

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: KEYSTONE APARTMENT BUILDING

Other names/site number: H.B. BURNS MEMORIAL BUILDING

2. Location

Street & Number: 2150 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Not for Publication

City or town: Washington Vicinity

State: D.C. Code: 001 County _____ Code: _____ Zip Code: 20037

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau
In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

| | | |
|--|-------------------------|----------------|
| I, hereby, certify that this property is: | Signature of the Keeper | Date of Action |
| <input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> see continuation sheet | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> see continuation sheet | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain:) | _____ | _____ |

Keystone Apartment Building/H. B. Burns Memorial Building
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark x in all the boxes that apply.)

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE;
COMMUNITY PLANNING
AND DEVELOPMENT

Period of Significance

1931

Significant Dates

1931

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Robert O. Scholz (Architect)
Baer & Scholz (Developer)

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9. Major Bibliographic References

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)

previously listed in the NR

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of add. data:

State SHPO office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Specify repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property Approximately 0.32 Acres

UTM References

1 18 / 32 / 58 / 16 / 4 / 3 / 0 / 8 / 0 / 1 / 1 /
Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The Keystone Apartment Building/H.B. Burns Memorial Building at 2150 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. is located in Square 75, on that part of Lot 46 that was previously Lot 35 in Washington, D.C.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

Square 75, on that Lot 46 that was previously Lot 35, on which the Keystone Apartment Building/H.B. Burns Memorial Building is currently located, represents all of the land associated with the original construction of the apartment building in 1941.

See continuation sheet

Keystone Apartment Building/H. B. Burns Memorial Building

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Janet Emery Flynn and Laura Hughes, Architectural Historians

Organization EHT Traceries, Inc.

Date February 2006

Street & Number 1121 5th Street, NW

Telephone (202) 393-1199

City or Town Washington

State DC

Zip code 20001

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name The George Washington University

street & number 2121 I Street, N.W., Suite 701

telephone 202/994.2371

city or town Washington

state District of Columbia zip code 20052

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of the Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**Keystone Apartment Building/H. B. Burns Memorial Building
Washington, D.C.**

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ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Keystone Apartment Building is located on the southeast corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and 22nd Street in the northwest quadrant of Washington, D.C. Presently known as the H. B. Burns Memorial Building, the building is part of the Medical Faculty Associates complex that is owned by The George Washington University. The triangular-shaped plan of the building conforms to the corner location at Pennsylvania Avenue and 22nd Street, N.W. The building is within one block of Washington Circle and serves as an outpost on the boundary of The George Washington University campus proper. The Keystone Apartment Building is located adjacent to a row of two- and three-story nineteenth-century commercial buildings, and across the street from a block-wide modern office building that all front on Pennsylvania Avenue. F-shaped in plan, the building is approximately 100 feet wide, 138 feet long, and 122 feet tall. The building is situated on a lot that slopes slightly to the south.

The twelve-story, nine bay building rests on a concrete foundation and is constructed of limestone and concrete-variegated brick in an American bond pattern. The building extends ten bays across the front façade (north elevation) and 12 bays deep at the west elevation. The building features a cutaway corner that is one bay wide. The first story of the façade and the bays above the main entrance are clad in limestone. The main entrance to the building is centrally located at the façade. The twelfth story is stepped back from the main block of the building at the street-facing, or north and west elevations. The flat roof of the building is clad in slag on which there are presently several rooftop additions that appear to be for mechanical purposes.

The fenestration at the building's façade is characterized by horizontal bands of windows in single units and as ribbons of three. Windows throughout the building are 1/1 metal sash with lug limestone sills. Original windows at the first story of the façade have been replaced with single-light fixed and tinted units. Windows at the south elevation include hopper over fixed single-light windows and 1/1 metal sash units. Although some of the original groups of windows at the first story of the west elevation appear to have been in-filled, six of the original

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twelve groups of windows remain. In addition to the limestone ornamentation, metal panels featuring geometric and organic Art Deco designs are located in between the first and second, and ninth and tenth stories above the central five bays at the facade, above and beneath the windows at the northwest elevation, and in between the tenth and eleventh stories at the second, sixth, and tenth bays (looking south along 22nd Street) at the west elevation.

