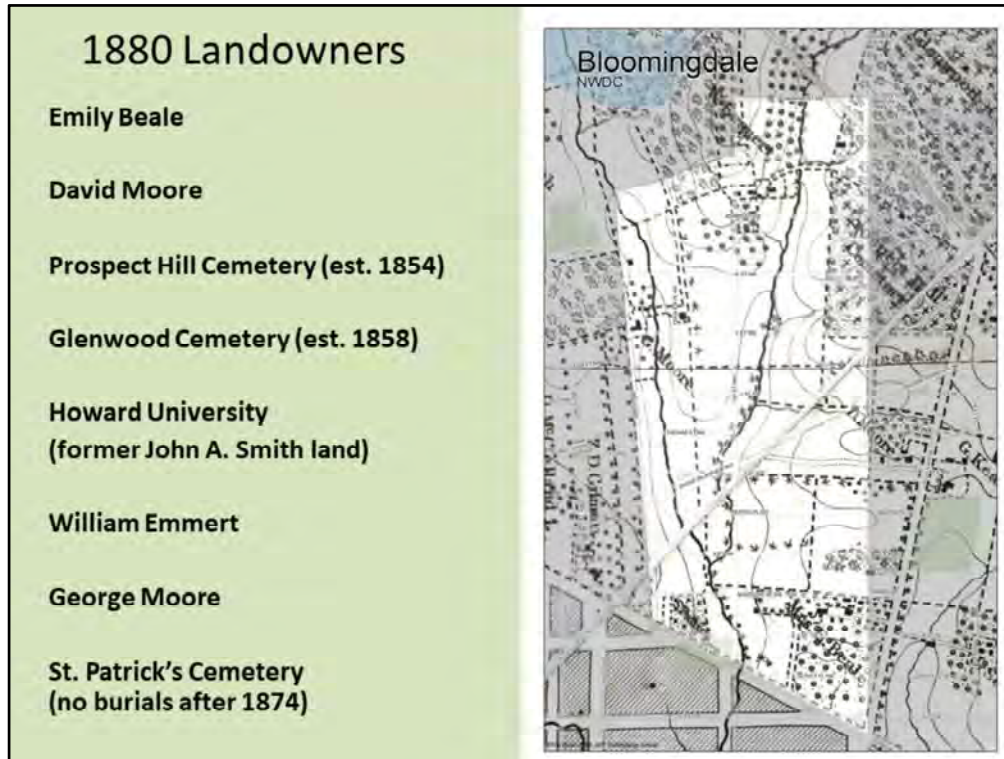
George and Emily Beale bought property here in 1820. George died in 1835 but Emily remained until her death 50 years later. A journalist called her place a "stately old house...encompassed by a village of outbuildings and magnificent grounds lighted with radiant flower beds...and shaded with majestic trees, [primarily oaks]." This was the Bloomingdale estate, for which the neighborhood is named.



We enlarged the Boschke map and laid a current map over it, so you can see Emily Beale's Bloomingdale estate in relation to today's streets.

In the 1870s, President Grant was a frequent guest at Bloomingdale. (Grant served 1869-77.) He was close with Emily's son General Edward F Beale, who later owned Decatur House on Lafayette Square.





Here's a list of landowners in the area that became Bloomingdale. Starting in the lower right-hand corner we see Emily Beale and, north of her estate, David Moore and the two cemeteries.

Howard University had purchased John A. Smith's property where the reservoir is now in 1867. Much of it was immediately sold for development and some sold later (in 1882) to the U.S. government for McMillan Reservoir.

William Emmert bought land here in 1839.

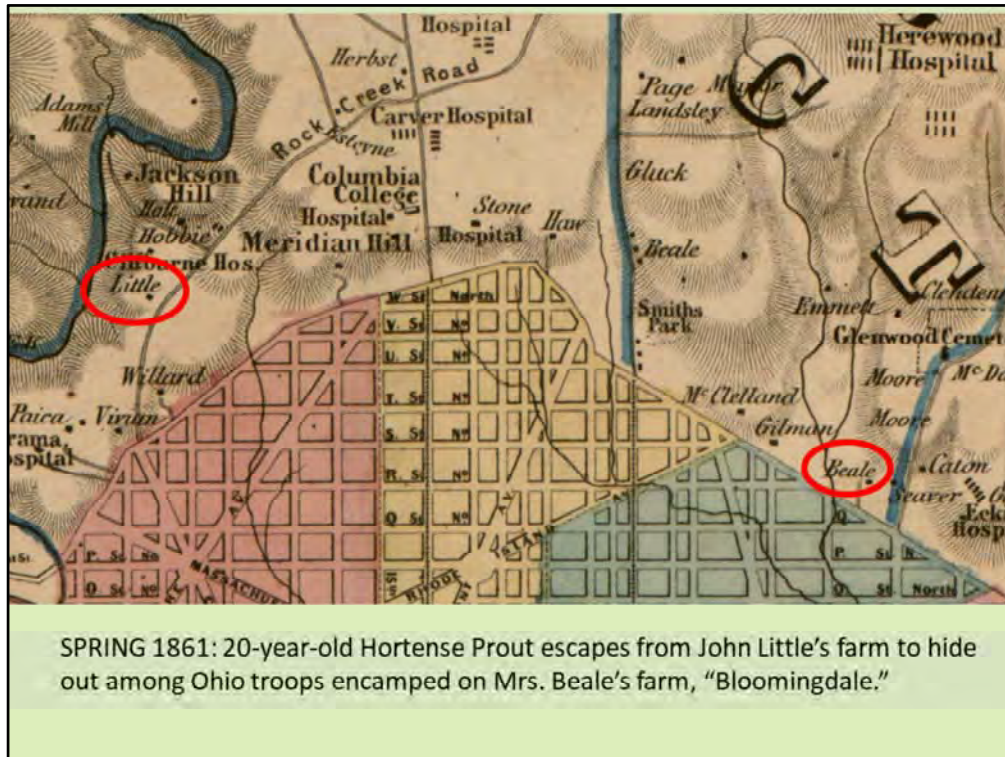
George Moore owned the strip of land extending from Florida Avenue all the way to today's reservoir grounds. The land was originally purchased by Moore's father, who had split it among his five children in 1839. Daughter Ann Moore McDaniel's parcel was just east of Lincoln Road.

St. Patrick's Cemetery was established in 1808 and was surrounded on three sides by George Moore's land. Burials tapered off at St. Patrick's once Mount Olivet Cemetery opened in 1859, and the last remains in St. Patrick's were moved to Mount Olivet in 1895.



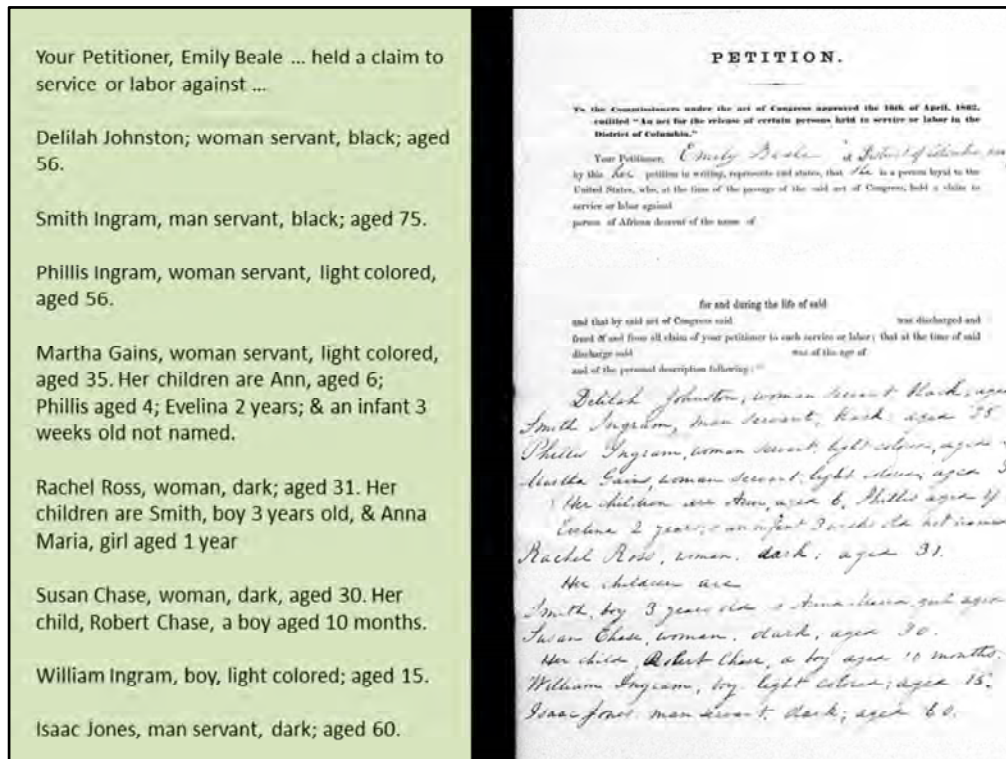






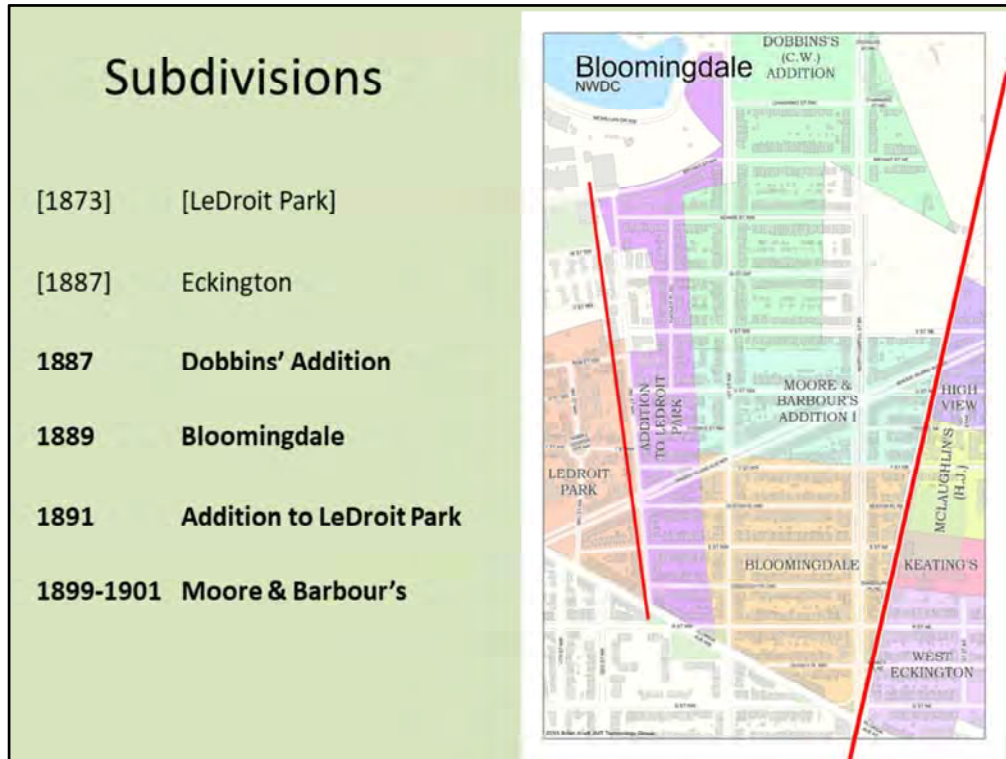
Artist/historian Mary Belcher has done an enormous amount of research on the Little family who lived on land that included today's Kalorama Park in Adams Morgan. A few years ago, she and Mara Cherkasky co-wrote a historic landmark nomination for Kalorama Park, and that's how we learned how the two estates are connected. In the spring of 1861, a young woman named Hortense Prout who was enslaved on John Little's farm ran away. This map shows where she went: to Emily Beale's estate, where Union troops were encamped and hid her. Unfortunately, she was caught--disguised as a man--and returned to John Little, who jailed her. Based on that incident, Mary got Kalorama Park designated as an official Underground Railroad site – and we will be working with her to get signage there.





In April 1862, under the DC Compensated Emancipation Act, slave owners were allowed to petition the government for reimbursement for the enslaved individuals they were required to emancipate. This is a page from Emily Beale's petition for seven adults and eight children, whose value she estimated at \$7,725.

The provision for compensation of up to \$300 per slave happened only in DC; it was dropped from Lincoln's final version of the Emancipation Proclamation, issued nine months later.



The land north of Florida Avenue was becoming valuable for development by the 1880s, and families began selling it. This map shows the four major subdivisions that comprise today's Bloomingdale, which originally extended east to Lincoln Road.

Dobbins' Addition had been William Emmert's property, which he left to his daughter Caroline Dobbins. (He died in 1869.)

Bloomingdale was subdivided by Emily Beale's heirs four years after her death in 1885.

Addition to LeDroit Park had been George Moore's land, some of which he'd sold to the U.S. government for the reservoir. After his death in 1887, his widow Elizabeth Moore remained in her house near today's Second and Elm streets until her death in 1912.

Moore & Barbour's Addition was David Moore's land, which he had left to his daughter Annie Barbour.



During this time the city was expanding rapidly, and as it grew more crowded and less desirable to the growing middle class, real estate speculators began to look to Washington County. Sometimes subdivisions were being developed by the same people who were building streetcar lines to serve them. For example the developer of Eckington, George Truesdell, established DC's first electrified streetcar line specifically to serve his new neighborhood.

This map accompanied proposed legislation that would require new subdivisions to conform to the L'Enfant Plan's street grid, and the timing was such that Bloomingdale became one of the first suburbs to conform. LeDroit Park had been developed earlier, so its streets run at a slight angle, as you can see.

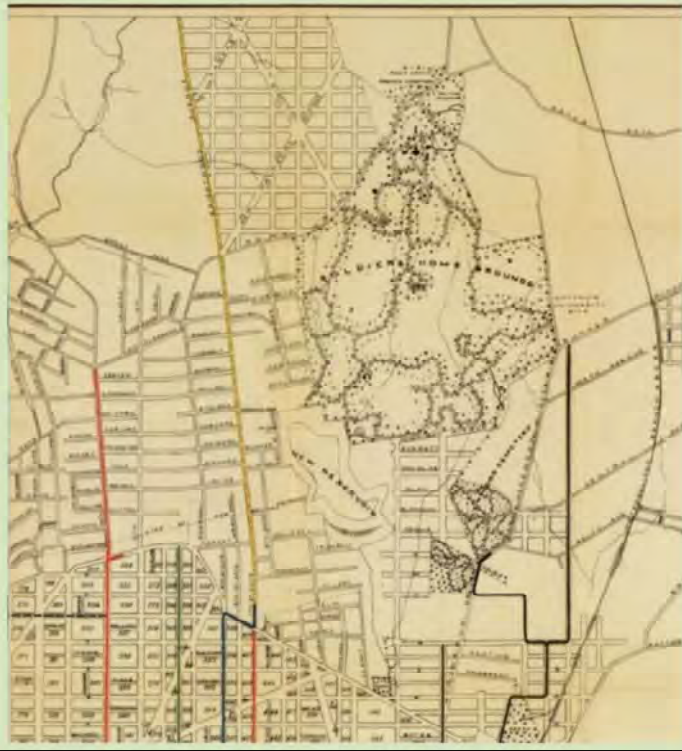


## Streetcar Lines

### 1888:

Seventh Street Line  
extended from Boundary  
Street to Brightwood.

