

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Registration Form1376
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REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name National Union Buildingother names/site number NA

2. Location

street & number 918 F Street, N.W.☐ not for publication NAcity, town Washington, D.C.☐ vicinity NAstate District of Columbiacode DCcounty NAcode 001zip code 20004-1406

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

NANumber of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official Carol B. ThompsonDate 8/3/90

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- ☒ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.
- ☐ determined eligible for the National
Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.
- ☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.
- ☐ removed from the National Register.
- ☐ other, (explain:)

Patrick Andrews9/21/90

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use	
Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
<u>COMMERCE/Business</u>	<u>COMMERCE/Business</u>
<u>COMMERCE/Professional</u>	<u>COMMERCE/Professional</u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>

7. Description	
Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)	Materials (enter categories from instructions)
<u>LATE VICTORIAN/Richardsonian Romanesque</u>	foundation <u>Concrete</u>
<u> </u>	walls <u>Brownstone</u>
<u> </u>	<u>Brick</u>
<u> </u>	roof <u>Slate</u>
<u> </u>	other <u>Terra Cotta</u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☒ statewide ☐ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☐ A ☒ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G NA

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Architecture

1890-1905

1890

Community Planning and Development

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Significant Person

Brown, Glenn

Architect/Builder

Brown, Glenn

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

☒ See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

Previous documentation on file (NPS): NA

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☒ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

☒ See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data: NA

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one.

UTM References

A

1	8
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3	2	4	4	1	0
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4	3	0	7	0	8	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

D

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☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 30 and 31, Square 377, Washington, D.C. Plat Maps.

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire city lots historically associated with the property.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title William Bushong

organization NA

street & number Browns Court, S.E.

city or town Washington,

date 9/30/88

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Summary

The National Union Building at 918 F Street, N.W. is a narrow six-story steel frame, brownstone, and brick office building measuring 27 feet wide by 129 feet long. Built in the Romanesque Revival style in 1890, the structure is an imposing rockfaced brownstone commercial building capped by a molded shed-type slate roof. The alley facade is notable for its five-story oriels, which were added to provide ample light in the original office spaces. The exterior of the building is relatively unaltered with the exception of the installation of a 20th century projecting storefront on the ground level. The interior floor plan and finishes of the building are also largely intact and, remarkably, the original manually operated 1890 open-caged A. B. See elevator continues to service the building.

Construction materials

918 F Street, N.W. was built according to the best fireproof construction practices of the period. The building's structural frame is steel and iron clad with terra cotta. All floors, partitions, and stairs are also either iron, terra cotta, or brick. The stairway and elevator are located at the center of the building, encased from cellar to the roof by 18-inch brick walls. The principal exterior facade is constructed of warm colored brownstone and the remaining walls are red brick. The roof's structural system was also fireproof. Projecting I-bars were anchored into the frame at an obtuse angle to support metal rafters and the west party wall was built up to create a long triangular roof superstructure of brick and steel. Iron laths were riveted on the rafters to carry the slate shingles, which were attached to the roof structure by wires. A pyramidal roof section was added to the F Street side of the building and the side alley oriels were capped by hipped dormers, thus creating a molded silhouette in the roofline.

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Exterior Appearance

The F Street facade of the National Union Building is coursed brownstone accented by intricate foliated carvings and polychromatic stone bands. Its architect, Glenn Brown, visually divided the primary facade's design into three distinct zones. The first of these divisions, incorporating the first and second floors, is a rock faced pilastered arcade with foliated capitals and voisoirs with decorative carved archivolts. A deep recessed double door entry and large plate glass show window once filled the ground level arched openings. Polychromatic stone panels laid in a floral petal pattern divide the first and second floors. Recessed within the round arches of the arcade on the second level are two large semi-circular windows.

The second design zone on the main facade is defined by two sets of compound columns with foliated capitals that support a smooth brownstone frieze set within decorative bands of floral carvings. On the smooth surface the capital letters of the building's name, NATIONAL UNION BUILDING, are raised in brownstone. The fenestration for the third and fourth floors bow outward and are delineated by polished columns with foliated capitals resting on a rock faced coursed brownstone spandrel.