Limestone detailing adds dimension to the building, while pilasters and other embellishments at the upper stories emphasize the verticality of the building. The central five bays project slightly and are capped by limestone coping. A continuous sill of limestone is located beneath the three easternmost and westernmost (looking along Pennsylvania Avenue) bays. Both of these features draw attention to the upper portion of the building, where pilasters project slightly in between the central three bays at the north elevation's twelfth story. These pilasters culminate into a centrally located stepped parapet with limestone coping. At the west elevation, limestone belt courses are located in between the first and second, ninth and tenth, as well as the eleventh and twelfth stories. Additionally, the building is capped with limestone coping at this elevation.

The main entrance is articulated from the rest of the building by the extensive Art Deco detailing that surrounds and embellishes it. Double-leaf, single-light metal doors with a transom serve as the primary entrance. In between the central three bays of the first and second stories are fluted pilasters of limestone that rest on rectangular bases and are capped with Art Deco capitals with a fountain motif. Coping that features Art Deco organic and geometric detailing caps the first and partial second-story limestone facing. Original light fixtures flank the main entrance. A vinyl awning extends from the main entrance to the street. The ghost of a former door opening is present at the first story of the cutaway corner. Now in-filled with concrete, that former doorway is adorned with a silhouette of George Washington, a symbol of the University's ownership of the former apartment building.

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INTERIOR

The interior of the Keystone Apartment Building, in keeping with its function as an apartment building, was designed with distinct public and private spaces (Note: no interior designation is sought by the application). As originally planned, the apartments were one to two room units with baths, kitchenettes, and dining alcoves. Details included ornamental columns, architectural cornices, and a lobby elaborately decorated with marble and glazed tile. The building continues to be accessible by two elevators. Over time, much of the original interior has been lost, including the distinctive decorative elements.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Keystone Apartment Building is significant as an example of a large-scale apartment building constructed in response to rapid population growth in Washington, D.C. during the interwar period. Constructed in 1931, the Keystone provided affordable housing and amenities to downtown workers. At the time of its construction, the twelve-story, 136-unit Keystone Apartment Building was one of the largest apartment buildings in the Foggy Bottom neighborhood. The building's scale represents the acceptance of the high-rise buildings by middle-class households and illustrates the growth of the apartment building movement in Washington, D.C. The Keystone Apartment Building is also significant as the work of architect Robert O. Scholz, a noteworthy designer of Art Deco buildings in Washington, D.C., and builder Baer and Scholz, a prominent developer of apartment buildings in the city. The building is an important example of Scholz's work and epitomizes the Art Deco style that was popular in apartment building design during the 1920s and 1930s.

The Keystone Apartment Building/H.B. Burns Memorial Building at 2150 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. in Washington, D.C. meets National Register of Historic Places **Criterion A: Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history**; and **Criterion C: Distinctive physical characteristics of design, construction, or form**. Additionally, the building meets D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites criteria 201.1 (d) **Architecture and Urbanism** and (f) **Creative Masters**.

The area of significance is **Architecture** as an Art Deco design of master architect Robert O. Scholz and developers Baer & Scholz, and **Community Planning and Development** for its representation of the Conventional High-Rise Apartment building type in Washington in the 1930s. The period of significance is **1931**, documenting the year the building was constructed.

The Keystone Apartment Building is nominated under the Multiple Property Documentation Form, *Apartment Buildings in Washington, D.C.: 1880-1945* (Tracerics, 1993). The Keystone

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meets criteria specifically developed to evaluate apartment buildings pursuant to the D.C. Apartment Building Survey and adopted by the Historic Preservation Review Board in 1989. These criteria are:

A-2: Buildings that illustrate the development of the apartment movement as it related to the need for housing, including the introduction of the building type and its early formation throughout the city.

A-3: Buildings that form critical clusters, or districts that illustrate the patterns of development of the city.

A-4: Buildings that reflect economic forces, both external and internal, that altered the development of the city.

These criteria reference the place of the Keystone as one of the post-World War I boom complexes spurred by population growth of the city; the acceptance of large-scale apartment buildings by the middle-class in Washington, D.C. during the 1920s and 1930s; and the Keystone's role in the formation of a cluster of high-rise apartment buildings in the Foggy Bottom neighborhood in the early- and mid-twentieth century. Additionally, the Keystone Apartment Building meets criteria:

C-10: Buildings that are the work of skilled architects, landscape architects, urban planners, engineers, builders, and developers.