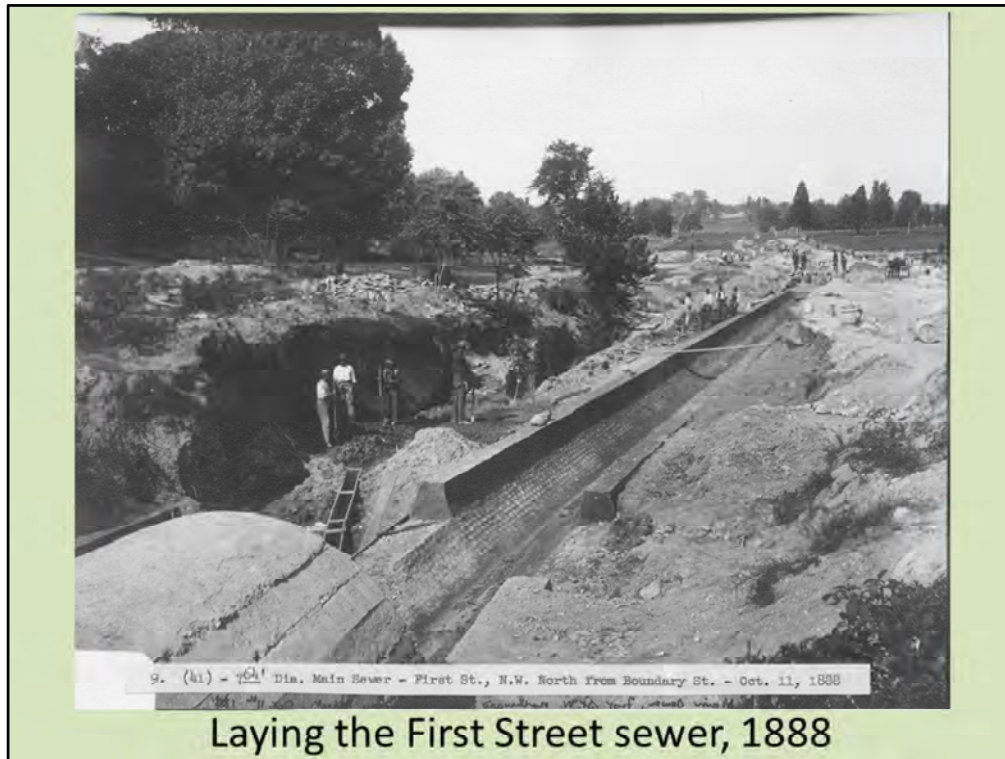
Eckington & Soldiers Home  
Railway becomes first  
mechanized line. Terminus  
at Mt. Vernon Square.



This 1891 map shows that the Eckington & Soldiers Home Railway had a new line going up North Capitol from New York Avenue to T Street. In December 1890 it became DC's first mechanized line.

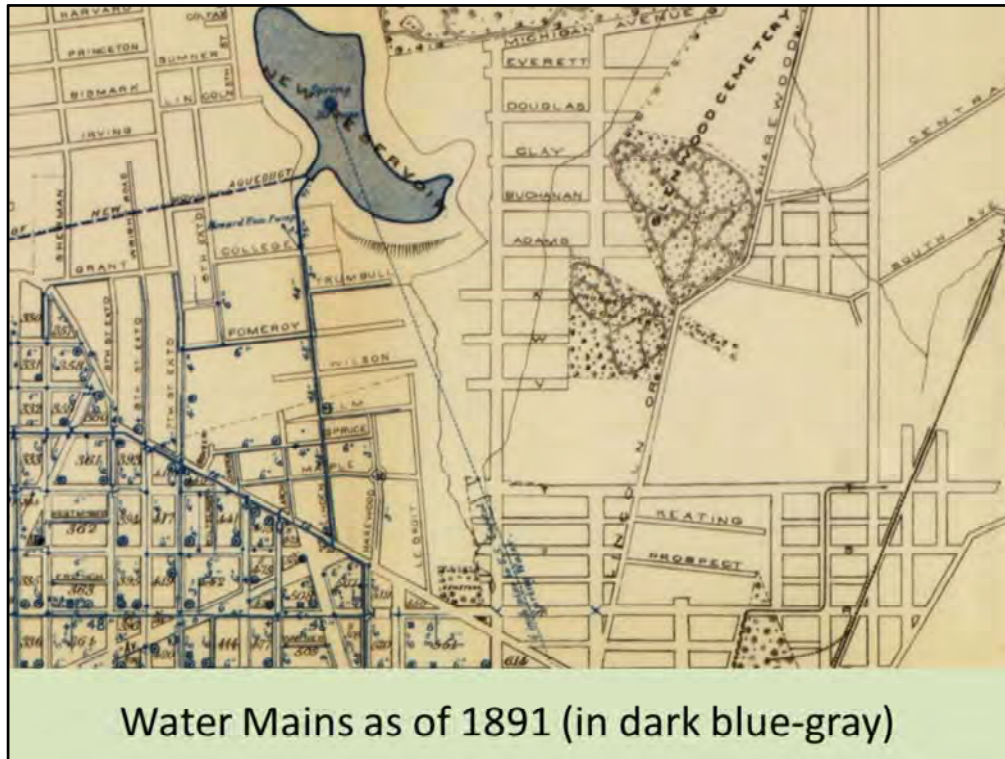


Dense development would of course require sewers, which began to be built at the southern end of the neighborhood by the late 1880s.



Here's a sewer being laid along First Street to just beyond T in 1888. The area north of there was entirely undeveloped and rural.

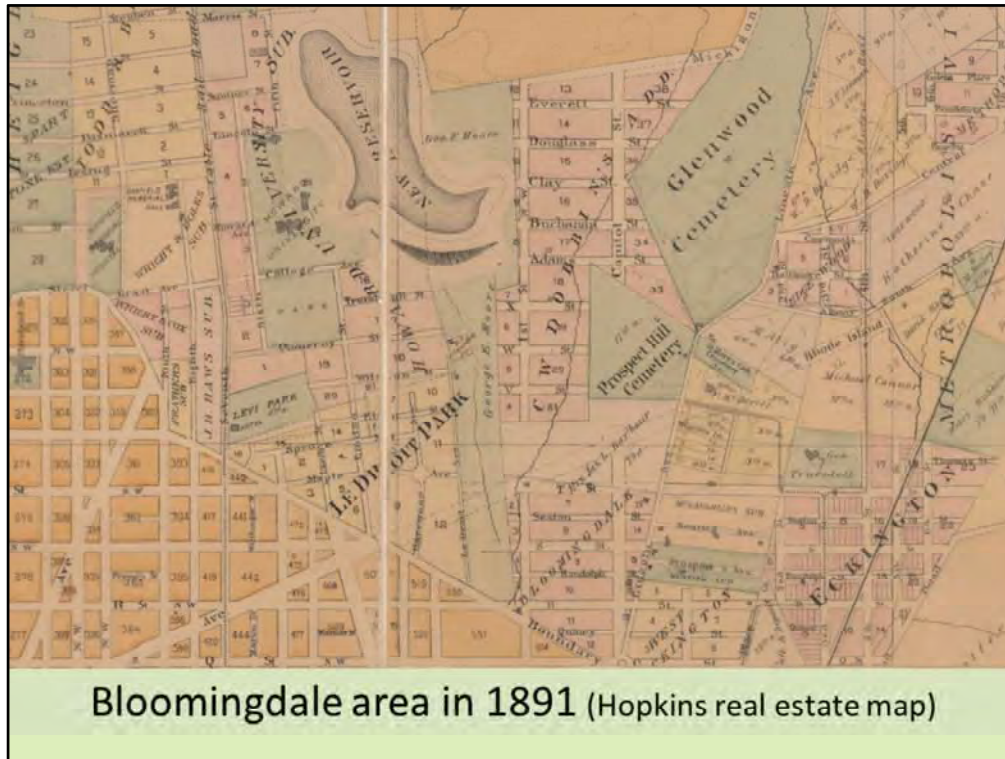




Smith Springs (the dot in the middle of the reservoir) were DC's most copious supply of water and fed Tiber Creek – which ran roughly along today's Second Street and joined another branch near First and S streets NW. The Beales were said to have dammed a portion of the Tiber to create a lake for fishing and boating.

Congress had purchased an acre of Smith's land in 1832 to pipe water to the U.S. Capitol.

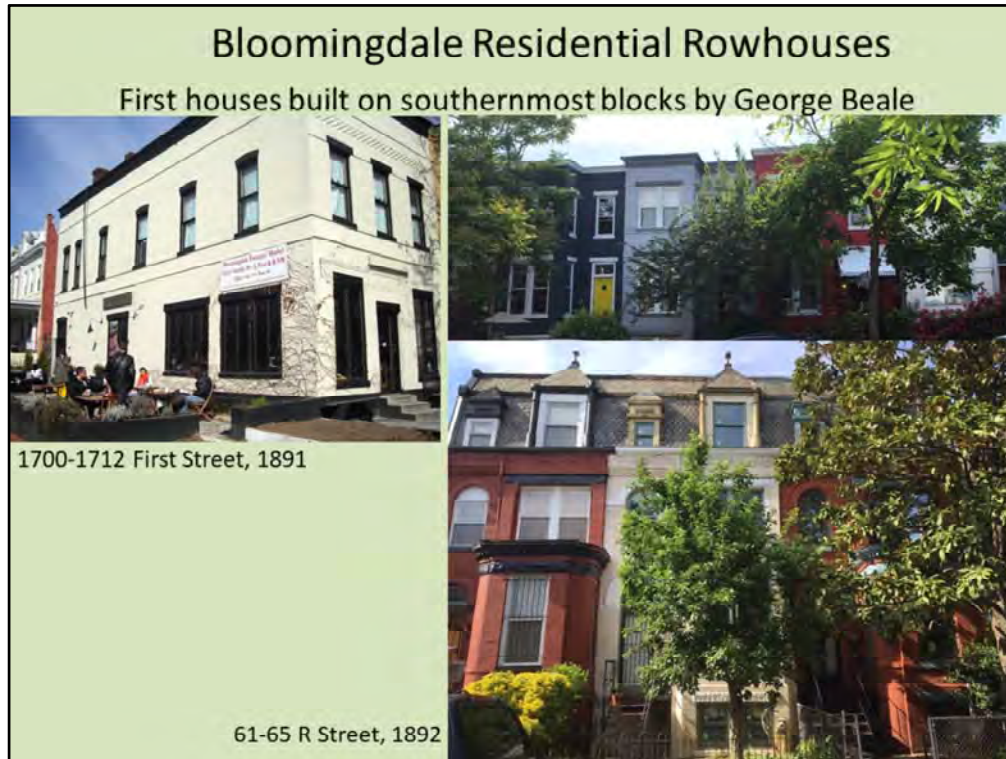
Tiber Creek eventually disappeared as a free-flowing stream but as many of you probably know, water continues to run underground (and sometimes aboveground) in Bloomingdale.



This map shows streets above Buchanan (today's Channing) --- Clay, Douglass, and Everett --- that were never built.

George Moore's and Annie Barbour's tracts were the last to be subdivided (in 1891 & 1899) due to a lengthy legal dispute over ownership.

Prospect Hill Cemetery continued to own land west of North Capitol Street until 1910.

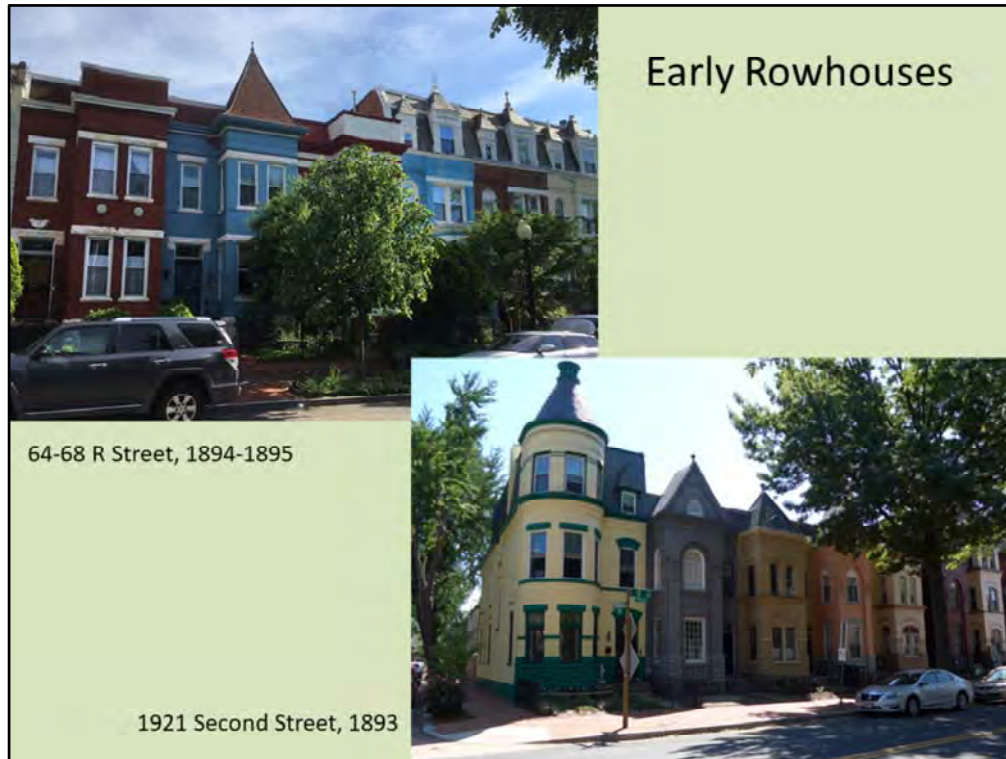


The initial phase of rowhouse development in Bloomington was concentrated in the blocks closest to Florida Avenue.

These are the first rows of houses built in Bloomington. They were built by Emily Beale's son George N. Beale, who established the high quality of residential building that characterizes Bloomington. The First Street row includes the first of many distinctive corner buildings, a number of which were built for stores on their ground level.

Numbers 61-65 R were designed by Richard Crump.

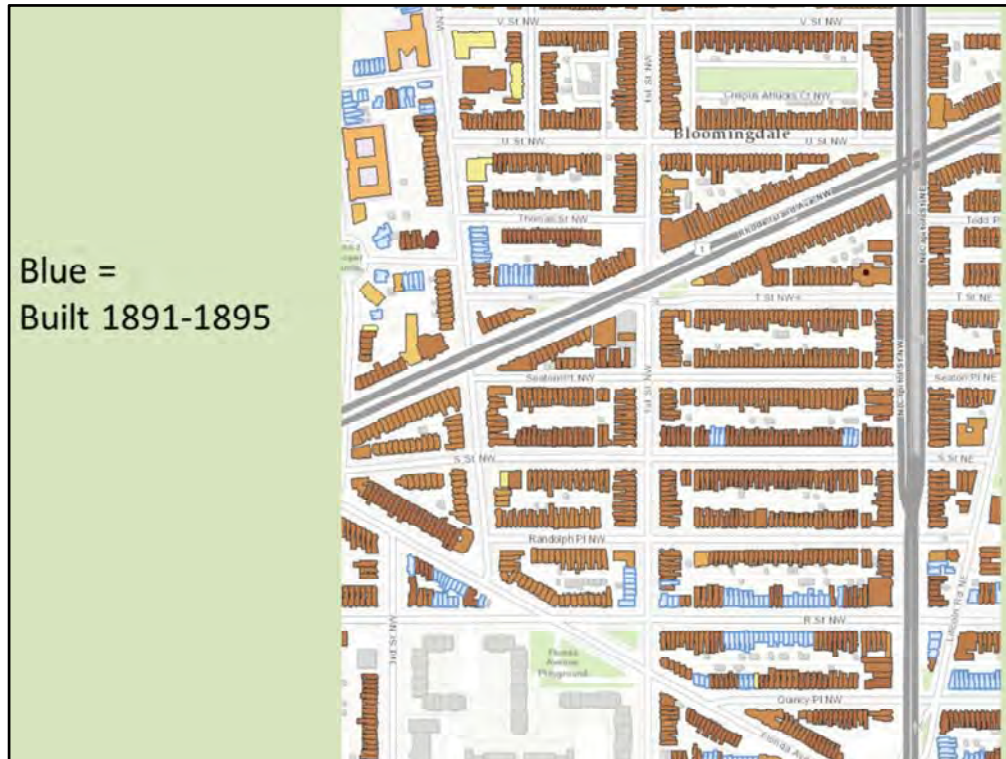




This row along Second Street (east side, just below Thomas) was developed in 1893 along the edge of the already established suburb of Le Droit Park. Nicholas T. Haller was the architect.