The upper design zone of the building, like the first two floors, is dominated by the rugged appearance of the rock faced coursed brownstone. The fifth floor fenestration is rectangular, deep-recessed, and ribbon-like in effect. The round arched windows on the sixth floor are flanked by columns with foliated capitals and rock faced voisoirs. Above the windows is a rock faced coursed spandrel surmounted by an arcaded attic story finished with elaborate naturalistic carvings. All of the fenestration of the primary facade have single glass plate panes without meeting rails.

The remaining walls of the building are flat common bond brick surfaces with the exception of the side alley facade. Brown utilized this permanent open space to its full advantage placing five projecting oriel on the east side of the narrow building. These projections provide increased light and ventilation to the office spaces within the building. The windows of this undulating facade have rock faced brownstone sills and lintels with simple one-over-one sash.

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The rear alley facade has six symmetrically arranged rows of windows--three to each floor. The second through the sixth floor have simple rectangular deep set openings that are decorated with flat arch brick lintels. The first floor fenestration has rough cut brownstone lintels and sills. All of the windows have one-over-one sash. Brown utilized the gradual slope of the site to place additional windows in the basement of the side alley facade and a service entry on the rear of the building. Originally the basement service entry had a segmental relieving arch, but today a steel beam supports the weight of the opening and the arch has been bricked in.

Interior Appearance

The plan of the National Union Building was laid out with a long side corridor on the east side of the building with a central staircase and elevator shaft. On the first floor a recessed porch entry provided access to double doors leading to the corridor passage and to the entrance of the National Union Fire Insurance Company offices. At the center of the hallway passage were two round arched openings delineating the staircase and elevator section. Each floor had a lavatory built into the rear of the central space behind the staircase. The rear wing of the first floor had four small offices flanking the corridor to the west and a larger office suite in the rear of the building. Each of the upper floors, levels two through six, had identical L-shaped office wings flanking the central staircase/elevator space with access off the long side passage. Two large office office suites, utilizing the full width of the building, were on the front and rear of the building. Eight smaller office spaces completed the mirror-like L-plan and were designed with connecting doorways. This design scheme allowed the offices to be used as a suite or separate smaller units.

The most elaborate architectural interior of 918 F Street was the office of the National Union Fire Insurance Company. This suite, located on the first floor at the entrance of the building, included wrought iron screens and "artistically carved and molded" oak counters and fittings. Although these furnishings have been removed, the original raised plasterwork of the walls and ceilings is extant. This plaster design is notable and suggests that the

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office space was custom designed by Brown. The enriched foliated rinceau plasterwork is reminiscent of Chicago architect Louis Sullivan's famous organic decorative motifs, but undoubtedly Brown's influence was Henry Hobson Richardson.¹

The remainder of the interior design of the National Union Building was simple in comparison to the expressive Richardsonian decor of the fire insurance company. The corridor floors were finished in white tile with a green and ochre border. The woodwork throughout the building employed simple bull's eye molding for its door and window surrounds and raised panel doors. The walls have plain finishes and did not use the intricate raised plasterwork of the first floor. The most decorative interior element, with the exception of the principal office suite, was the delicate wrought iron cage designed to house the manually operated A. B. See elevator.

Integrity Assessment

Exterior

The only appreciable alteration to the exterior of the building was the addition of Cobb's Shoestore storefront and the recent aluminum and glass infill of the recessed entrance on the street level facade. The brick and glass storefront addition projects approximately three feet out onto the sidewalk and is capped by storefront signage. Fortunately the original piers have not been damaged and this treatment would be reversible. The recessed entry has been infilled with a modern bronze anodized aluminum and glass, but the new door does not seriously diminish the overall integrity of the F Street facade. There are no other major discernible alterations to the exterior with the exception of the steel structural bracing of the basement delivery bay at the rear of the building.

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Interior

The overall interior integrity of the National Union Building is exceptional. The original floor plan and decorative finishes are intact largely because the fireproof construction employed standard 18-inch thick walls throughout the building. The difficulty of removing these walls has preserved the original office arrangement on many of the floors. Although partitions have been used on several floors to create modern office suites, this infill could easily be removed and the original plan restored. In addition, original door and window surrounds are intact throughout the building. Even the original steam heating radiators and fireplace mantels remain in many of the office rooms in the building. The highlight of the interior is the operative wrought iron caged elevator and iron staircase which appear as they did almost one hundred years ago. Together with the floor plan and interior finishes, the overall design integrity of the National Union Building is outstanding and vividly recalls the commercial life of downtown Washington in the late nineteenth century.