C-11: Buildings that illustrate the work of skilled architect/developer teams.

These criteria refer to architect Robert O. Scholz's skillful application of modern building techniques to create an Art Deco-style building that responded to the contemporary aesthetic of the 1930s and appealed to middle-class Washingtonians. Furthermore, the building was a product of

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the partnership of Baer & Scholz, one of Washington D.C.'s leading architect/developer teams.

The Keystone Apartment Building/Burns Memorial Building is significant as an example of a Conventional High-Rise Apartment Building Sub-Type. As described in the Multiple Property Documentation Form, a Conventional High-Rise Apartment Building type is composed of buildings that contain at least 27 self-sufficient apartments, is at least six and no more than twelve stories high, has a single main public entrance, and was designed to hold an elevator. Examples of this building type were typically constructed between 1922 and 1945. Conventional High-Rise Buildings played a critical role in the development of apartment buildings in the District of Columbia. These buildings employed modern technology such as steel-frame structural systems and passenger elevators to create tall buildings that accommodated many units on a small footprint. This efficient use of land led to greater affordability of housing units and greatly altered the course of residential patterns in the city.

As stated in the Multiple Property Documentation Form, examples of Conventional High-Rise Apartment Building must retain sufficient integrity of location, design, workmanship, materials, associations and feeling to convey their associative, artistic, or informational values.

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THE BUILDING

The Application for a D.C. Permit to Build number 140231 dated January 14, 1931 lists David A. Baer and Robert O. Scholz as the owners/builders and Robert O. Scholz as the architect of the Keystone Apartment Building. According to the application for the building permit, the estimated cost of the building's construction was \$350,000. At the time of its construction, the 193-room building contained 136 apartment units, two elevators, was heated by steam, and would also be used for retail purposes at the first floor. From 1931 to 1979, the Keystone Pharmacy and Palace Laundry were located in the ground floor retail spaces of the apartment building. One of the tallest residential buildings in the area, an advertisement in the Evening Star indicated that, "the new building...will afford a view of the city and suburban Virginia from its upper floors."¹

Twelve-story apartment buildings like the Keystone created a dramatic change in the scale of the Foggy Bottom neighborhood (the area bounded by 17th Street on the east, Rock Creek Park on the west, the Potomac River to the south and Pennsylvania Avenue to the north). Prior to World War I, Foggy Bottom was comprised largely of narrow two-to-three story rowhouses. The neighborhood was home to a socio-economically diverse range of families: from households headed by military officers and government officials living near the White House to working-class families and laborers living near the industries situated on the riverbank.² After the first zoning code was introduced in 1920, the section of the neighborhood north of I Street was zoned for high density residential uses. The first multi-story apartment buildings were constructed in Foggy Bottom in the 1920s, replacing the preceding frame and brick dwellings. Great portions of the neighborhood were eventually transformed by construction of high-rise apartment buildings.³

¹ "Apartment House for Avenue Site," *The Evening Star*, February 22, 1931, pg. B-2.

² Suzanne Sherwood Unger, "Foggy Bottom: Blue-Collar Neighborhood in a White-Collar Town," in *Washington at Home*, Kathryn Schneider Smith ed. (Washington, D.C.: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1988), 55-59.

³ Suzanne Berry Sherwood, "Foggy Bottom, 1800-1975: A Study in the Uses of an Urban Neighborhood," GW

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The large-scale Keystone catered to a different demographic than the pre-World War I housing in Foggy Bottom, reflecting drastic changes in the city's population that occurred as the federal work force expanded rapidly during the interwar period. The high-rise Keystone Apartment Building offered studio and one-room apartment units to singles or young married couples who came to Washington from across the country to work low-level white collar jobs for the federal government or local businesses.

The 1930 Census and 1932 City Directories provide a profile of the initial residents of the Keystone, which opened in 1931. The residents tended to be young—almost half of those sampled were in their twenties. The young married couples tended to be without children and often both the husband and wife were employed. Many of the units were occupied by households comprised of two or three female roommates. Over half of the employed residents worked for government agencies, including the War Department, Veterans Administration, Internal Revenue Service, Federal Trade Commission, Agricultural Department, Census Bureau, Commerce Department, and the State Department. Keystone residents were generally employed in lower-level white collar jobs such as clerk, stenographer and secretary. There were, however, a few accountants and lawyers. Private sector employees included sales people—particularly for motor car companies including the Trew Company and the Warrington—nurses, and shop managers. A clerk from the Keystone Pharmacy lived in the building as well as workers for People's Drug Store and Sears, Roebuck & Company.