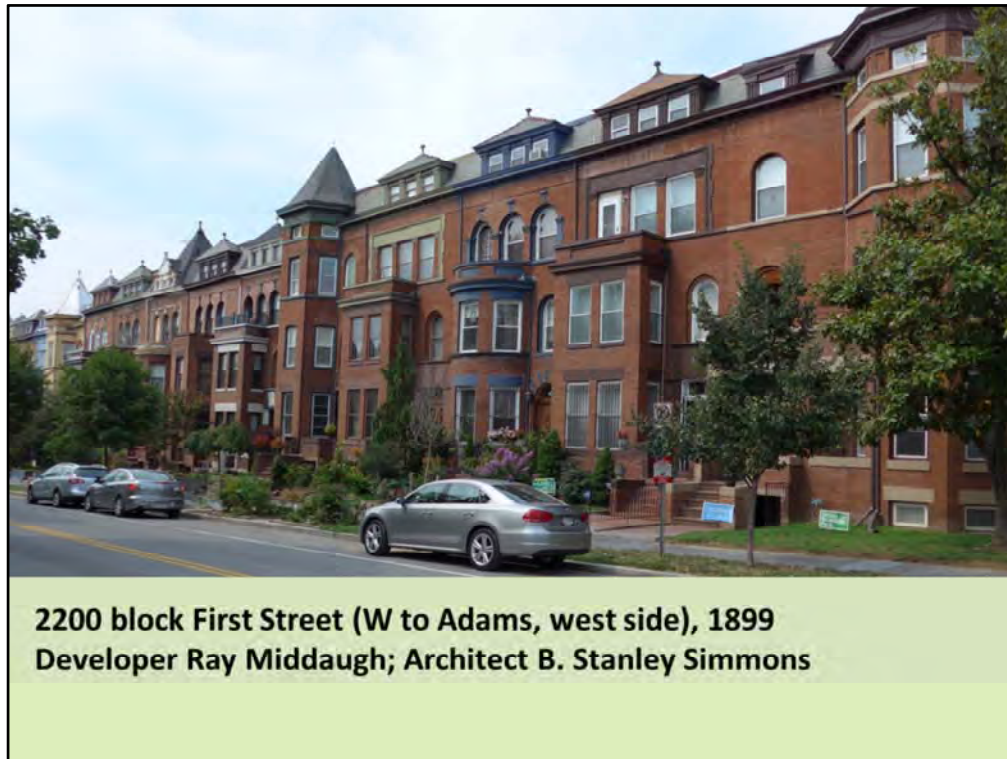
Numbers 64-68 R were built by George Beale in 1894-95. The architect was Francis Blundon.

The fact that such substantial and stylistically exuberant rowhouses were built so early in the neighborhood's existence showed a real confidence in Bloomingdale's future, a faith that there would be strong real estate market here.



By 1895, within the first years of Bloomingdale's development, new rowhouse construction clustered next to Beale's first dwellings on R Street and along Second and T streets, across from Le Droit Park.

Although many of these lots (on Beale & Dobbins land, the neighborhood's first two subdivisions) were originally platted as 50 feet wide (& 100 feet deep), they were divided into narrower lots prior to construction, enabling dense development as demand for housing in this section began to grow.



The 2200 block of First Street paved the way for a more concentrated focus of architecturally notable rowhouses along the entire stretch of First Street from Rhode Island Avenue to Channing Street over the next five years.

The houses here were designed by Ray Middaugh, who began working with William T. Shannon in 1900. Middaugh & Shannon became the most prolific developers in Bloomingdale - 305 buildings.



The entrance bays, raised above street level, feature intricate carvings above the doorways. Each one is different.



**Nos. 2301 to 2333 First Street, Northwest.**



(This photograph looking north from Adams.)

**MIDDAUGH & SHANNON, OWNERS.**  
**NO PLACE LIKE HOME—NO HOMES LIKE OURS.**

**IT IS HERE THAT  
VALUES GROW.**

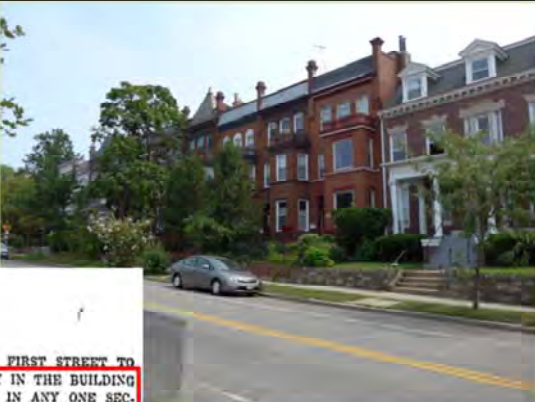
One of the finest  
residential streets of  
the city.

A most popular  
thoroughfare.

Highest elevation  
within the lettered  
streets of the northwest.

*Evening Star, October 15, 1902*

This is a 1902 ad for the east side of First Street, looking north from Adams. There are no houses on the other side yet.



"NO PLACE LIKE HOME;  
NO HOMES LIKE OURS."

WE OWN ALL OF THE GROUND ON TOP OF THE HILL FACING FIRST STREET TO THE GOVERNMENT HOLDINGS, AND ARE SPENDING MORE MONEY IN THE BUILDING OF HANDSOME HOUSES ON THIS STREET THAN 'IS BEING SPENT IN ANY ONE SECTION OF THE CITY.

THIS IN CONNECTION WITH THE FACT THAT THESE PROPERTIES ADJOIN THE THIRTY-FIVE ACRES OF GROUND SURROUNDING THE NEW RESERVOIR RECENTLY PURCHASED BY THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT, UPON WHICH CONGRESS HAS AUTHORIZED AN EXPENDITURE OF \$4,700,000 FOR PARKS AND OTHER IMPROVEMENTS, WILL MAKE THIS ONE OF THE FINEST RESIDENTIAL SECTIONS IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

IMPROVEMENTS OF THIS CHARACTER MAKE VALUES GROW.

Open for Your Inspection.  
No. 2304 First st. nw.

THESE PROPERTIES ARE BUILT WITH A CONSCIENTIOUS REGARD FOR THE FACT THAT HOME BUYING IS A PERMANENT INVESTMENT, AND SHOULD BE OF SUCH CHARACTER AS TO GIVE A LIFETIME OF PERFECT SERVICE.

MIDDAUGH & SHANNON,  
OWNERS.

*Washington Post*, October 12, 1902  
2304 First Street

Here's another 1902 ad -- for 2304 First. It says Middaugh & Shannon are "spending more money in the building of handsome houses on this street than is being spent in any one section of the city."

**We Are Now Building  
Some Three-Story Houses**

Across the street from the new reservoir  
and what will be within a year one of  
Washington's largest and finest parks.  
It is safe to say no other houses in the  
city are so favorably located.

These houses have nine big, old-fash-  
ioned rooms, with a lot of closet room.  
The interior arrangement is different  
from any house you ever saw, and will  
contain "all modern helps to comfortable  
living."

Price, \$6,250.

2407 to 2419 FIRST st. northwest.  
The leading driveway to Soldiers' Home.  
Take N. Cap. st. cars to Baltimore st.

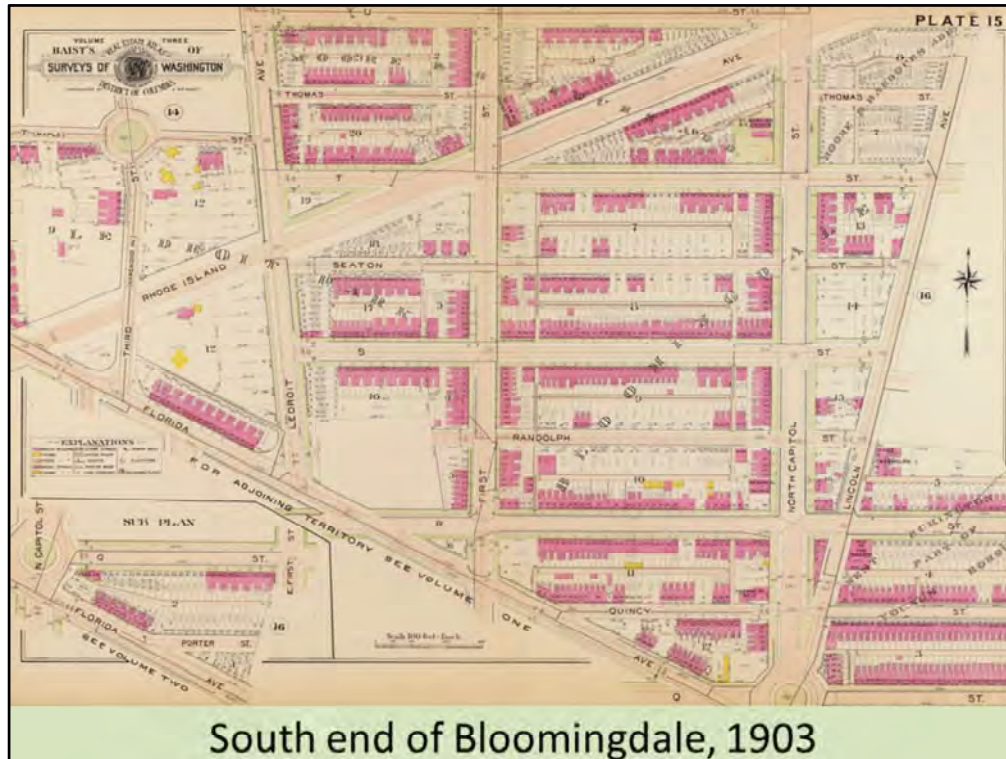
**MIDDAUGH & SHANNON,**  
Owners,  
First and Baltimore sts. n.w.  
"No place like home; no homes like ours."  
se28-423

*Evening Star, October 8, 1904*  
2407-2419 First Street

This ad for 2407-2419 First (Bryant to Channing) says: "Across the street from the new reservoir and what will be ... one of Washington's largest and finest parks. It is safe to say no other houses in the city are so favorably located."

Ray Middaugh moved into 2405 First Street next door to this row. He was one of many developers and architects who actually lived in the neighborhood, proof that they very much believed in it.

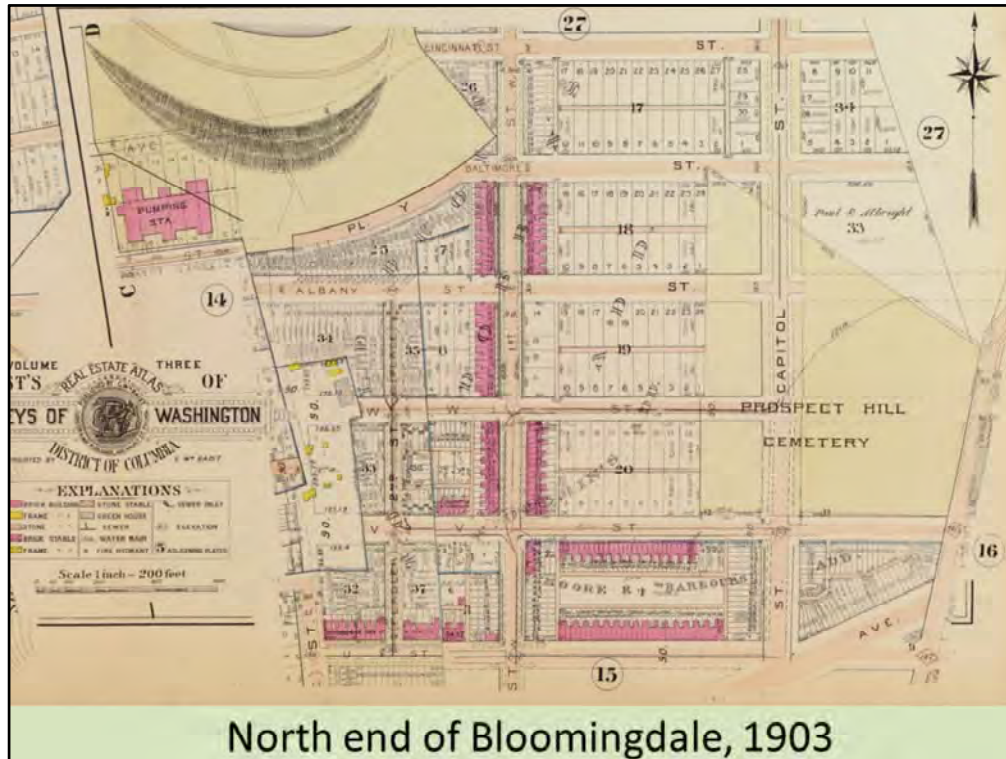
In 1903, the *Washington Post* credited Middaugh & Shannon for their pioneering development in Bloomingdale, noting the new neighborhood already had 869 houses accommodating almost 3,500 residents.



South end of Bloomingdale, 1903

So how did the neighborhood look in 1903? Here's a real estate map showing that the southern end was pretty built up.

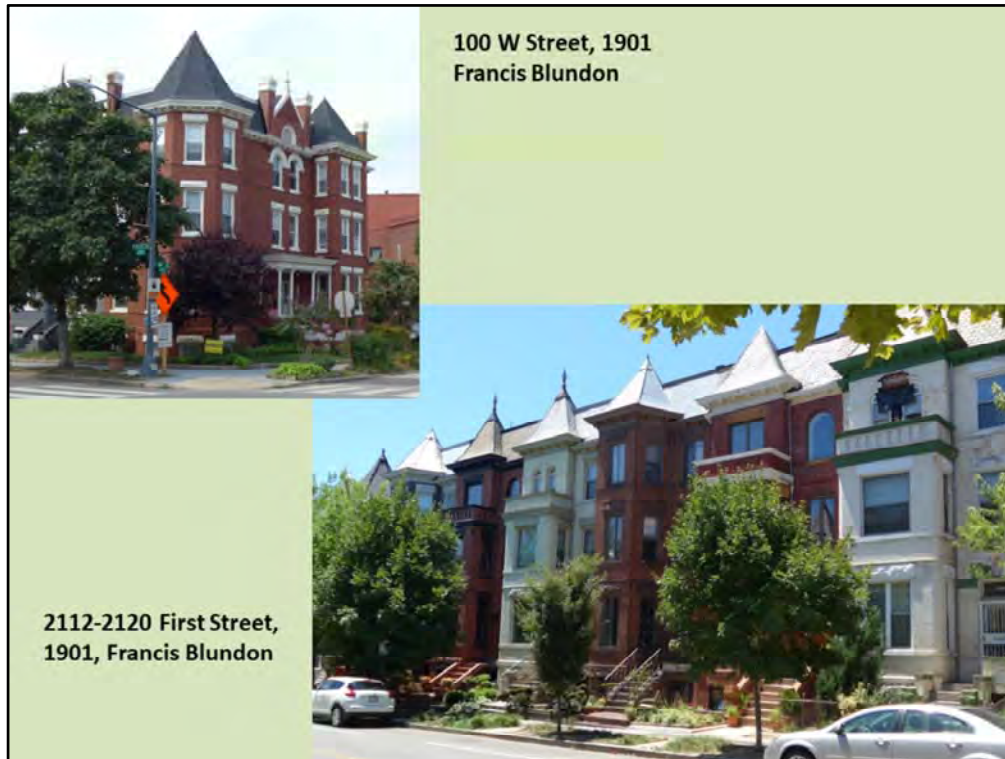




In the northern end, development was occurring mainly along First Street. These houses' proximity to the new reservoir grounds, which were being developed as one of the city's premier parks, was a big selling point.



