

# WARDMAN's WASHINGTON

Celebrating a Century of Wardman Row-House Neighborhoods

## COLUMBIA HEIGHTS



Wardman Buildings in Columbia Heights, DC Building Permits Database, Brian Kraft, compiler (above)

Wardman contributed enormously to the housing stock of Columbia Heights, an area long considered a healthy place to live because of its higher elevation, pleasant breezes, and cooler temperatures — a welcome relief from the malaria-ridden summers of swampy downtown Washington. With abundant trolley service, including the Fourteenth Street, Eleventh Street and Georgia Avenue lines, and with municipal infrastructures in place by the early twentieth century, developers began a frenzied pace of building. Between 1902 and 1913, Wardman built 650 row houses in the neighborhood, most with front porches in the Colonial Revival style. Nearly half of these row houses are located in the Holmead Manor subdivision, bounded by Monroe, Fourteenth, and Spring Streets, and Holmead Place; all were designed by Albert Beers.

At the start of World War I, as large parcels of land became scarce in Columbia Heights and land prices increased, Wardman turned to apartment building. The map shows that these higher-density units (colored green) are concentrated west of Fourteenth Street, while the row houses (colored orange) are situated mainly east of that major artery.

During the late nineteenth century, as the large estates of the Peters and Holmead families were subdivided and platted, investors envisioned an exclusive suburb to compliment the imposing mansions that dotted the hilly area overlooking the original city. However, Wardman responded to the critical shortage of housing for the person of average means by building rows of generously sized and well-appointed attached houses. He thus propelled Columbia Heights into one of Washington's most desirable suburban residential areas for the middle class. With the majority of Wardman buildings still remaining, Columbia Heights is testament to the developer's insistence on quality design and construction.

### 1 11th & 13th Streets



Facade and Detail, 2009 — 2313 Thirteenth Street, NW, 1902, Nicholas R. Grimm, architect (above and inset)

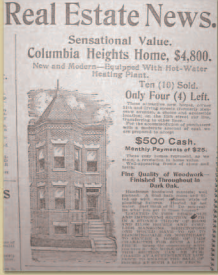
Facade, 1231 — 1241 Girard Street, NW, 1902, Nicholas R. Grimm, architect (right)

"Sensational Value, Columbia Heights Home, \$4,800," Real Estate Advertisement for 3002-3022 Eleventh Street, *The Evening Star*, May 19, 1904 (right top)

3002-3022 Eleventh Street, NW, 1904, Nicholas R. Grimm, architect (far right)

Wardman's start in Columbia Heights came in 1902, when he built 2009-2313 Thirteenth Street for prominent real estate developer Lewis E. Brunninger (1859-1942), The Hartford County, Maryland native was a successful businessman and philanthropist who contributed enormously to Washington's residential building stock. The brick and carved stone row houses on Thirteenth Street and Girard Street typify the solidity and ornamentation of his houses and illustrate the developer's use of capable designers, skilled craftsmen, and superior materials. Designed by Nicholas R. Grimm, they feature carved stone over door porches, classically ornamented cornices, and Roman brick.

In 1904 Wardman began building for himself in Columbia Heights, on the 1400 block of Lancon Street. He, like Brunninger, insisted on quality of design and construction and employed Nicholas Grimm to design row houses in a similar late Victorian style. A Moore and Hill real estate ad from 1906 features Grimm's rendering for Wardman's houses of Eleventh and Irving Streets. Stating that the houses were selling quickly, as they were in a desirable, improving area and adjacent to public transportation, the ad also boasted their proximity to costly mansions and their good value, as "therefore one would have to go to Bloomingdale or Northeast to secure a home of this character for such a low price."



### 2 14th Street



Detail, 3400 Black Fourteenth Street at Meridian Street, NW, 1908, Albert H. Beers, architect (above)

"A MASTER PRODUCTION," Real Estate Advertisement, *The Evening Star*, May 22, 1908 (right)



3400 Black Fourteenth Street, NW, 1908, Albert H. Beers, architect (above)

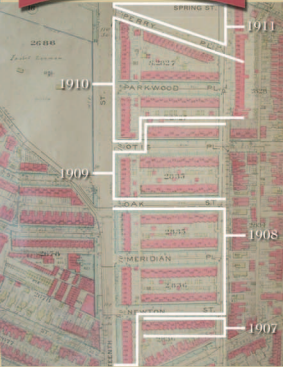
"Price \$7,500," Shannon and Luchs Advertisement, *The Evening Star*, May 22, 1908 (right)



The full page, 1908 ad for the houses on Fourteenth Street shows that Wardman's development of the large Mattingly estate required bold advertising. He hired Shannon and Luchs Realtors, who had claimed that "MR. HARRY WARDMAN" was constructing "the only home of its kind ever built in America." Just two years earlier, the modest Moore and Hill ad for Victorian-style row houses on Eleventh Street had not even mentioned the developer's name. The early Wardman also switched architects, replacing upstate Nicholas Grimm with the talented Albert Beers, whose Colonial Revival-style front porch row houses dominate the tract. The Fourteenth Street floor plans were wider and more highly ornamented than those on the side streets, and show a generously sized reception hall and kitchen, with three bedrooms and a bath on both the second and third stories.

Beers' masterful designs avoided the visual monotony inherent in the row house. By combining repetition with individual variations, especially above the cornice line, the houses were of one unified and unique. As upper Fourteenth Street, originally a prestigious residential address, became increasingly commercial, many of the houses — at least on the ground level — were converted to businesses. It called to this use, the grand old houses suffered again during the riots that followed the assassination of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968. Many of the houses are being restored, missing front porches are being reconstructed, and Fourteenth Street between Monroe and Spring Streets is once again a tribute to Harry Wardman and Albert Beers.