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NOTES--SECTION 7

¹Brown was a scholarly architect who produced his best work from the study of precedent. As leader of the American Institute of Architect's local chapter, Brown established an architectural library shortly after the organization's formation in 1887 and encouraged design research. In addition to subscriptions to all the major architectural journals, the chapter must have obtained the seminal work of Maria Griswold Van Rensselaer, Henry Hobson Richardson and His Work (1887) since Brown revered Richardson during his early career. See William Bushong, "Glenn Brown, the American Institute of Architects, and the Development of the Civic Core of Washington, D.C." (Ph.d. dissertation, George Washington University, 1988), especially chapter 1.

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Summary

The National Union Building is a contributing property in the Downtown Historic District (NR DOE/Owner Objection, October 18, 1984) and is individually eligible under Criteria B and C of the National Register of Historic Places criteria for evaluation for its strong associations with the career of noted Washington architect Glenn Brown and for its local architectural significance as an outstanding example of the commercial Romanesque Revival style. The building housed Brown's architectural office from 1890 to 1905, a period in which the architect's influence on the planning of Washington's civic core was formidable. It is the only extant property in Washington that directly represents his career achievements as an architect, civic activist, professional organizer, and historian. The building is also highly representative of the height of the Romanesque Revival movement in Washington and represents one of the city's most significant examples of commercial "Richardsonian Romanesque" design.

Glenn Brown (1854-1932)²

Glenn Brown was one of the most famous and respected Washington architects of his generation. Eighty years ago his name was synonymous with the architectural profession in the United States. Architects, editors of architectural journals and popular magazines, civic leaders, and politicians sought his counsel and respected his opinion as the voice of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). Today, scholars recognize Brown's influence as AIA secretary from 1899 to 1913 and refer to his writings as authoritative sources on a diverse range of topics, including the planning of Washington, the history of government architecture, and the development of the architectural profession. Brown's autobiography, Memories: A Winning Crusade to Revive George Washington's Vision of a Capital City (1931), is an important source for its observations of contemporary architects and political figures and for its accounts of historical events that shaped the monumental core of Washington.

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Born in Virginia in 1854 and raised on a North Carolina plantation, Brown took great pride in his southern heritage. His grandfather, Bedford Brown, had a long and distinguished career in politics and served as U.S. Senator from North Carolina from 1828 to 1841. Glenn Brown received a traditional classical education at Washington and Lee University and obtained his formal architectural training at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. After completing his studies at MIT, Brown was employed by Norcross Brothers, masterbuilders of Henry Hobson Richardson's designs. Brown's position with Norcross was paymaster and draftsman for the Cheney Building in Hartford, Connecticut. Soon after completion of the building in 1877, he returned home to Alexandria to work as a draftsman and construction supervisor for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. In 1880, the young architect opened an architectural office in Washington and subsequently began a diverse fifty-year career in the capital as an architect, author, civic activist, and professional organizer.

Brown practiced as an architect in Washington from 1880 to 1921. While the architect's records and drawings have been destroyed, citations from contemporary periodicals that have been verified by building permits document over seventy-five commissions for his firm in Washington alone. Structures in Virginia and North Carolina have also been identified. The majority of the buildings discovered date from the 1880s and 1890s. After 1900 only a handful of commissions have been discovered. In addition, very little is known about the firm of Glenn and Bedford Brown IV which practiced between 1907 and 1921. Of the seventy-five commissions in the District only fourteen buildings are known to be extant and retain sufficient integrity to represent Glenn Brown's architectural career in the city (see Appendix A).

Throughout his career Glenn Brown exhibited an ability to design buildings in the prevailing architectural fashions of the day. He soon established himself as a leading proponent of modern domestic architecture in the early 1880s, offering his clients workmanlike Richardsonian designs and advanced plumbing systems. The best known extant works of Brown's early career are the Simpson House (1886) fronting Logan Circle, and the National Union Insurance Building (1890) located at 918 F Street, N.W.