Middaugh & Shannon also worked with Thomas Haislip, who, like a number of other architects, became a developer in his own right. He purchased lots here on First Street between V and W streets (east side), where he designed and built 17 houses. He reserved the corner house at First and V streets for himself.



Across the street in the 2100 block (west side between V and W), architect and builder Francis Blundon completed a row, with a house for himself at 100 W Street.

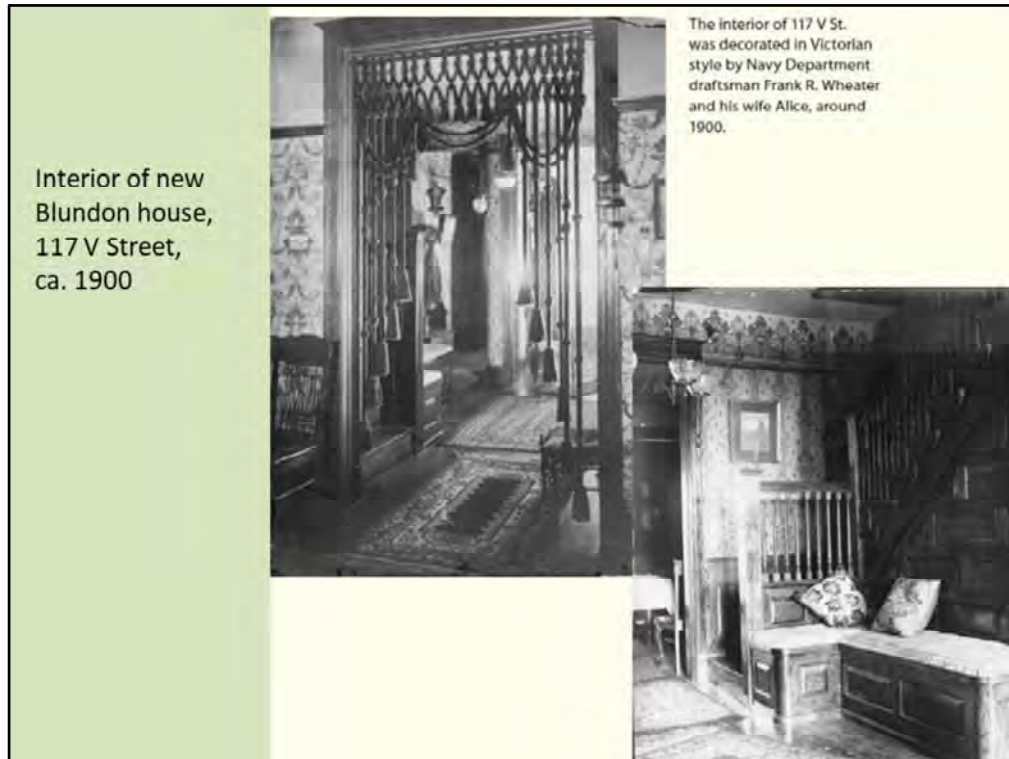
Blundon ultimately was the builder or co-developer for more than 200 buildings in the neighborhood. In 1910 the *Evening Star* newspaper called him “the pioneer builder in the Bloomingdale section.”

100 W Street,  
home of architect  
Francis Blundon,  
ca. 1902



Blundon's house as it looked when new.





Interior of new  
Blundon house,  
117 V Street,  
ca. 1900

The interior of 117 V St.  
was decorated in Victorian  
style by Navy Department  
draftsman Frank R. Wheeler  
and his wife Alice, around  
1900.

These shots show the interior of 117 V. The owners, Navy Department draftsman Frank Wheeler and his wife Alice, decorated their house in the Victorian style.



In 1904, developer Harry Wardman worked with his architect Nicholas R. Grimm on the east side of the 2200 block of First Street (W to Adams) which at the time of completion was dubbed, “The Fifth Avenue of Bloomingdale” by the *Washington Times*.

“Among the many special features of these houses ... are their ideal arrangement, designed with special view to the comfort of the housekeeper.”



Noting how rapidly Bloomingdale had developed, an *Evening Star* writer wrote in 1902 that,

“Not in all this beautiful city has such progress been made within recent years as that made since 1896 at and about the head of North Capitol Street.” It is “one of the most phenomenal growths ever experienced in any one section of the District of Columbia.”

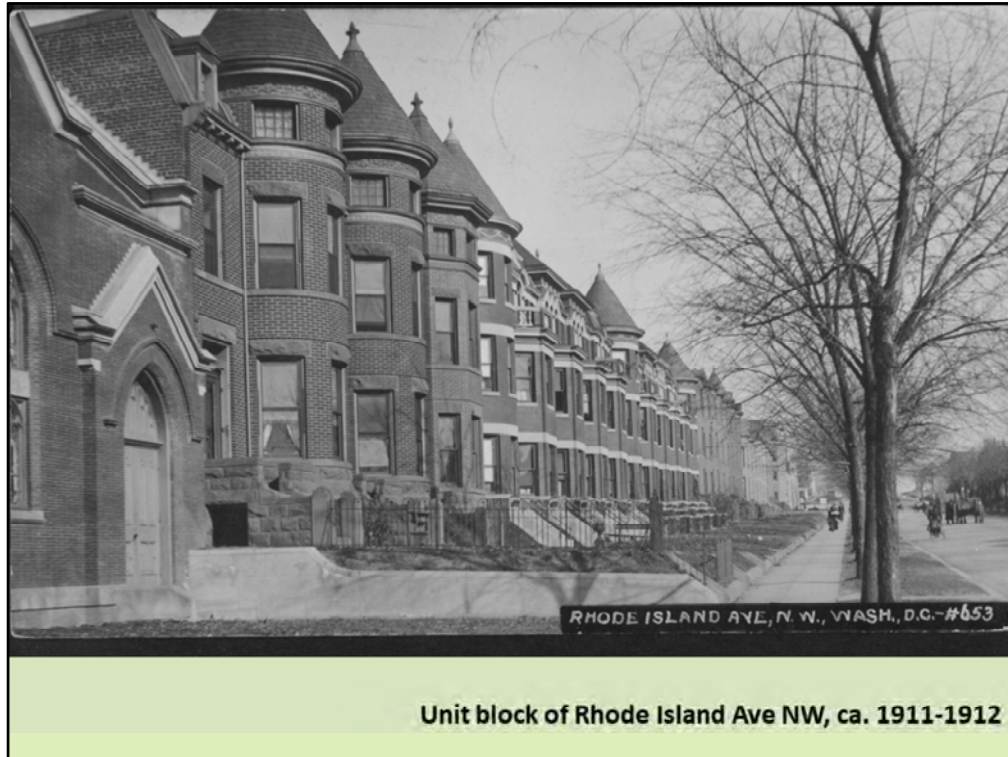


In the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a new rowhouse form began to emerge that was far simpler than the Victorian-era styles that had characterized much of Bloomingdale until this time.

In part due to a series of economic recessions, there was a turn away from opulence and amenities such as servants' quarters, toward houses that were more basic and practical.

This group of rowhouses is among those that illustrate the transition to flat façades with full-width front porches.



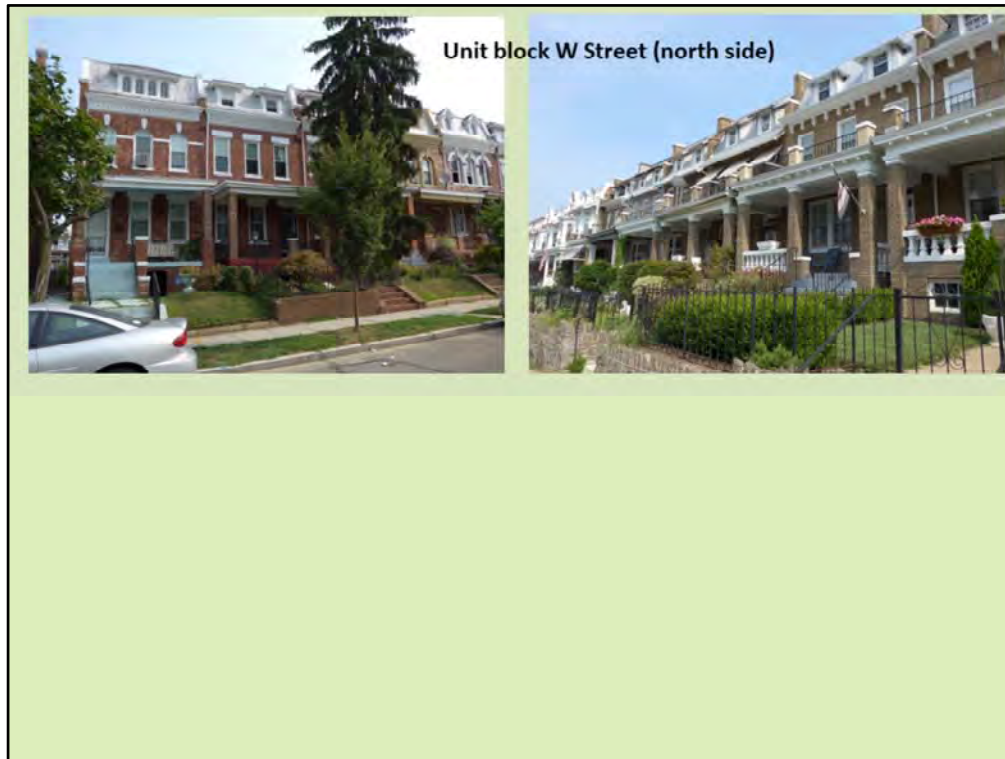


On the other hand, more grandiose styles persisted along Rhode Island Avenue, one of the city's most important thoroughfares.

[Builder/architect Louis H. Meyers and others.]



At the end of this block is a beautiful building with a tower and deep roofline reminiscent of Victorian styles, but that are contrasted with a more modern, flat façade.



By the 1920s, the Victorian model of rowhouse had essentially been replaced by the 20<sup>th</sup>-century one: the two-story, front-porch variety. (George Santmyers designed many but not all of the houses on this block.)

Excellent examples of a range of styles used throughout the 1910s and '20s can be found within the single square block bounded by W, Adams, North Capitol Street and First Street.



27 W Street: William C. Allard architect and builder.





Santmyers designed 16-20 Adams for T.A. Jameson.



Bloomingdale Firehouse (Old Engine Co. 12), built 1897

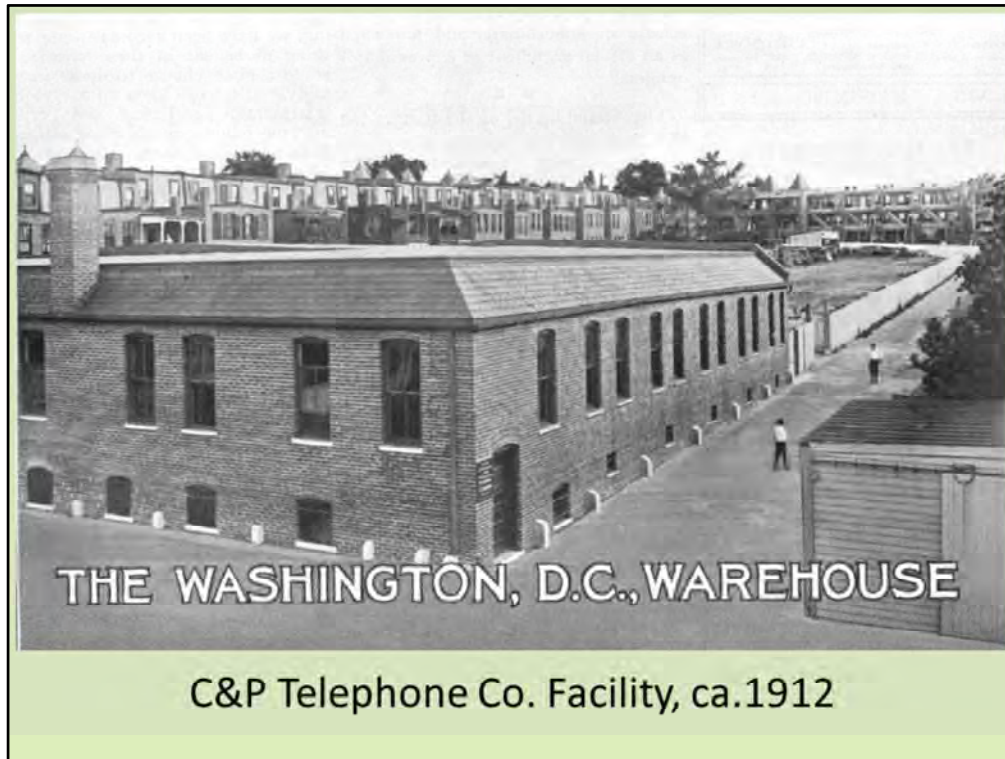
Now for some non-residential buildings. Bloomingdale and Eckington's citizens association successfully advocated for the construction of a firehouse in 1897. It served the neighborhood for almost a century, until 1987. It was designed by Snowden Ashford-- who was known primarily for public schools--and is considered a premiere example of his work. It's on the DC Inventory of Historic Sites.



Gage Elementary School opened at Second and Elm in 1904 to serve white children in the rapidly growing neighborhood. It was named for the beloved and influential educator Nathaniel Parker Gage. The school was expanded in 1908 but overcrowded again by 1912 & remained so into the 1920s.

It is also a DC historic landmark, designated in part for being an institutional building in the midst of an otherwise almost entirely residential neighborhood.

[The architect was Lemuel W. Norris.]



This C&P warehouse was permitted in 1909. It stood between North Capitol and First, U and V...





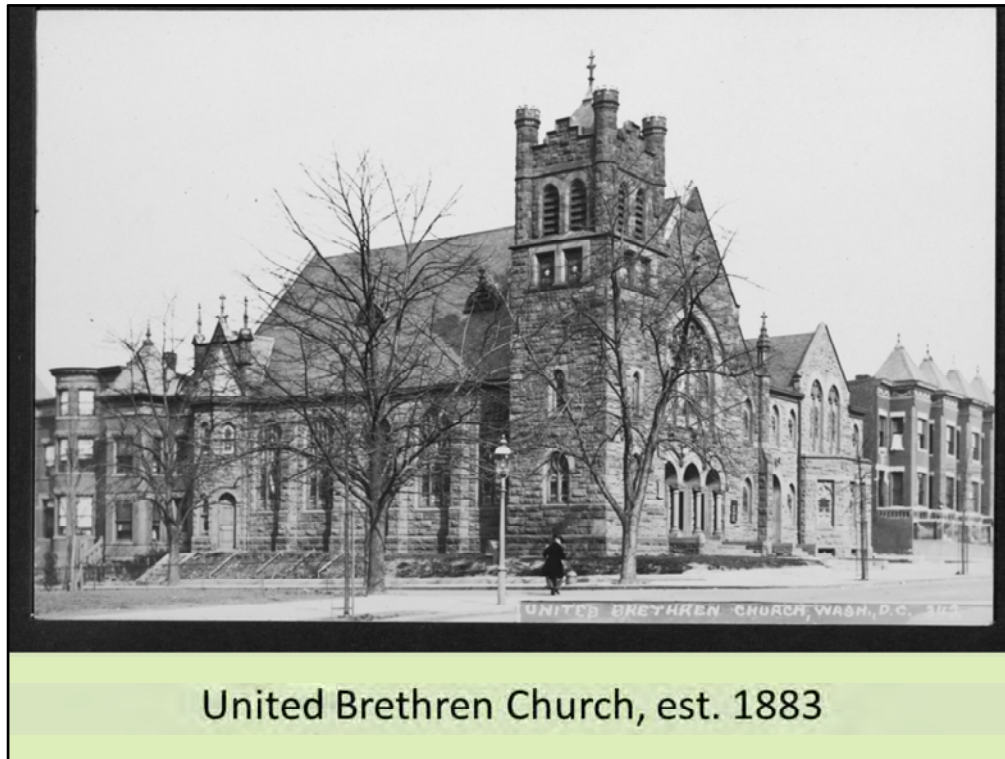
Crispus Attucks Park

...the site of today's Crispus Attucks Park.