Purchased by The George Washington University in 1979, the Keystone Apartment Building was renamed the H. B. Burns Memorial Building for the deceased brother of University Benefactor Jacob Burns (1970). The building is now identified as part of The George Washington University Medical Faculty Associates; a non-profit, academic multi-specialty medical group committed to providing excellence in healthcare. The organization was separately incorporated from The George Washington University on July 1, 2000.

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HISTORIC CONTEXT OF APARTMENT BUILDINGS

With the expansion of the federal workforce during World War I, thousands of new workers arrived in Washington to staff the new agencies. During the War, housing construction had been stunted by material shortages. Consequently, there was a large demand for housing once construction resumed in the early 1920s. Developers responded to the demand by constructing apartment buildings. Prior to this period, Washington exhibited an aversion to large-scale multi-family housing. This aversion was overcome by developer's efforts to build attractive apartment buildings that would be acceptable to the upper- and middle-classes. From the end of the World War until 1929, 731 apartment buildings were constructed in Washington, twice the number built during the previous decade. In fact, apartment living became so popular that more apartment buildings were constructed during the 1920s than single-family units, and Washington was ranked with New York and Chicago as cities with the highest percentage of apartment house residents.

With the stock market crash in 1929, and the subsequent lack of investment capital, housing construction slowed. When it resumed in the mid 1930s, apartment buildings continued to predominate over single-family houses. Between 1935 and 1941, 60 percent of the \$102 million expended for residential housing went toward apartment buildings. The increased demand for apartments was largely the result of federal salaries that failed to keep pace with housing prices, placing single-family residences out of the reach of many government workers. During the Depression, federal programs brought droves of new residents to Washington, effectively inverting the percentage of new construction of houses versus apartment units. By the end of the decade, apartment units outranked single-family houses by 70 percent. This popularity changed the character of Washington's real estate investment industry. Apartment buildings, with their accompanying speculative investment potential, became Washington's prime real estate venture.⁴

⁴ D.C. Apartment Building Survey prepared by the D.C. Preservation League and Tracerics in 1987 under the D.C. Office of Historic Preservation Survey and Planning Grant Program.

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Competition between apartment buildings developers was fierce. Developers Baer & Scholz became leaders in the field by offering apartments like the Keystone that combined affordability with urban amenities. An advertisement for the building in the June 21, 1940 edition of the *Evening Star* read, "From within this apartment residence, you derive the 'best' in downtown living, from atop its 12 stories an unrivaled panorama of the entire city." The Keystone's convenient location was another selling point; "Live here ... walk to work ... save time!" A one room apartment with a foyer, dressing room, Pullman kitchen and bath rented for \$47.50 in 1940 (approximately \$720 in 2009 dollars); a one-bedroom unit with a sun porch rented for \$60 (approximately \$900 in 2009 dollars).⁵

In addition to offering affordable amenities, developers employed innovative building techniques to distinguish their apartment buildings from the competition. These innovations resulted in changes to the form of apartment buildings, as exemplified by the Keystone Apartment Building's steel frame construction. Changes to building form were also seen in the emergence of modern architectural styles. The use of modern styles for Washington apartment buildings between the 1920s and 1930s stands out as the single most significant change in the building type in those years. The predominant style of apartment buildings shifted from the Classical Revival and Eclectic Styles of the 1920s to the Streamlined Art Deco and International Styles in the 1930s.⁶ Unlike the Revival styles of the previous decades, Art Deco conveyed a "feeling of velocity and machine elegance." Scholz in particular was interested in applications of modern technology and design. On the Keystone Apartment Building, he experimented with newly-available building materials such as the aluminum panels that are intrinsic in conveying the sense of the machine age and the verticality of the Art Deco style.⁷

⁵ "8 Good Reasons why You Should Live Downtown," *Evening Star*, 21 July 1940.

⁶ James Goode, *Best Addresses: A Century of Washington's Distinguished Apartment Houses*, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2003), p.329.

⁷ Hans Wirz and Richard Striner, *Washington Deco*, Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984, p.35.