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Brown's historical study of American architecture, published between 1887 and 1897 in numerous articles in the American Architect and Building News influenced his personal choice of restrained Georgian and Federal classicism in the domestic architecture of his clients. For example, in 1893 he designed as "old New England style" residence for P. A. Ames (now demolished). By the end of the decade all of his work evolved to an austere classicism well-represented by such buildings as a 1898 Neo-Georgian house for Mrs. Joseph Beale, 2012 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W. Brown's conversion to classicism became increasingly evident in his work after his visit to the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1894, which made a profound impression on his thinking concerning civic art in Washington. However, Richardson's legacy remained a potent influence, as can be seen in several of his extant commercial and public buildings, such as the Washington School (1900) at 15th and Rosedale, N.E. and a warehouse building (1904) at 715-719 D Street, N.W. Moreover, Brown's rustic designs for park structures and buildings at the National Zoological Park (all demolished) powerfully echoed the rural imagery of Richardson's rustic architecture, particularly his collaborative work with Frederick Law Olmsted.

By the early twentieth century Brown designed almost exclusively in a classical idiom. Again direct experience with the work of an American master architect helped shape his design approach. In 1901-1902 Brown aided Charles F. McKim as superintendent for the McKim, Mead and White renovation of the White House. This opportunity to observe the New York architect at work and to act as his historical consultant and adviser on the project engendered respect and admiration of McKim's design skill and artistic taste. For example, a pair of houses designed for James D. McGuire in 1901-1903 on 16th Street, N.W. and a 1905 dwelling for David Moore on California Avenue, N.W. had an understated Georgian character highly reminiscent of the McKim, Mead and White commissions in the Back Bay area of Boston.

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In 1907 Bedford Brown IV joined his father in his practice. Their first known collaborative effort was a handsome classical palatial house for Mrs. Joseph Beale on Sheridan Circle that today serves as the Egyptian embassy. Another important commission that represents the best work of the firm of Brown and Brown was the Dumbarton Bridge on Q Street (1913-1915). Popularly known as Buffalo Bridge because of its four impressive buffalos, sculpted by A. Phimister Proctor, this commission received widespread local praise and national recognition for its design excellence. In 1921 Brown dissolved the partnership with his son to become an architectural adviser to the U.S. Marine Corps and spent the remainder of his active career developing plans for the Quantico Marine Base in Virginia. These schemes were not implemented because of the lack of construction funds.

Glenn Brown achieved national fame as an author with the publication of his two volume study, History of the United States Capitol, in 1900 and 1903. The two-volume study established the Washington architect as a national expert on the history of government architecture and the planned origins of the capital. Brown's assessment of L'Enfant's intent for the capital in the first volume of this book impressed the Senate Park Commission and contributed to the revival of the French engineer's 1791 city design in the commission's 1901-1902 comprehensive plan for the capital. Foreign reception to the books was equally complimentary and led to Brown's induction as an honorary member of the British, French, Italian and Belgian architectural societies. In 1915 he produced a historic structures report for the AIA, The Octagon, which became a classic work of its genre. In addition to these major works, Brown wrote over a hundred articles for professional journals and popular magazines. The topics of these articles ranged from sanitary engineering, city planning and architectural history to professional ethics, fees, and standards for practice. Brown also edited and compiled the Proceedings of the AIA for 15 years, and produced a number of outstanding topical monographs from convention papers. The most important of these works was Papers Relating to the Improvement of the City of Washington published in 1900, a compilation of planning papers for the central core of Washington that contained as John Reys has observed, the "seeds of ideas later to take root in the minds of the official Senate Park Commission."³

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As a civic activist Brown epitomized the crusader's zeal and energy that President Theodore Roosevelt infused into the cultural life of Washington at the turn of the century. Brown orchestrated the important AIA campaigns between 1900 and 1913 that advanced the City Beautiful movement in the capital. During his fifteen years as AIA secretary, Brown became a trusted fine arts counselor to Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William H. Taft. During this period he also engineered AIA sponsorship of the Senate Park Commission in 1901 and directed the lobbying campaign that led to the enactment of legislation establishing the U. S. Commission of Fine Arts in 1910.

Glenn Brown's role in the AIA campaigns that secured sites for the Agriculture Building in 1904, the Grant Memorial in 1907, and the Lincoln Memorial in 1913 has received attention in planning histories of Washington, most notably, John Reys's Monumental Washington and Frederick Gutheim's Worthy of the Nation. His commitment to the organizational development of the American architectural profession was also noteworthy. Brown was instrumental in the founding of the Washington Chapter of the AIA in 1887 and guided that organization's professional activities for nearly three decades. Brown's most significant contributions to the national organization of the architectural profession included establishing the AIA national headquarters in Washington; creating a national AIA archives and library; founding the first journal of the Institute; and greatly increasing the membership of the organization. During his tenure as secretary, his prolific writing widely disseminated AIA ethics and standards for professional practice, architectural competitions, and educational requirements of the qualified architect to both a professional and lay audience. Brown so effectively promoted the AIA and its causes that by 1913 the Institute enjoyed an organizational status analagous to the American Bar Association or American Medical Association.