Sylvan Theater, est. 1914

The Sylvan opened in 1914 as the American Theater. Its developer, Jesse Sherwood, Jr., built the commercial row along First Street just south of Rhode Island Avenue at the same time.

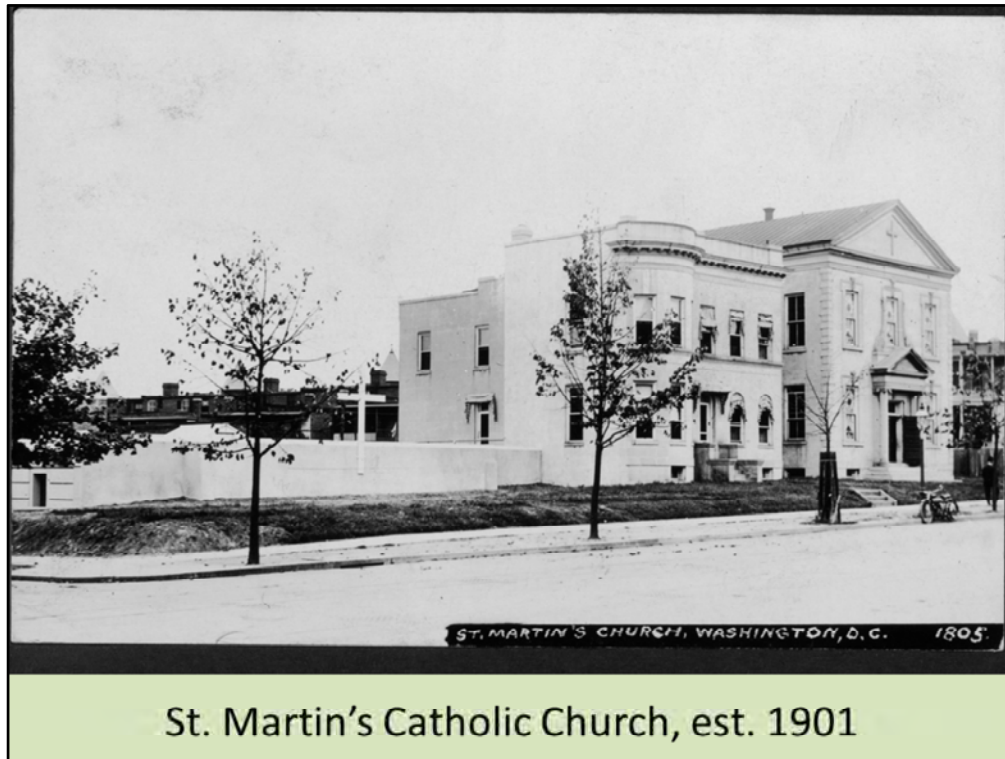


Other notable structures in the neighborhood include several churches, such as the one that opened at the northwest corner of North Capitol and R as United Brethren in 1883, and in the 1950s became Metropolitan Wesley African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Zion.



St. Martin's originally opened in the mansion of one of the former estate owners, David Moore. These buildings on North Capitol Street were designed by Albert O. von Herbulis and constructed in 1902.





The cross marks the location of St. Martin's parish hall -- which would be built in the late 1930s.



Notable early residents of Bloomingdale included labor leader Samuel Gompers, shown here with his wife in front of their house at 2122 First Street, where they lived from 1902 to 1917.

Two doors down, the president of another major labor group, the International Association of Machinists, bought 2126 First Street around the same time.

Builder John R. Haislip lived at 2120 First, and was among several Bloomingdale developers and architects who lived in the neighborhood.

Arthur Powell Davis, head of the Interior Department's Reclamation Service and nephew of the famous western explorer John Wesley Powell, lived at 2212.



McMillan Park, developed 1902-1913

McMillan Reservoir and its slow sand filtration plant were originally conceived to be developed in conjunction with a park. It was seen as a key link in a series of parks – an emerald necklace – stretching from Rock Creek to the Anacostia River.

Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., designed the park with walking paths surrounded the reservoir. The steps seen here rose from First Street just north of Channing. The now-iconic sand silos, and also Howard University, can be seen in the background. There was no visible divide; it was all one expansive green space.

The park was named for Sen. James McMillan, who chaired the Senate Parks Commission responsible for planning the park as a component of what became known as the McMillan Plan (1902).



McMillan Park, developed 1902-1913

Here's a closer shot of the fountain.





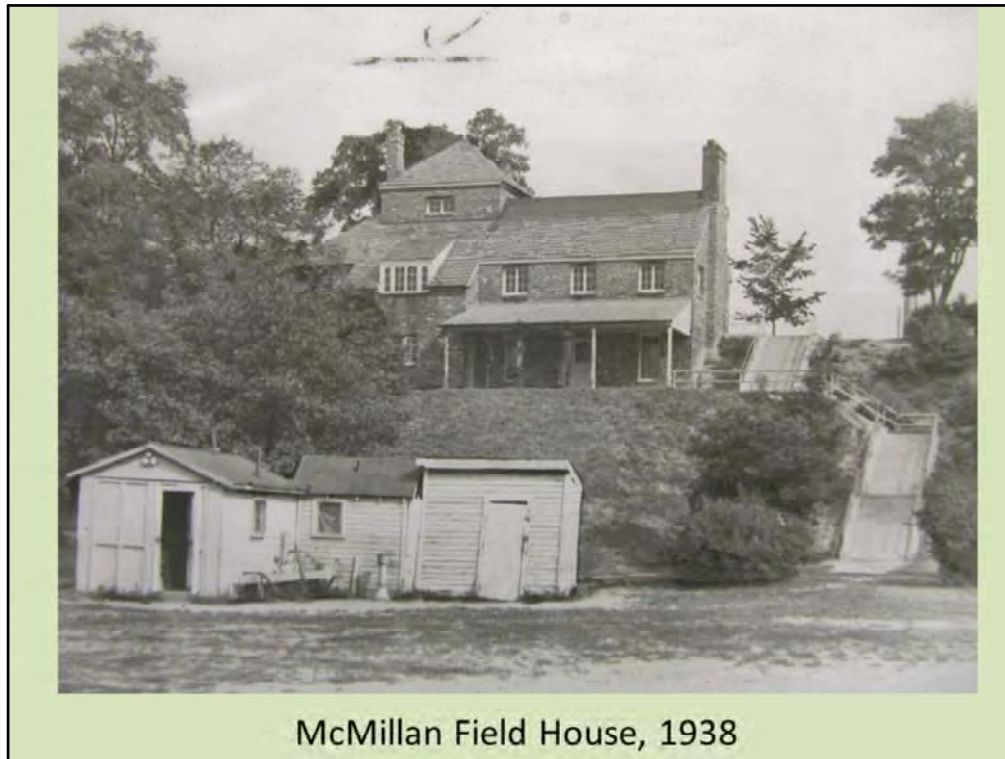
This view from First and Channing, looking north on First, shows the silos used to store sand used for the below-ground filtration system. Olmsted treated them and the other industrial buildings on the site as central elements of his design. Walking paths surrounded the silos.

Due to the site's history, including the innovative nature of the sand filtration plant and the remarkable historic buildings that remain on the site, this whole area is landmarked as a historic district.

McMillan Park  
1930s



McMillan was among the few public recreation spaces in the city that did not prohibit use by African Americans. This is the opera singer Lillian Evanti, and her son Thurlow Tibbs.



McMillan Field House, 1938

McMillan Park included a large playground along Bryant Street at the south end. Among its amenities were six tennis courts, later replaced by the Bryant Street Garage. This brick field house stood behind the playground, facing the neighborhood, and it's actually still there. The wooden shed in the foreground was used to store playground equipment.

Unlike the rest of the park, the playground was run by the city, which segregated all its playgrounds. This one was for whites only.

(Along with the rest of McMillan Park, the playground was closed in 1941, supposedly due to security concerns during World War I. But unlike the rest of the park, which remains surrounded by a chain link fence, the playground re-opened after the war. By this time Bloomingdale was largely African American but the playground remained for whites only until closing altogether by 1952.)

*A Bargain for a*  
**Colored Home Seeker!**  
**Modern 6-Room House**  
*\$1,000 to \$2,500*  
*Less Than Prices*  
*in Neighborhood*  
**\$9,450**  
**Easy Terms!**



Here's a **modern, spacious and bright** home in a **high-class colored section** of Washington. Can be bought on **EASY TERMS**. Suitable for Dentist, Doctor or other professional man.  
 House is in **first-class condition**, with **modern plumbing**. **NEAR 1st AND**  
**1817 First Street N.W.**  
 See this at once or you will miss an opportunity!

**Open for Inspection**  
**Sundays from 10 A.M.**  
**to 8 P.M.**

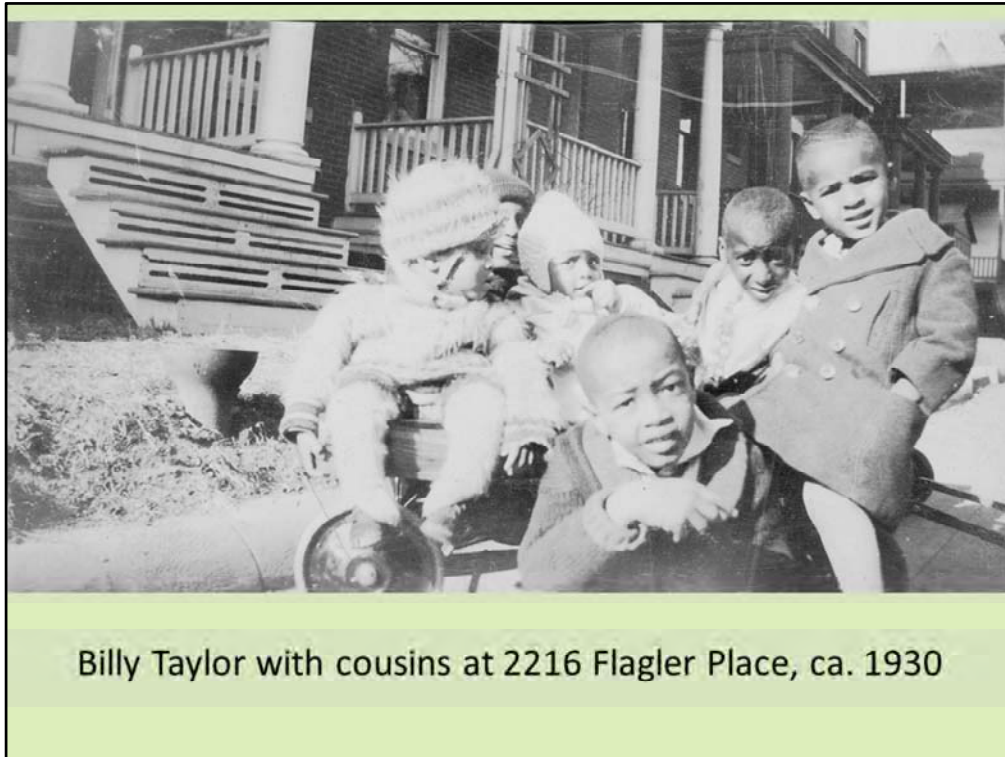
**Michigan Park Manor Co.**  
**59 Rust Bldg. Franklin 513**

1927 ad for 1817 First Street NW

As mentioned earlier, Bloomingdale was originally an exclusively white neighborhood. However, it was next door to LeDroit Park, where African Americans had started settling in the 1890s; it was also close to Howard University, and it abutted the largely black neighborhoods just south of Florida Avenue.

Houses south of Rhode Island Ave began to be marketed to African Americans as early as 1927. That's when this ad appeared for 1817 First Street, in a "high-class colored section." It also notes that the property is "suitable for dentist, doctor or other professional man." Many black doctors settled in Bloomingdale and worked out of home offices.





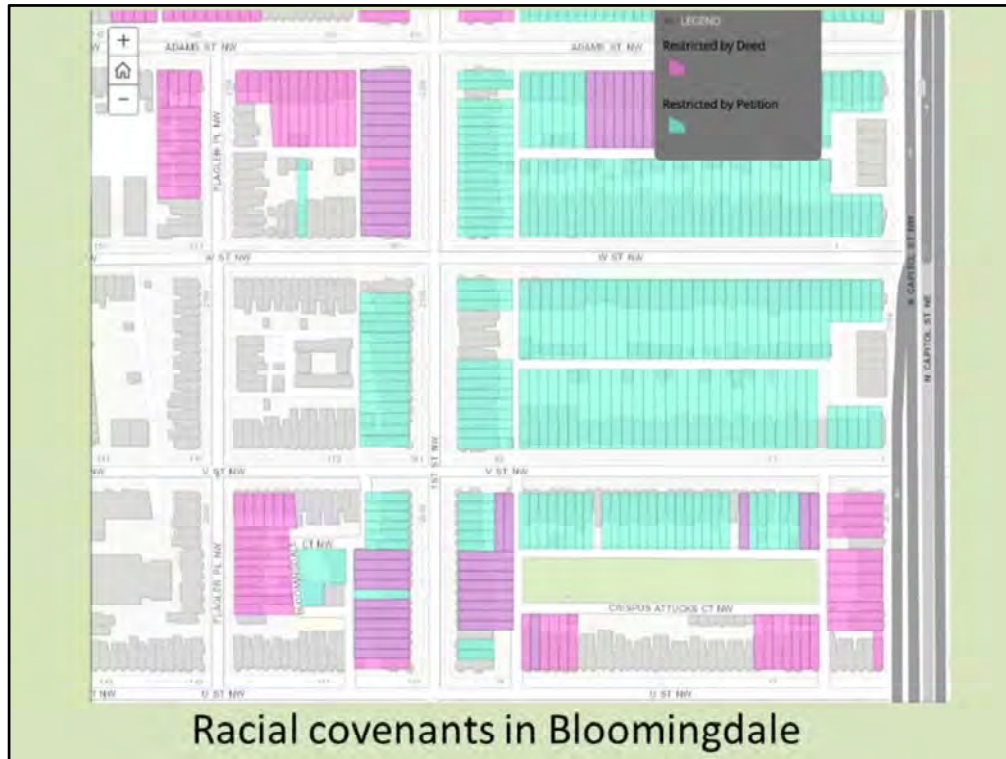
Billy Taylor with cousins at 2216 Flagler Place, ca. 1930

By the mid 1920s, African Americans also began settling on blocks close to LeDroit Park, between First and Second streets.

Here's Billy Taylor, later a renowned jazz musician and educator, in the foreground with his younger brother Rudy, about 1930 when they were visiting their cousins on Flagler Place. Billy and Rudy lived on Fairmont Street, in Columbia Heights.