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THE BUILDER: Baer & Scholz

The Keystone Apartment Building was built, owned and operated by Baer & Scholz, a partnership formed in 1922 by architect Robert O. Scholz and lawyer and builder David A. Baer. As a firm Baer & Scholz were considered one of the city's leading architect/developer teams.⁸ In 1925, the firm constructed the apartment building at 3701 Massachusetts Avenue, using the design of the architect Joseph Younger. In 1927, the firm constructed the Bishop's House, (a four-story apartment building at 3010 Wisconsin Avenue. The following year, Baer & Scholz built the Alban Towers at 3700 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., also designed by Scholz. The five-story Gothic Revival Alban Towers was the tallest apartment building in D.C. when it opened in 1929. Baer and Scholz were in partnership until the early 1930s when Scholz formed his own company. Among the buildings the partnership designed and constructed were the Blackstone Hotel at 1016 17th Street, N.W. (1926) and the Greystone Apartments at 815 18th Street, N.W. (1930). According to the District of Columbia's Historic Preservation Office's Building Permit Database, Baer & Scholz are credited with the development of 122 buildings between 1922 and 1934.⁹

David A. Baer (1889-1947) was born in Washington, D.C., graduated from Western High School, and earned both his undergraduate (1910) and law degrees (1912) from The George Washington University. He entered law practice in 1912 and, although he continued to practice law, he joined with architect Robert O. Scholz to form a construction company after World War I. Scholz formed his own company in the early 1930s, but Baer's obituary states that the two men continued to work together until Baer's death in 1947.¹⁰ Baer is credited with building the St. Albans Apartments at 2310 Connecticut Avenue (now the Chinese Embassy) (1922) and the

⁸ "Business Romance Hidden in Building," *Evening Star*, 30 August 1930.

⁹ District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office's Building Permit Database 2006, funded in part by a U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service Historic Preservation Fund grant administered by the District of Columbia's Historic Preservation Office.

¹⁰ "David A. Baer, Builder, Dies at Age of 58," *Washington Post*, 13 July 1947, 17M

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Ricardo Apartments at 3625 16th Street (1923), among many others.¹¹

¹¹ District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office's Building Permit Database 2006, funded in part by a U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service Historic Preservation Fund grant administered by the District of Columbia's Historic Preservation Office.

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THE ARCHITECT: Robert O. Scholz (1894-1978)

Robert O. Scholz, architect of the Keystone Apartment Building, specialized in apartment building design during his thirty-year career as a Washington architect and builder. Many of his better-known buildings command prominent corner lots on major Washington avenues. At the outset of his career in the 1920s, Scholz's buildings were designed in Classical Revival styles, but by the 1930s he espoused the Art Deco style and became one of Washington's leading designers of Art Deco apartment buildings.¹²

Robert O. Scholz was born in New York City on September 25, 1894. His parents had recently immigrated from Germany and the family moved to Chicago where Scholz's father painted china for the Marshall Field Company.¹³ He attended grammar school and three years of high school in Chicago. From 1911 to 1914, he enrolled at a technical college, the Armour Institute, in Chicago, but did not receive a degree. Scholz worked as a draftsman in the office of H. Clyde Miller in Chicago from 1914 to 1917 and then worked for a year as an engineer for the Kalman Steel Company. During World War I, Scholz served in the Navy, moving to Washington to work for the U.S. Navy's Bureau of Yards and Docks as an engineer, where he remained until 1920.

Scholz began designing apartments in 1920, when he became an architect for Howard Etchison, a prominent builder who was active in apartment house construction in Washington, D.C. from circa 1910-1925. The next year he took a position as architect in the office of noted Washington architect George N. Ray, who was known for his neo-classical commercial buildings.¹⁴

¹² Wirz, Hans and Richard Striner, *Washington Deco: Art Deco Design in the Nation's Capital* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Pres, 1984), 40.

¹³ Robert R. Scholz (son of Oscar Scholz), interview with Andrea F. Schoenfeld, EHT Tracerics, Inc., July 18, 2006. Washington, D.C.