In 1925 Brown retired in Washington and resided for the remainder of his life at his Corcoran Courts apartment preparing his autobiography, Memories. His health deteriorated and prompted frequent automobile trips to the Virginia shore or mountains to restore his condition. He became gravely ill in 1931 and while on vacation at Old Point Comfort in Virginia succumbed to a long battle with respiratory disease and died in Buxton Hospital in Newport News on April 22, 1932. He was buried at Rock Creek Cemetery in Washington, D. C.

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918 F Street, N.W.

The address of 918 F Street, N.W. remains the most important property in Washington associated with the career of Glenn Brown. The building was the architect's office between 1890 and 1905, Brown's most prolific period as an author and the height of his career as a professional organizer and city planning activist. Brown's other office addresses included 607 Louisiana Avenue, N.W. (1880-1889), 806 17th Street, N.W. (1905-1920), and 1502 H Street, N.W. (1921-1926). All of these office buildings have been demolished. Brown's District residences between 1880 and 1932, all located in the northwest sector of the city, also have either been demolished, altered to the extent that they no longer retain historic integrity, or the period of association was too brief to impart significance. (see Appendix B).

Brown's office in the National Union Building was the hub of his professional activities in the 1890s. In this decade Brown's support of an intensive lobbying campaign, led by Chicago architect Daniel Burnham, helped the AIA gain implementation of the 1893 Tarsney Act. This statute gave the Secretary of the Treasury the discretionary power to award private architects with commissions for major government buildings. Brown then intensified his political activities on behalf of the architectural profession and in 1895 masterminded the organization of a national fine arts lobby called the Public Art League. This organization was formed for the sole purpose of advocating legislation that would establish an expert commission of architect and artists to advise the federal government with its selection of works of architecture, art, and sculpture. The legislation was introduced in the Senate by Francis G. Newlands of Nevada in 1897 but died in committee. Yet this national initiative established Brown as a prominent advocate of the architectural profession and led to his election as AIA secretary. Once installed as a national AIA officer, Brown began his energetic crusade to revive Pierre Charles L'Enfant's 1791 plan for Washington for which he is best remembered today.

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Between 1890 and 1905 the rooms of Brown's architectural office on the second floor of 918 F Street, N.W. was the scene of many meetings that were significant to the planning history of the capital. Brown's papers indicate that his architectural office was an important stopover for architects and artists promoting national fine arts legislation. Although minutes of these meetings were not recorded, it can be inferred from his correspondence that Brown's office in this fifteen year period was a venue for meetings of local and national AIA leaders and fine arts activists. After 1899 when the AIA obtained a lease for a national headquarters in Washington, Brown began to spend his mornings at his office and afternoons working on AIA business at the Octagon. The AIA's Washington Chapter, which occupied a room in the office suite of architect Robert Stead at 906 F Street (now demolished) also moved into the Octagon in 1899. In the 1890s Brown routinely utilized both his office and the chapter's room for professional and civic improvement meetings. The Cosmos Club, then located on Lafayette Square, provided an appropriate atmosphere for luncheon and dinner meetings and for entertaining important guests visiting the city. After 1900 the Octagon became the primary location for the architectural profession's activities in the city and a center for fine arts lobbying in Washington. However, Brown's office on F Street remained an important address because of the architect's considerable professional influence.⁴

"Richardsonian Romanesque" Architecture in Washington, D. C.

One important facet of Henry Hobson Richardson's legacy to American architecture was the widespread revival of Romanesque design. Stemming from his widely admired commissions for Boston's Trinity Church (1872-1877), Chicago's Marshall Field Wholesale Store (1885-1887), and Pittsburgh's Allegheny County Buildings (1883-1888), Richardson's design influence affected every major American city between 1880 and 1900.⁵ Washington architects and builders followed national design trends and fully embraced the revival of the Romanesque style by the mid-1880s. It was hoped that Richardson's Romanesque mode would at last provide the capital with its "American style."⁶ The widespread popularity of the Romanesque in

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the city can be explained by several factors. Locally a strong architectural tradition of work in the round-arched *Rundbogenstil* existed. During the 1860s and 1870s Adolf Cluss, with great acclaim, had adapted the German Romanesque to numerous schools, markets, and other municipal and commercial buildings. In addition, James G. Hill's Auditor's Building Complex (1879) at 14th and Independence Streets, S.W. was a conspicuous public building which utilized the style's simple forms and repetitive round arches.⁷ However, Romanesque architecture remained just one of many picturesque Victorian styles built in Washington before Richardson's now demolished Nicholas L. Anderson house (1883) focused the attention of the city's architects and builders on his interpretation of the style.