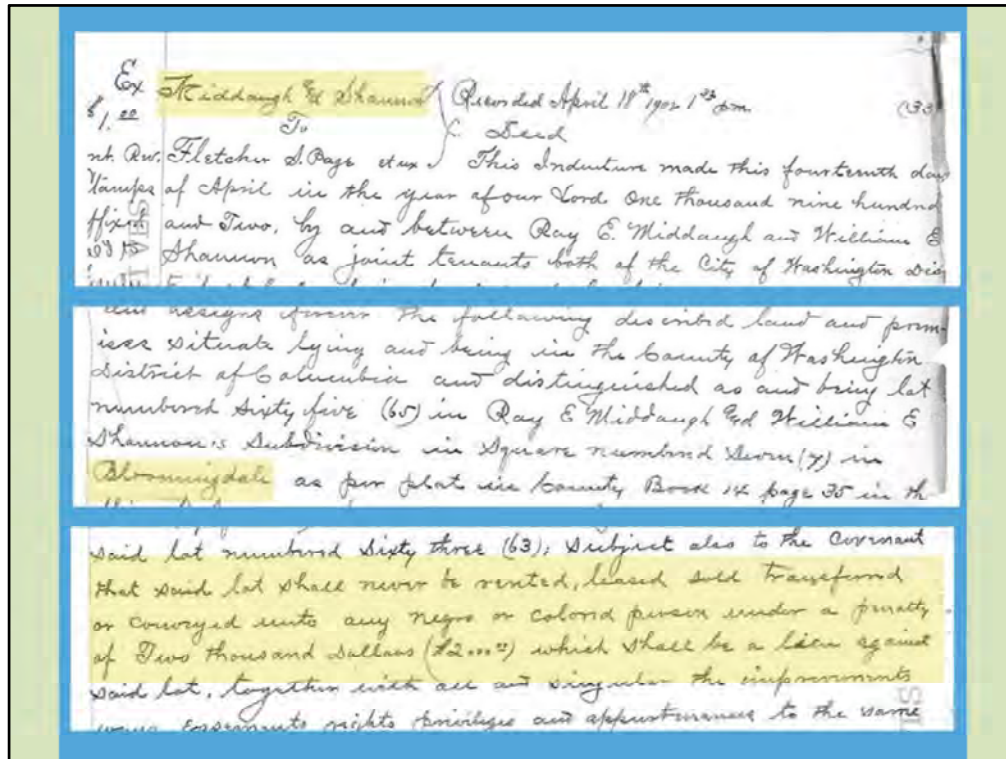
[Taylor studied piano with Duke Ellington's former piano teacher, Henry Grant.]

[The deed for 2216 Flagler had a covenant when originally sold in 1908.]



Although African Americans were settling in parts of Bloomingdale, much of the neighborhood, especially the unit blocks, remained off-limits to them. This was a period when segregation was on the rise and the real estate industry, and later the federal government, promoted racially restrictive covenants as a means, they believed, for keeping neighbors stable and for maintaining property values. Many rows of houses were restricted by developers at the outset; the ones we've identified thus far are shown here in pink, but there were almost certainly many more (we have much more research to complete). African Americans were barred from buying or renting these houses.

After the Supreme Court affirmed the legality of restrictive covenants in 1926, citizens associations all over the city began organizing to restrict their blocks, effectively keeping African Americans out of entire neighborhoods. The greenish-colored lots had this second kind of restrictive covenants – we call them petition covenants. Some lots, as you can see, had both.



This 1902 Middaugh & Shannon deed was for 1842 North Capitol Street, two houses down from the corner of T. It contains a restrictive covenant that states: "...said lot shall never be rented, leased, sold, transferred or conveyed unto any Negro or colored person under a penalty of \$2,000, which shall be a lien against said lot."

Parts of Squares 3122 & 3123 83      Recorded Oct. 6 1925  
 1st Street, N.W. between      ) PROPERTY HOLDER'S      At 11-09 A.M.  
 W & Adams Streets      ) ASSIGNMENT

THIS INDENTURE, Made this First day of September, 1925, by and between and among the undersigned, all being residents of the County of Washington, District of Columbia, and owner of real estate situate therein; witnesseth that

WHEREAS the said parties hereto are all owners of real estate situate in the District of Columbia, and located on First Street, between W and Adams streets, northwest, both on the East and West sides of said street, said property being parts of Squares 3122 and 3123, as recorded in the Surveyor's Office of the District of Columbia; and

WHEREAS the said parties hereto desire, for their mutual benefit, as well as for the best interest of the said community and neighborhood, to improve in any legitimate way and further the interests of said community and neighborhood:

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the premises and the sum of five dollars each to the other in hand paid, the parties hereto do hereby mutually agree, promise and covenant, we each with the other and for their respective heirs and assigns, that no part of the land now owned by the parties hereto, a more definite description of said property being given after the respective signatures hereto, shall ever be used or occupied by, or sold, conveyed, leased, rented or given to Negroes or any person or persons of the Negro race or blood. This covenant shall run with the land and bind the respective parties hereto, their heirs and assigns, for the period of twenty-one years from and after the date of these presents.

NAME AND SEAL	DESCRIPTION OF LAND
Frankie H. Melick (Seal)	Lot 31 - Square 3123
Hedgus & Middleton, by Jesus H. Hedgus (Seal)	Lot 12 - Square 3122
Almerino T. Zappone (Seal)	Lot 14 - Square 3122
Abbie T. Zappone (Seal)	" " " "
G. H. Gallant (Seal)	Lot 40 - Square 3122

Here's a 1925 petition covenant for the 2200 block of First Street. The language is essentially the same as that in the deed covenant, but this one was circulated by neighbors before being filed with the Recorder of Deeds to become binding.

Note that this covenant would remain in effect for 21 years, binding both the signers and any future owners to its terms. Deed covenants sometimes had expiration dates as well, but most were indefinite.





Racial covenants were common during this period, but what is remarkable about Bloomingdale is the number of legal challenges to them that took place here. Each of the pins you see on this map represents a property involved in a lawsuit.

Scholars have noted that elsewhere covenants often served a largely symbolic purpose, and that lawsuits did not commonly emerge except in a handful of locales.

DC was one of these places, and Bloomingdale had a central role in a dramatic story that played out over two decades. We have documented in more detail several of the cases in our online project, *Mapping Segregation in Washington DC* (<http://prologuedc.com/blog/mapping-segregation>).

## Challenges to Racial Covenants

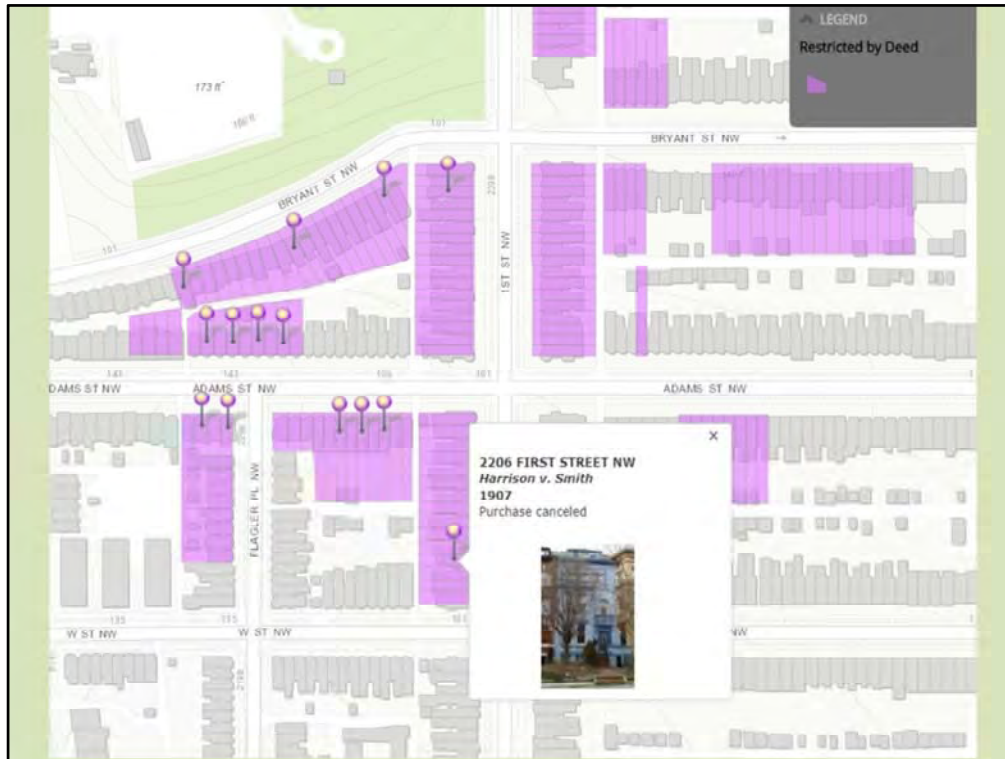
1907: *Harrison v. Smith*, 2206 First Street

1925: *Torrey v. Wolfes*, 40 Randolph Place

1937: *Grady v. Garland*, 1737-1747 First Street & 80-82 S Street

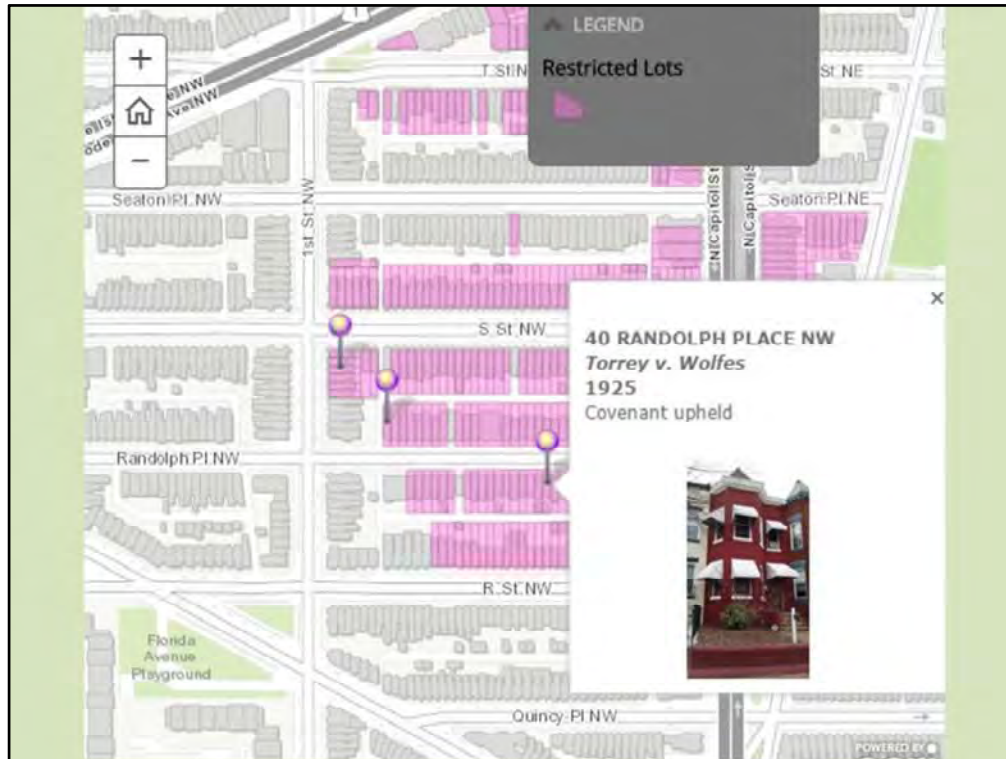
1948: *Hurd v. Hodge*, 116 Bryant Street

We'll address just a few of these cases here.



*Harrison v. Smith* is remarkable because it was so early: 1907. But it was dropped when the neighbors (all white, of course) persuaded the African American buyer of 2206 First Street, Francis deSales Smith, to let them help him sell to a white buyer.

Samuel Gompers contributed to a legal fund to support the neighbors' case.

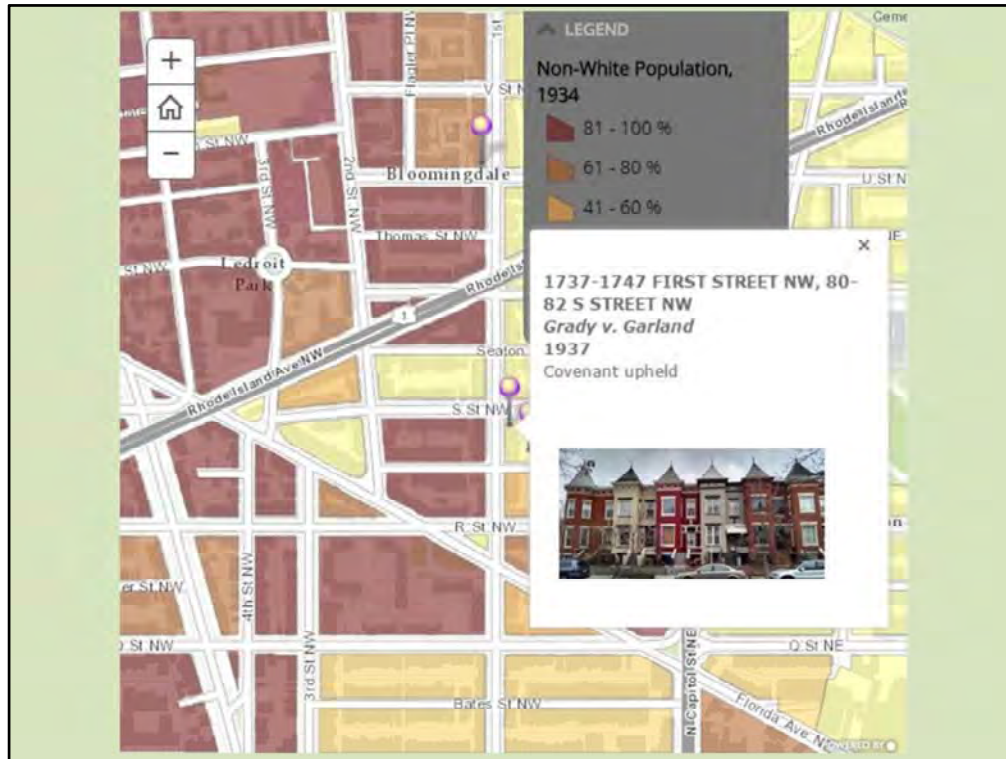


*Torrey v. Wolfes* in 1925 set precedent in DC for courts to uphold covenants placed by developers. In this case a white couple, Earl and Minnie Torrey, had attempted to sell their house at 40 Randolph Place to a black buyer, but it had a restrictive covenant placed in the original deed by Middaugh & Shannon in 1904. The court forbade the sale.





In this 1937 case, *Grady v. Garland*, First Street residents wanted to be released from the covenant so they could sell to whomever they wanted. Presumably they hoped to sell to African Americans, who were willing to pay top dollar because the supply of housing available to them was so limited. However, these houses on First Street were part of a group that included two houses around the corner on S, and those residents wanted the covenants upheld...



...and the court agreed with the S Street owners. It said that the covenants remained effective in keeping the blocks east of First exclusively white.



Meanwhile, by the mid-1930s, African Americans predominated on all the blocks south of Rhode Island and almost all of Bloomingdale's 100 blocks. Either they had moved into houses without racial covenants or covenants had successfully been broken.

Future U.S. Senator Edward Brooke's family bought 1730 First Street, and as a student Brooke walked to Howard University from there in the 1940s.