### 3 Holmead Manor



Boist Real Estate Maps for 1925, 1903 and 1896 (Supplement), Showing The Mattingly Farm and Its Development (above and top, left to right) Courtesy: The Historical Society of Washington, DC



The Arcadia Amusement House and Market, 1920s (above) Courtesy: DC Public Library, Washingtonian Division

"To Build Small Houses," *The Washington Post*, February 9, 1908 (above right)



Wardman's most extensive row house development in Columbia Heights — nearly 300 houses in Holmead Manor — was on the old Mattingly farm, located on the east side of Fourteenth Street between Monroe and Spring Streets. The Mattingly family had owned the land since at least the 1880s. Although a Boist map from 1896 shows a plan to create a transportation circle on their property, the farm remained undeveloped until 1908, when patent attorney Harry B. Wilson purchased the section below Old Street and partnered with Wardman to build over 100 houses. The developer purchased the remainder of the Mattingly farm in early 1910.

Wardman, working rapidly from the south of the property to the north, had fully developed the land by 1912. The *Washington Post* lamented the loss of the Mattingly farmhouse and barns, which had been a historic and picturesque feature of the area for many years. But progress on upper Fourteenth Street was inevitable after the trolley line was extended from Park Road to Decatur Street in 1907. The old car barn became a popular market and amusement house called the Arcadia.

### 4 Newton Street



1300 Black Newton Street, NW, South Side, 1907, Albert H. Beers, architect (above)

1300 Black of Newton Street, NW, North Side, 1908, Albert H. Beers, architect (above right)

Sleeping Porch, 1300 Black of Spring Road, NW, South Side, 1911, Albert H. Beers, architect (inset)

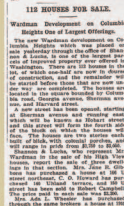


While Beers designed most of the blocks in Holmead Manor with front porch row houses, Newton Street is an exception. The south side, the first parcel Wardman developed (June 1907), has front porches that are found nowhere else in the tract. There is no separation between the porches. Instead, there is a single continuous line from one end of the block to the other. Although this arrangement provides extra visual unity to the streetscape, one with individual porches offers more privacy.

Interestingly, the north side of Newton Street, begun eight months after the south side, has no front porches and is lined with a version of the late nineteenth century vernacular row house. Wardman had used this older style for houses just north of Spring Road in 1907, but it is unclear why he chose to use this somewhat old fashioned design, and only once, for his Holmead Manor tract. Many of the houses in the development are hybrids, combining a front porch and a projecting bay, the latter feature being a hallmark of the earlier style. The ubiquitous rear sleeping porch is one feature that all of the houses have in common.

Boyd's *Directory of the District of Columbia* shows that nearly one-half of the original occupants of Newton Street's north side were still living there in 1914. Many of these residents were government clerks who took the Fourteenth Street trolley downtown to their offices at the Department of Agriculture, the Post Office, the Government Printing Office, and the National Museum. Aubrey Haines, a resident of 1361 Newton Street, walked to his smoked meat business at the Arcadia Market, located a few blocks away at Fourteenth Street and Park Road.

### 5 Hobart Place



700 Block of Hobart Place, NW, South Side, 1912-13, Frank Russell White, architect (far left)

"112 Houses For Sale," *The Washington Post*, May 12, 1912 (above left)



Boist Real Estate Map, 1925, showing Hobart Place (above right)

Park, North Side Of Hobart Place, NW, (inset)

In 1912-13 Wardman developed most of Square 2888, which is bounded by Sherman Avenue, Columbia Road, Georgia Avenue, and Harvard Street, part of a working-class, mixed-race neighborhood. The front elevation drawing for the Sherman Avenue houses shows that they were designed as smaller, simplified versions of the Holmead Manor houses. They are sixteen feet in width, the minimum permitted under an 1897 zoning regulation. Although Albert Beers had died suddenly in 1911, according to his designs for 2801-3223 Sherman Avenue (1911) with the houses in Square 2888 indicate that Wardman and Frank Russell White, Wardman's new chief architect, adapted Beers' designs for that square.

Hobart Street appears to be of several instances in which Wardman cut an extra street into the existing street grid in order to build more houses and, often, to build smaller houses. The 1925 Boist real estate map shows a park in the middle of Hobart Street on both the north and south sides. Since this is the only example of Wardman developing a parcel of land with a public amenity, it is possible that he was required to do so in exchange for creating an additional street. Occupants of Hobart Street in 1914 included many government clerks, several chauffeurs, an ironmonger, plasterer and wallpaperer, as well as a watchman, barber and shoemaker. Although the U.S. Census for 1920 shows that all of the Hobart Street residents were Caucasian, recently married Edward Kennedy Ellington managed "The Duke's Sennelocks" from his home two blocks away, at 2728 Sherman Avenue.

### Columbia Heights Community

Details, 1300 Black Old Street, NW, South Side, 1909, Albert H. Beers, architect (right)

Detail, 3400 Black of Fourteenth Street above Perry Place, NW, 1911, Albert H. Beers, architect (far right)

Residents of Columbia Heights who live in Wardman houses are not only proud but also appreciative of the houses' quality of design and construction. They are especially grateful for the front porches, which they believe contribute to creating community, for the facade variety and ornamentation, and for interior detailing such as parquet floors and Arts & Crafts fireplaces. They have an intense pride in their neighborhood and are eager to learn more about its history and architecture.