According to Glenn Brown the completion of the Anderson residence initiated a design transition in architectural fashion in Washington away from the prevailing Queen Anne modes to the Romanesque. Richardson's John Hay-Henry Adams (1884-1886) and Benjamin H. Warder (1885-1888) houses continued and intensified this movement. Brown recalled in 1896 that "the architectural profession was influenced in Washington, as in all parts of the country, by Richardson's work, and for eight or ten years we have had what are called Romanesque buildings, a few good, a large number mediocre, and the majority very bad."⁸

The impact of Richardson's influence in Washington between 1880 and 1900 remains in evidence. Although some exemplary Romanesque Revival buildings from this period have been lost, such as J.C. Cady's National Presbyterian Church (1889) and Nathan Wyeth's Lemon Building (1891), several important commercial and public buildings remain extant.⁹ James G. Hill's Atlantic Building (1887-1888) and Riggs Bank (1891) and Glenn Brown's National Union Insurance Building (1890) located on the 900 block of F Street form a highly significant architectural enclave reflective of Washington's best commercial Romanesque work produced in this period.¹⁰ The old Post Office on Pennsylvania Avenue designed by Willoughby J. Edbrooke, completed in 1899, is also a conspicuous local reminder of the large scale Romanesque Revival buildings erected by the federal government across the country in this period. Aside from these large public and commercial buildings, the flowering of the Romanesque Revival was most evident in the great numbers of fine residences built in this style between 1880 and 1900.¹¹

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The largest Richardson-inspired design Glenn Brown executed in Washington was the 1890 National Union Building. The predominant building material was "Hummelstown brownstone" quarried in Pennsylvania, and the structure today ranks as the city's most outstanding example of the commercial "Richardsonian" Romanesque Revival executed in brownstone. Most notable are the polychromatic ornamental stonework and rubbed textured surfaces similar to Richardson's intricate stonework at Boston's Trinity Church (1872-1877) and Austin Hall at Cambridge, Massachusetts (1881-1884). Brown specially designed the foliated caps, bases, and spandrel panels of the National Union Building. This special attention to the ornamentation of a building had been standard procedure in Richardson's office. Brown, who had prepared the shop drawings for the Cheney Building, adopted this design approach in his own architectural practice. He also utilized the zonal design composition employed by Richardson in his early commercial buildings, such as the Hayden Building in Boston and the Cheney store and offices in Hartford.¹²

Brown carefully designed the exterior of his buildings to complement their sites. He arranged the National Union Building's narrow F Street facade into three strong two-story horizontal zones with simple fenestration to create an imposing commercial front. The remaining facades with the exception of the party wall were also thoughtfully executed. Brown strongly believed that an architect should pay attention to the aesthetic character of all parts of a building. In an 1907 article written for Chicago's Inland Architect, Brown satirized architects who lavishly designed storefronts and commonly omitted attention to the overall appearance of commercial buildings. He criticized this design oversight and compared it to a gentleman attending a formal ball without a back in his tuxedo.¹³

The owner of the building was the National Union Insurance Company which occupied the first floor of the property and rented the remaining five floors of office space. The president of this company at the time the building was erected was Samuel H. Bacon. Little is known about Bacon except that

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he began his career in the family wholesale grocery business in 1874 (7th and Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.). The National Union Fire Insurance Company (643 Louisiana Avenue, N.W.), was founded in 1865 by his father Samuel Bacon, Jr. (1810-1887). The elder Samuel Bacon referred to by an early Washington historian as one of the capital's "merchant princes" had commissioned Brown to design his Romanesque Revival house at 1318 Rhode Island Avenue in 1884. His son must have known of Glenn Brown's talent and hired the architect to design the new office building for the insurance company.¹⁴ The National Union Building began construction in February, 1890, and was completed early in 1891 at a cost of \$65,000. Curiously, the builder of the structure was neither recorded on the building permit nor identified in a newsarticle about its construction in March, 1890. However, Washington contractors, A. J. Fisher, Richardson and Burgess, and George W. Corbett are likely candidates as the builder because one of these contracting firms usually erected Brown's commercial work in this period.¹⁵