¹⁴ Information on education and early employment is from Scholz's Application to Register as an Architect in the District of Columbia, dated July, 1925. Some dates differ from those he gave in an application to re-register on

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In 1922, Scholz set up his own practice and also formed a partnership with David A. Baer, a lawyer who had recently become a builder specializing in apartment buildings. During the 1920s, Scholz was actively involved in apartment house construction as an architect, builder and owner. Scholz was joined in the business by his younger brother, Oscar Richard Scholz, who worked on the building side of the business. Trained as a draftsman, Oscar Scholz came to Washington at age sixteen and supervised construction throughout his career.

Other notable apartment buildings, besides the famous Alban Towers, designed by Scholz included 2755 Macomb Street, N.W. (1926), 3707 Woodley Road, N.W. (1926), and the Bishop's House, 3010 Wisconsin Ave., N.W. (1927). Scholz also designed the row of elegant Classical Revival-style town houses in Kalorama at 1806-1818 24th Street, N.W. (1924) that was constructed by Baer & Scholz. The firm also built the Blackstone Hotel (1926) at 1016 17th St., N.W. (demolished). According to the District of Columbia's Historic Preservation Office's Building Permit Database, Robert O. and Oscar R. Scholz are credited with the design of 149 buildings between 1919 and 1947.¹⁵

The last major project of the firm of Baer & Scholz was the Keystone apartment building. As was typical of the larger Baer & Scholz buildings, it was located on a prominent site: the intersection of Pennsylvania Avenue and 22nd Street, N.W. close to Washington Circle. Unlike many of the firm's earlier buildings, it was distinctly modern in style with Art Deco detailing.

In the early 1930s, Scholz founded his own firm, the Robert O. Scholz Company, with his brother. Although the firm of Baer & Scholz was listed in city directories as late as 1936, it does not appear to have been active in apartment construction after 1931.¹⁶ The Scholz firm was

February 19, 1951.

¹⁵ District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office's Building Permit Database 2006, funded in part by a U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service Historic Preservation Fund grant administered by the District of Columbia's Historic Preservation Office.

¹⁶ There are no entries for Baer & Scholz as owner or builder of any apartment buildings constructed after 1931 in

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small: its professional staff consisted of Scholz, his brother Oscar, and a draftsman.

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, as the United States emerged from the Depression, Scholz designed six large apartment buildings, including the Munson (1937) and the Milton (1938) in Foggy Bottom. All six apartment buildings have Art Deco detailing. Scholz was interested in technology and innovation, according to his nephew, Robert R. Scholz.¹⁷ He designed decorative elements in aluminum, newly popular in that period. He experimented with systems for cooling apartments by forcing air through hallways and, in 1940, designed one of Washington's first air-conditioned apartment buildings, the General Scott, at 1 Scott Circle, N.W. The other Scholz apartment buildings of this period were the Eddystone at 1301 Vermont Avenue, N.W., (1937) the Bay State at 1701 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., (1939) and the Pall Mall at 1112 16th Street, N.W. (1940).

The principal men involved in the financing, ownership and construction of Scholz's apartment and commercial buildings were a close-knit group of friends who had known each other since the 1920s. Scholz was a yachtsman and some of his business associates were boating companions, as well. These included E. C. Baltz, founder and president of Perpetual Building Association, and Monroe Warren. Scholz listed Ernst as the owner of the Eddystone, Bay State and General Scott apartment buildings.¹⁸

Scholz's apartments were designed for Washington's middle-class federal office workers. Most of the residents were single or young married couples without families. The apartments were centrally located in the downtown area, on or near major streets. The majority of apartments were planned with efficiencies, and a few one-bedroom units. Although the apartments were relatively small, the lobbies were designed to create an air of elegance. Typical features in-

the D.C. Apartment Building Survey prepared by the D.C. preservation League and Tracerics in 1987 under the D.C. Office of Historic Preservation Survey and Planning Grant program.

¹⁷ Robert R. Scholz, interview with Andrea F. Schoenfeld, EHT Tracerics, July 18, 2006, Washington, D.C.

¹⁸ Robert O. Scholz File, Board of Examiners and registrars, D.C. Archives, Washington, D.C.

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cluded a step down lobby, designed to give greater height to the lobby within the constraints of the District of Columbia's building height restrictions, reception desk, switchboard and operator to serve residents, domed ceiling with indirect lighting, streamlined detailing and marble floor.