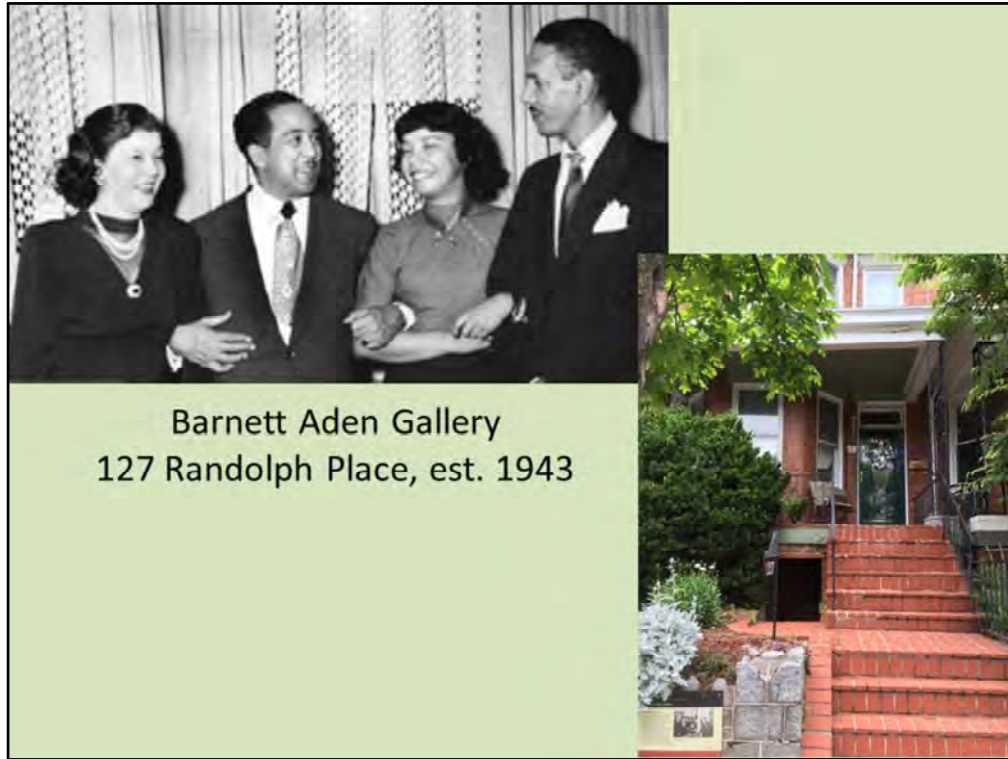
Judge Alice Gail Pollard Clark one of four young African American women – three on her block and one around the corner – who would become judges. Clark's parents had bought 139 Randolph Place about 1936.

## Ambassador Will Mercer Cook, 127 W Street



Will Mercer Cook lived at 127 W between 1945 and 1961. He was the son of famed composer Will Marion Cook and singer Abbie Mitchell Cook but also prominent in his own right. He was a professor of romance languages at Howard University during the years he lived here and later served as the U.S. ambassador to Niger among other international posts.





Barnett Aden Gallery  
127 Randolph Place, est. 1943

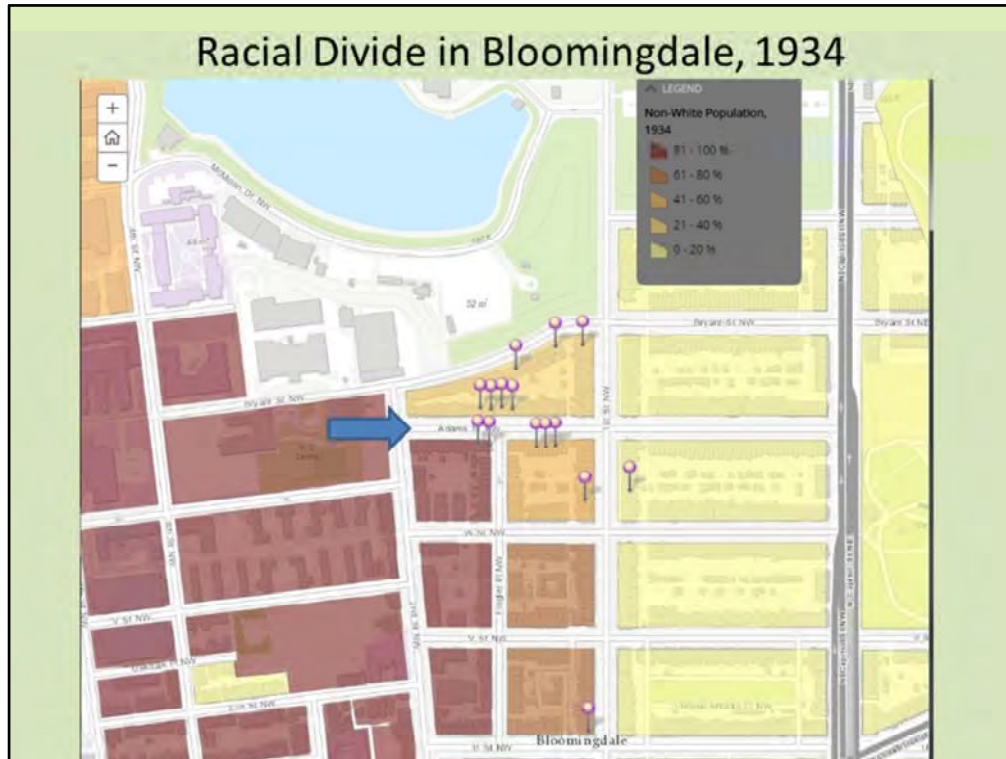
Barnett-Aden Gallery at 127 Randolph was the first privately owned black art gallery in the U.S. It represented major black artists and regularly hosted events.



Chita  
Rivera,  
ca. 2005



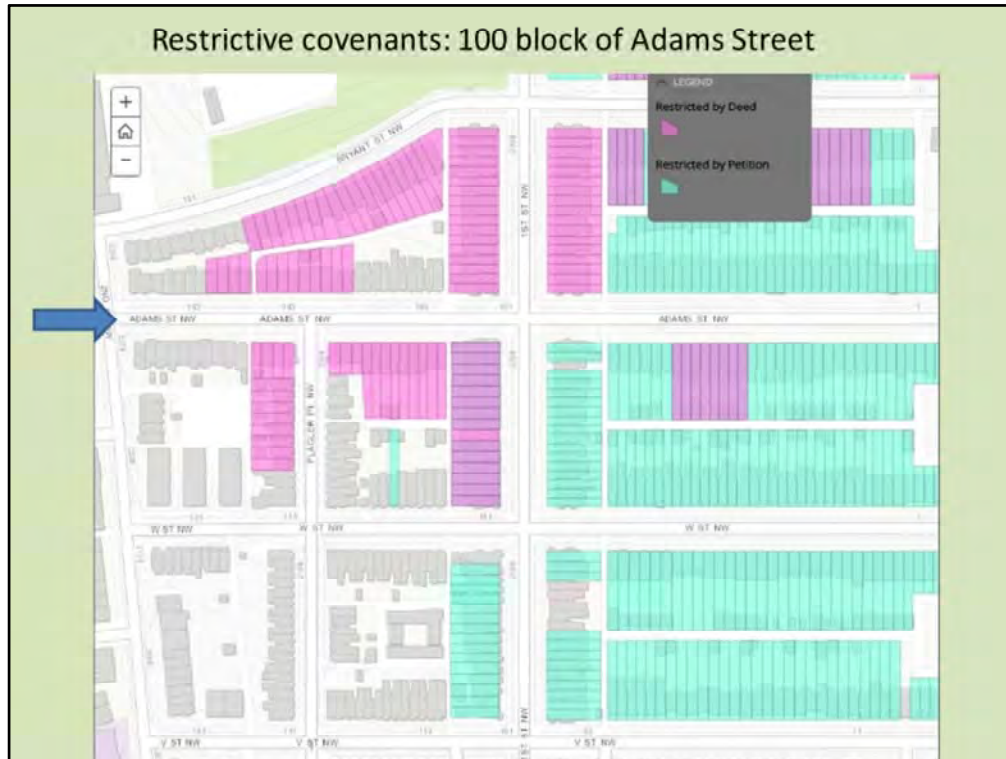
Here she is in 2005.



First Street remained a racial barrier. This map shows data from 1934, but as you'll see in a minute, things didn't look much different by the early 1940s.

Meanwhile, African Americans had been attempting to break covenants on the 100 block of Adams Street since the 1920s. In 1941, NAACP attorney Charles Hamilton Houston began representing black buyers in Bloomingdale.

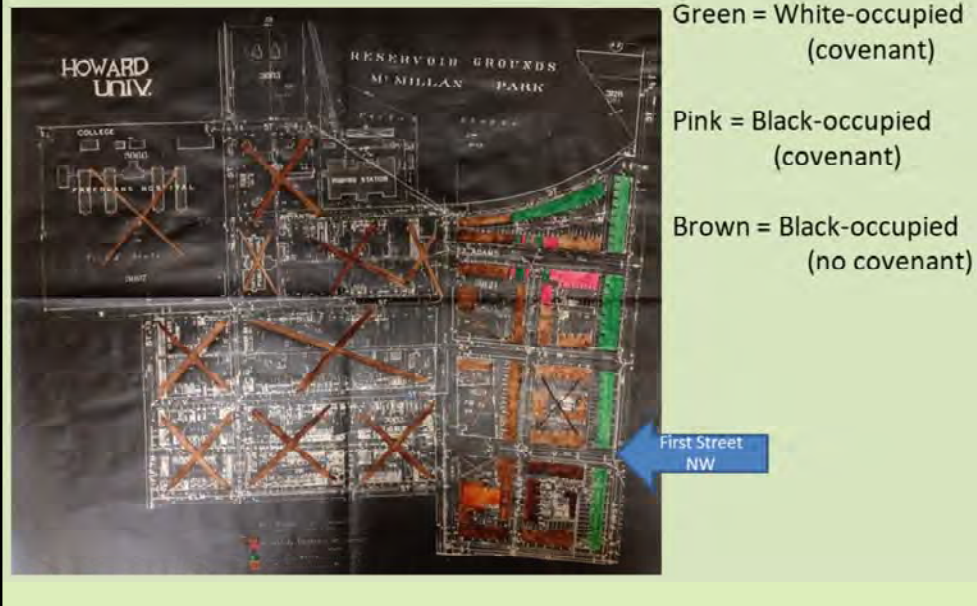
Just a little background on Houston: he had transformed Howard University's law school into a fully accredited law program largely focused on civil rights, and counted future Supreme Court justice Thurgood Marshall among his students. By the time Houston began litigating racial covenant cases in Bloomingdale, he was a long-established national civil rights attorney and would go on to fight numerous school desegregation cases leading up to the landmark 1954 Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*.



Back to Adams Street. Covenants placed by Middaugh & Shannon on one end of the block in the early 1900s remained in effect, but African Americans had moved into other houses on the block.



Map created by attorney Charles Hamilton Houston  
during battle against restrictive covenants in Bloomingdale



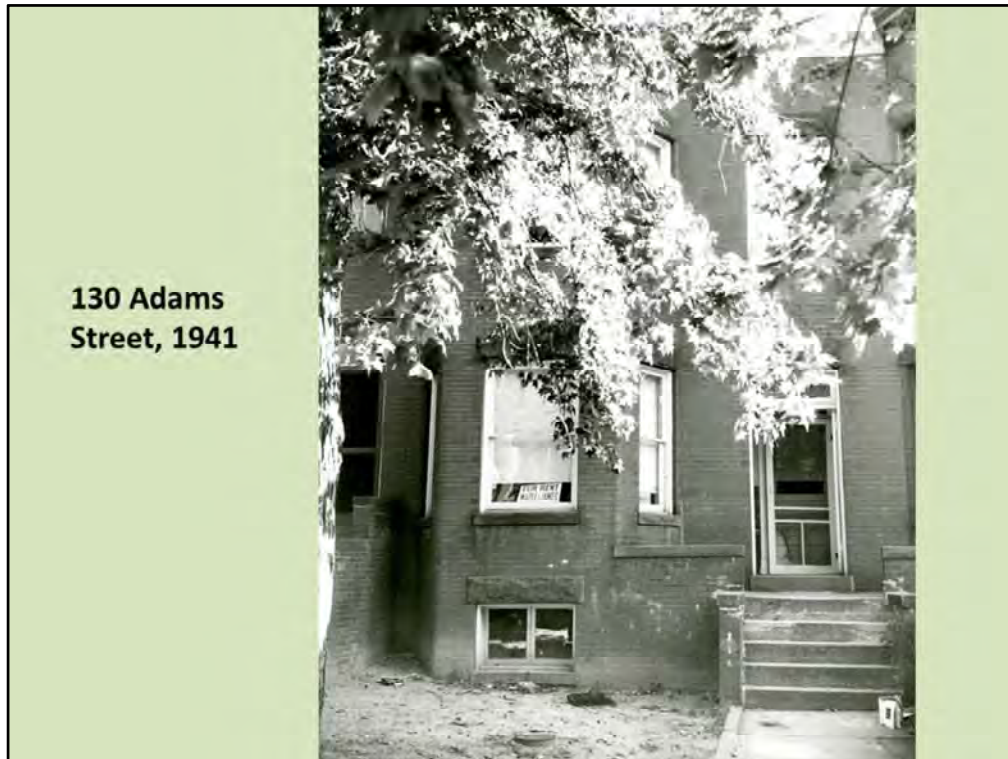
In representing several clients attempting to move onto Adams Street in the early 1940s, Houston used the opportunity to put a new legal strategy to work: he collected evidence (including testimony from residents and local school principals) to show that racial covenants were having a detrimental impact on the neighborhood.

Houston's team also collected detailed data on the ownership history of each house on the block and mapped the presence of racial covenants, black households, and white households on the surrounding blocks. This is Houston's map.

purchasers of property affected by the covenant, according to recent sales:					
Premises	112	Adams	Street	sold	for \$5,000.
"	114	"	"	"	4,750.
"	116	"	"	"	4,000.
"	118	"	"	"	4,500.
"	122	"	"	"	4,950.
"	124	"	"	"	4,750.
"	126	"	"	"	5,000.
"	128	"	"	"	5,000.
"	130	"	"	"	4,275.
"	132	"	"	"	4,600.
"	136	"	"	"	4,775.
"	138	"	"	"	5,000.
"	137	"	"	"	4,050.
"	149	"	"	"	4,750.
On the other hand the following properties owned by colored people and occupied by them, which are free of any restrictive covenant, brought the following prices:					
Premises	153	Adams	Street	sold	for \$8,500.
"	157	"	"	"	7,750.
"	161	"	"	"	6,950.
"	163	"	"	"	6,900.
"	165	"	"	"	7,000.
"	167	"	"	"	6,950.
"	169	"	"	"	7,800.
"	171	"	"	"	6,750.
"	173	"	"	"	8,450.

Houston showed, for example, how much more African Americans were willing to pay for houses in Bloomingdale, in comparison to what whites were paying. The extremely limited supply of housing for African Americans led to them paying far more to live here.

By this time the only whites buying houses here were real estate investors who hoped to turn a profit by selling them to African Americans...



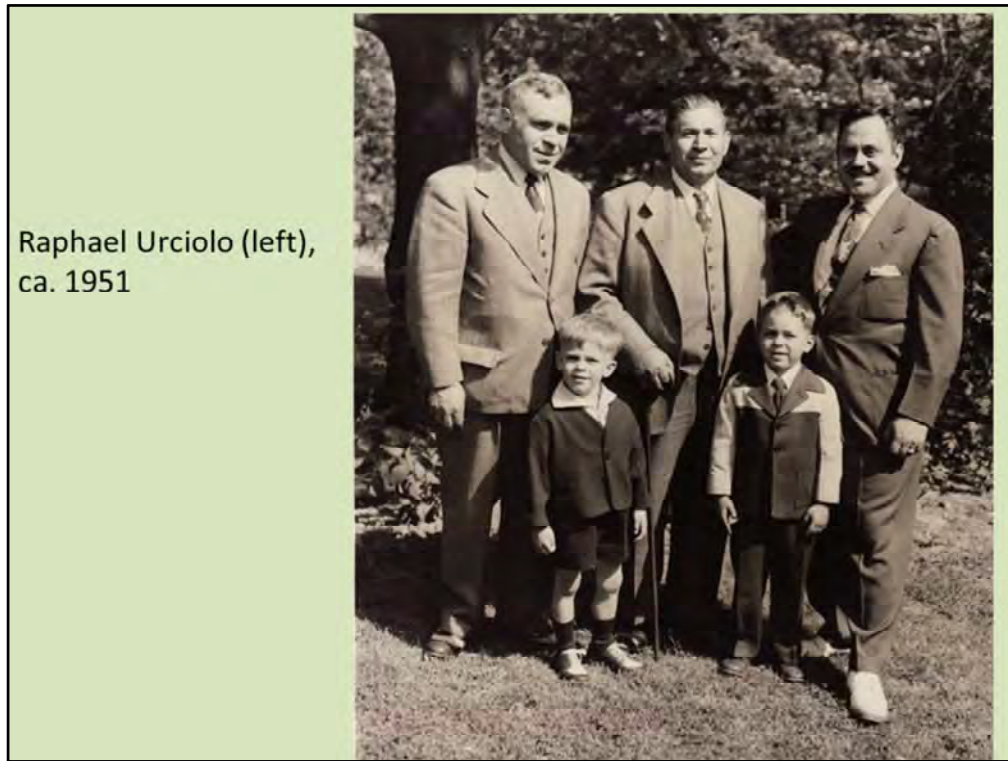
...and most white owners did not actually live here anymore by early 1940s. This is a photo Houston presented in court.