The General Scott and Pall Mall were the last large downtown apartment buildings Scholz designed. Many of his later buildings were for commercial use, although he also designed the suburban Pooks Hill Apartments in Bethesda, Maryland in 1949. Scholz's brother and business partner Oscar Scholz died in 1954.¹⁹ After his brother's death, Scholz became involved in oil drilling investments and did not actively continue his architectural practice, although he still maintained an office. Scholz officially retired from his architectural practice in 1954 and died at the age of 82 in 1978.²⁰

¹⁹ "O. R. Scholz, Official of Architects and Contractors Firm," *Evening Star*, 23 November 1954.

²⁰ "Robert O. Scholz, Architect, Builder in Area 50 Years," *The Washington Post*, 8 June 1978, C16.

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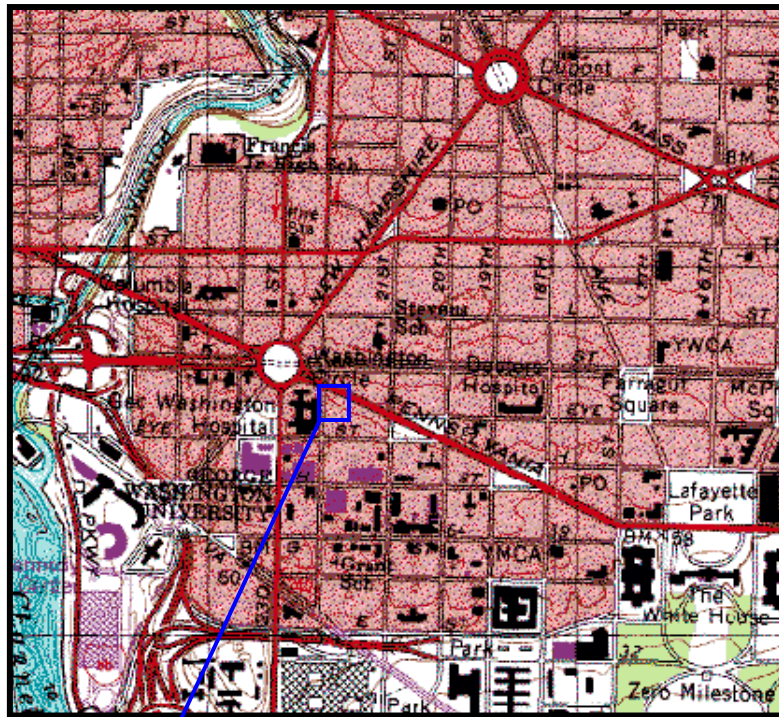
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USGS Quad Map: Washington West, *Topozone* 2006