136 Adams Street NW being sold at auction, 1941



Houston also presented this photo. This house at 136 Adams Street was sold at auction to a real estate investor in 1941. An African American had tried to buy the house back in 1926 but the court forbade it because of the covenant.

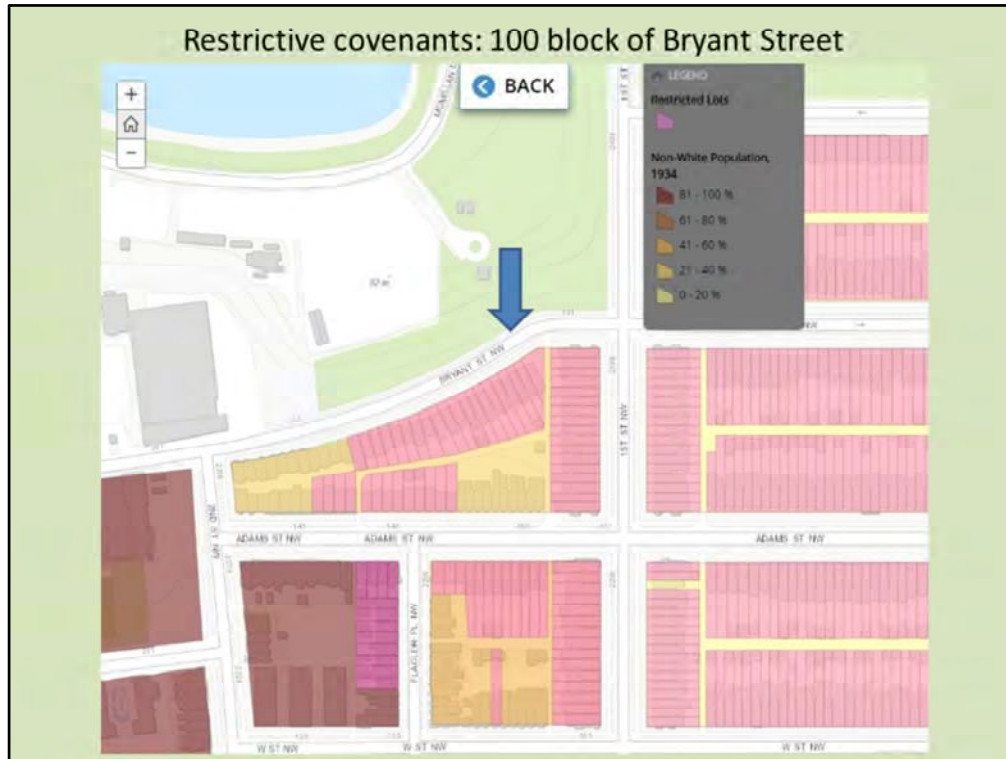
Despite Houston's efforts, in 1942 the DC courts upheld restrictive covenants on at least nine Adams Street properties.



Meanwhile, the same investor who had purchased 136 Adams had begun selling houses with covenants to African Americans on the 100 block of Bryant Street.

Raphael Urciolo was a real estate broker and attorney who recognized the opportunity for profit but also opposed covenants and fought numerous cases in court. In 1941 he financed the sale of 116 Bryant to the owner of a salvage yard he frequented: a man named James Hurd





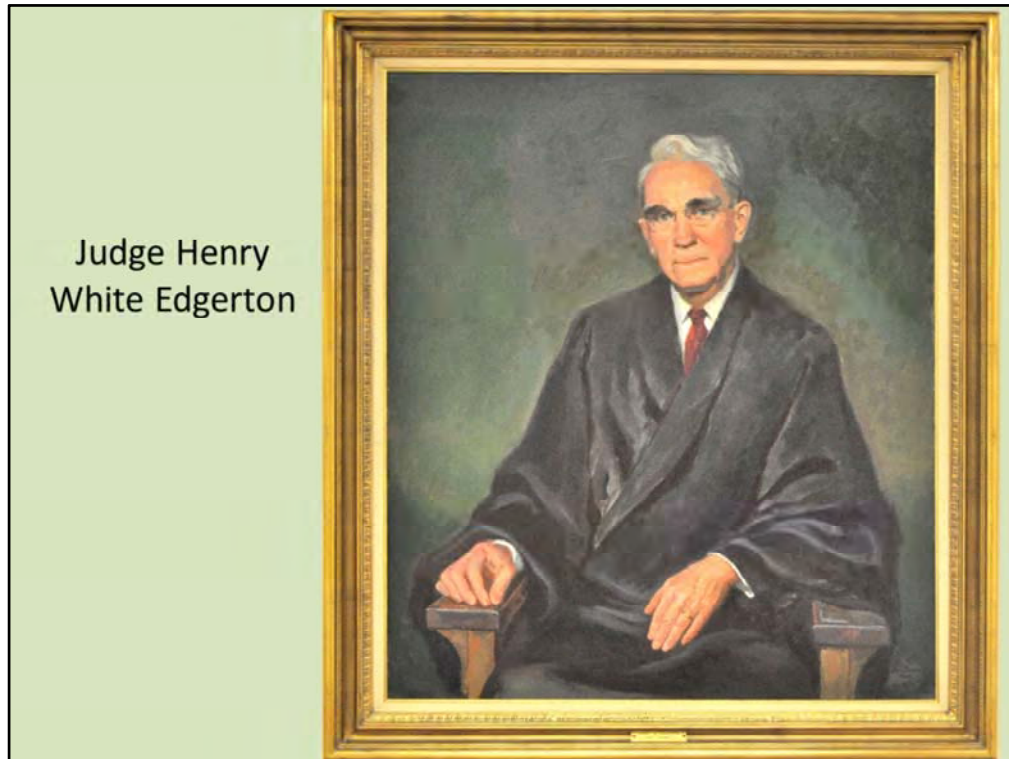
Because 116 Bryant was in the row of Middaugh & Shannon houses with covenants, a white couple who lived down the block at number 136, Frederic and Lena Hodge, sued the Hurds and Urciolo.



Charles Hamilton Houston, center, ca. 1940

Urciolo and Charles Houston had already begun strategizing on breaking down covenants on Adams Street, and continued working together on this case.

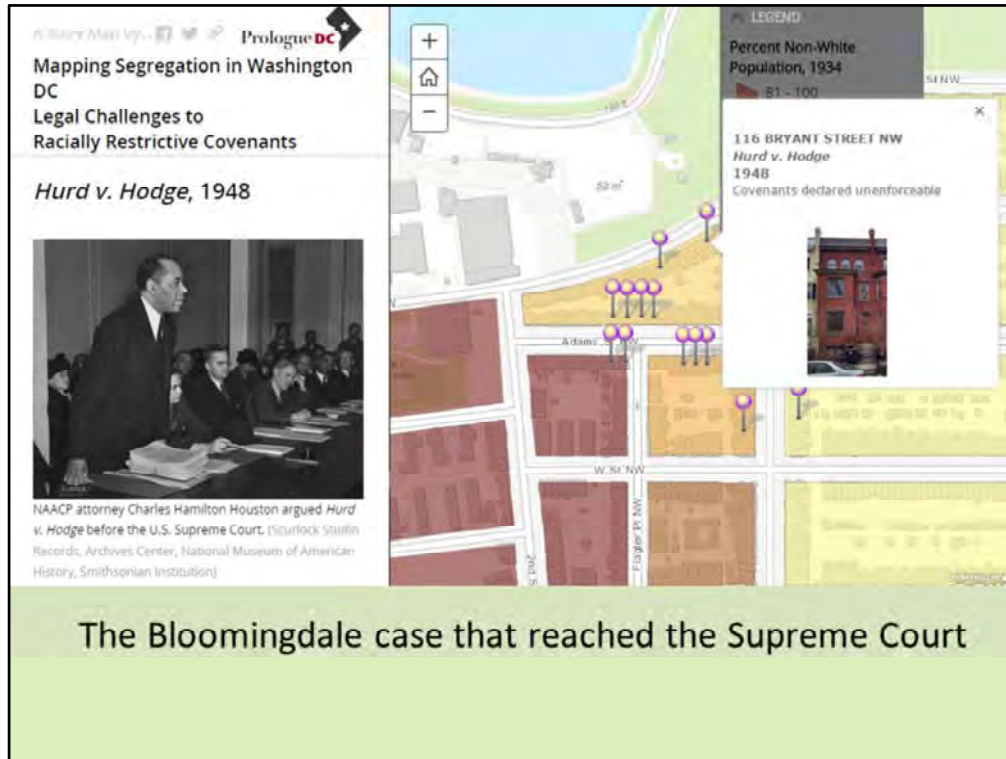
Houston represented the Hurds in the DC courts while Urciolo represented himself.



In these cases, *Hurd v. Hodge* and *Urciolo v. Hodge*, the DC courts again upheld racial covenants.

But Judge Henry White Edgerton issued a powerful dissent, including the argument that the legal enforcement of limits on the transfer and use of property violated the Constitution. Leading civil-rights lawyers regarded Edgerton's dissent as one of the best formulations yet against judicial enforcement of racial covenants and took hope from it.

Despite Houston's loss of this case, its timing was good because the Supreme Court finally agreed to hear a couple of racial covenant cases (from St. Louis and Detroit), and the NAACP filed *Hurd v. Hodge* to be heard with those cases.



In May 1948, the Supreme Court ruled the enforcement of racial covenants unconstitutional, based on a group of cases that included *Hurd*.

It was important that a DC case be heard, because the Supreme Court largely based its ruling on the Constitution's 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which requires states to provide their citizens equal protection under the law. Since DC is not a state, the ruling in *Hurd v. Hodge* was based on the Civil Rights Act of 1866.

(Racial covenants also were contrary to public policy and the 5th Amendment, which provides the right to freely convey property, the Court said.)

*The Washington Post,*  
May 4, 1948, page 1

# High Court Voids Racial Ban in Realty Transactions

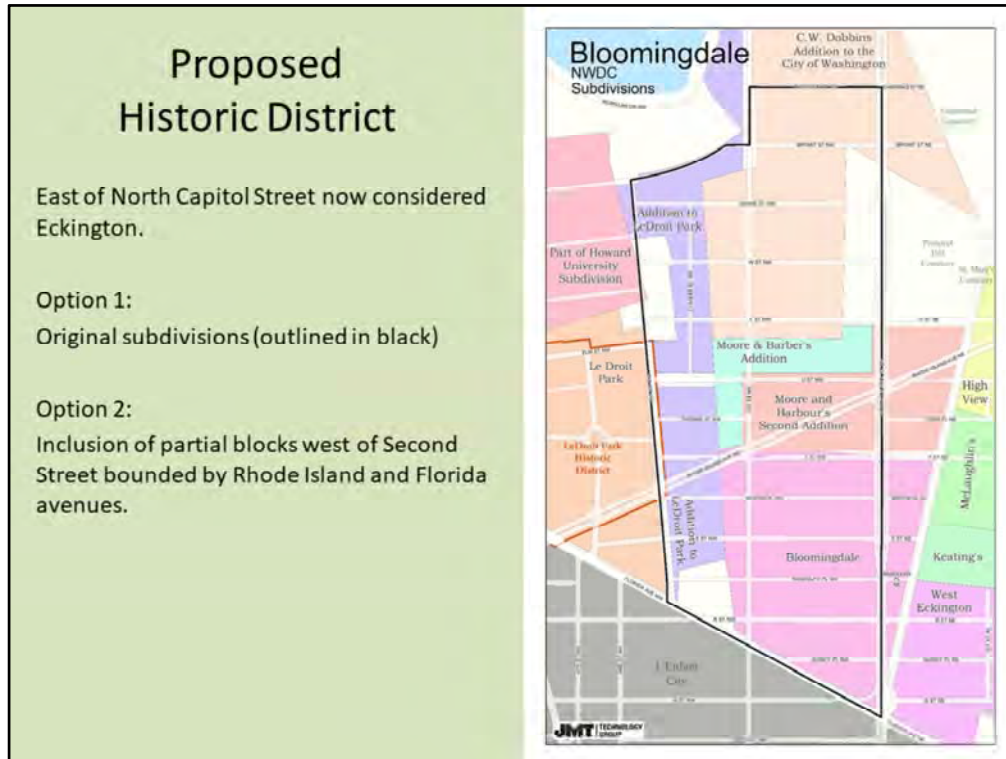
Decision Knocks  
Props From Under  
'Restricted' Area  
System in Nation

By Dillard Stokes  
*Post Reporter*

The Supreme Court yesterday ruled 6 to 0 that court orders against Negroes living in white neighborhoods violate the Constitution and the public policy.

And while the Hodges and a few others on the block vowed to keep fighting, racial covenants were no longer enforceable by the courts, and, as a result, Bloomingdale and other DC neighborhoods became open to all – legally, at least





At this point we want to review the criteria and boundaries we propose for historic designation. Here we've outlined the original four subdivisions that made up the neighborhood, minus the blocks east of North Capitol, which are now considered part of Eckington.

We'd propose a historic district in accordance with these boundaries, but another possibility would be to include the partial blocks just west of Second Street, bounded by Florida and Rhode Island avenues. While originally part of the LeDroit Park subdivision, this area was developed during the same time period and by the same builders and architects as the rest of Bloomingdale, so there's certainly justification for including it.

### DC Inventory of Historic Sites: Relevant Evaluation Criteria

The site must possess **historical integrity**, and must also:

- Be the site of **significant events**; or
- Be associated with **significant historical periods**; or
- Be associated with **significant persons**; or
- Represent **urban planning** or **design** that is significant to the appearance and development of DC; or
- Possess **high artistic or aesthetic values** that contribute significantly to the heritage and appearance of DC

These are some of the DC criteria for historic district designation. We've listed only those relevant to Bloomingdale.

## How Bloomingdale Meets Historic District Criteria

- Site of nationally important challenges to racial deed covenants; associated with implementation of planned development beyond the boundaries of original L'Enfant Plan
- Associated with individuals who played a significant role in the history of DC or the nation (Charles Hamilton Houston, Henry White Edgerton, Raphael Urciolo, Samuel Gompers, Edward Brooke)
- Site of extraordinarily cohesive and intact collection of rowhouses built within a short period of time by many of DC's most well-known developers and architects. These rowhouses, independently and together, embody the distinctive characteristics of their building type, possess high artistic value, and illustrate the changing aesthetics of the type in terms of form and style.

And finally, we want to review how Bloomingdale meets the criteria for designation as a historic district.

Questions?  
Please contact [info@prologuedc.com](mailto:info@prologuedc.com)