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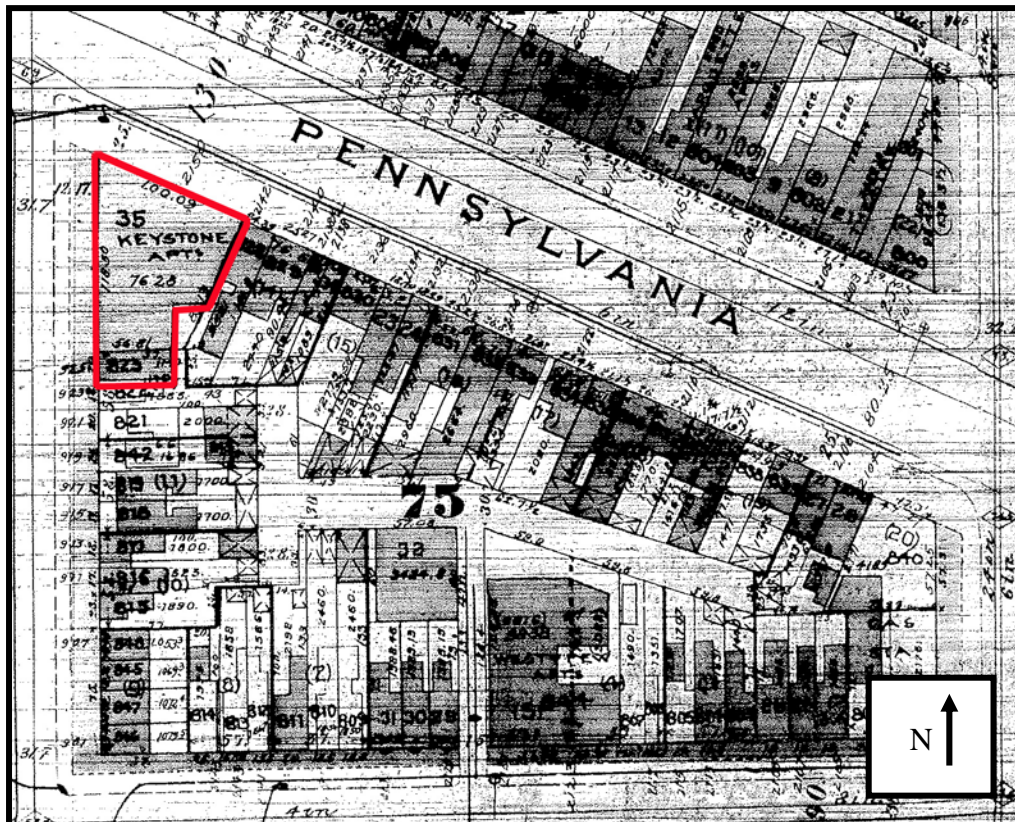
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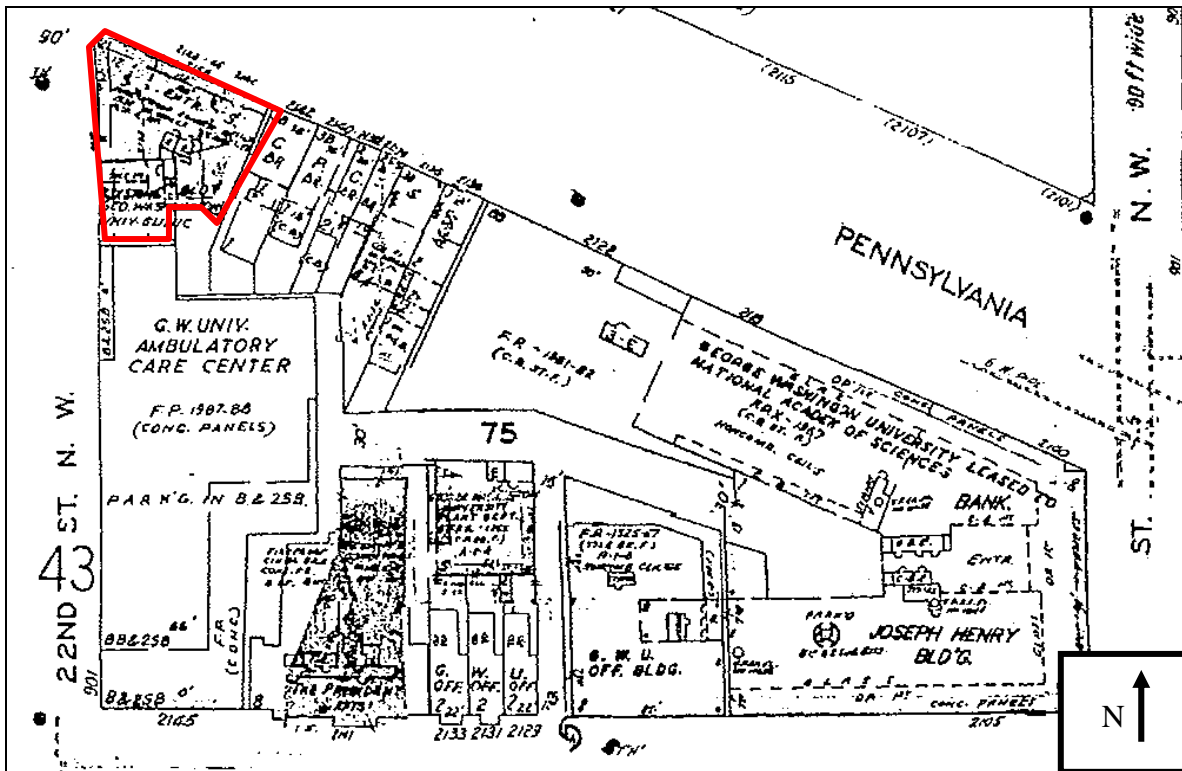
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Washington Star, July 21, 1940

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Buildings on the South Side of the 2100 Block of Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., April 1961
PR 0479B, Emil A. Press Slide Collection, Historical Society of Washington, D.C.



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Apartment House at 22nd and Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., August 12, 1950
Photo 2985, Wymer Collection, Historical Society of Washington, D.C