The National Union Fire Insurance Company occupied the first floor of 918 F Street until the mid-1940s and rented the upper floors to patent attorneys, real estate agents, jewelers, and watch repairers. Today Cobb's Shoestore utilizes the old insurance company's space and the upper floors remain in use and are leased to a variety of professional firms, including architects, non-profit organizations, and attorneys.

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²All biographical information in the following essay was drawn from Bushong, "Glenn Brown, the American Institute of Architects, and the Development of the Civic Core of Washington, D.C."; see also William B. Bushong; Robinson, Judith; and Mueller, Julie. A Centennial History of the Washington Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. (Washington: The Washington Architectural Foundation Press, 1987).

³John Reps, Monumental Washington: The Planning and Development of the Capital Center (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 85.

⁴Glenn Brown's personal, office, and professional papers are located at the AIA Archives, Washington, D. C. Appointments and references to meetings at 918 F Street are too numerous to list here. See Bushong, "Glenn Brown, the American Institute of Architects, and the Development of the Civic Core of Washington, D.C.", especially chapter 3, for discussion of Brown activities in this period. Figures who visited Brown included national AIA presidents and board members such as William A. Boring, Robert S. Peabody, and Charles McKim and political aides such as Charles Moore. A caricature of the architect published in the Architect and Builder's Journal (Baltimore) 2 (December 1900) reflected the open character of Brown's office in this period. The illustration depicted the architect busily drawing away at a drafting board. Underneath the board was a jug of ink, symbolic of his prolific writing. The door of the office proudly announced Brown's name, the address of his office, and his professional title as architect. On the wall was a diploma identifying Brown as AIA secretary. Ink dripped from the table and a cigarette dangled from the architect's mouth. The scene well-captured Brown's frenetic work pace and his well known habit of chain smoking cigarettes. In addition, the cartoon depicted a wide open office door, symbolizing the busy and public character of his office.

⁵For an interpretative overview of the impact of Richardson's architectural career, see James F. O'Gorman, H. H. Richardson: Architectural Forms for an American Society (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987. O'Gorman also provides a comprehensive chronologically arranged bibliography of works on Richardson published up to 1987.

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⁶For a discussion of the influence of Richardson's architecture on the design of both Washington's public and private buildings and the perception locally that it would become the "American style," see Appleton P. Clark, "History of Architecture in Washington," pp. 500-502. In John C. Proctor, ed. Washington Past and Present: A History. 5 vols. (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1930).

⁷For information on Cluss, see Tanya Edwards Beauchamp, "Adolf Cluss: An Architect in Washington during the Civil War and Reconstruction," Records of the Columbia Historical Society, (1971-1972), pp. 338-358; and for material on Hill's career, see Margaret G. Davis, "James G. Hill: Victorian Architect, Washington, D. C." (M.A. Thesis, University of Virginia, 1981).

⁸Glenn Brown, "The Domestic Architecture of Washington," Engineering News 7(June 1896), p. 447.

⁹See James Goode, Capital Losses (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1979).

¹⁰For a description and evaluation of these buildings, see Tanya Edwards Beauchamp, "Downtown Historic District," National Register Nomination, June 23, 1983. (On File National Register of Historic Places, Washington, D. C.).

¹¹Brown, "The Domestic Architecture of Washington," pp. 453-455. Brown did not mince words in evaluating the design of what he considered poor Romanesque design. In the article he noted: "The abominations in the way of ill-proportioned structures with crude and meaningless details are legion, the designer usually contenting himself with several semi-circular arches, and grotesque carvings, as sufficient warrant for the title Romanesque."

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¹²Reference to Brown's customized design of the National Union Building's decorative stonework is made in a contemporary description of the proposed building, see "National Union Building," Evening Star (Washington), March 8, 1890. For discussion and illustrations of Richardson's zonal design scheme for Hayden and Cheney Buildings, see Jeffrey Ochsner, H. H. Richardson: Complete Architectural Works (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1983), pp. 150-154.

¹³Glenn Brown, "Architecture and Dress Reform," Inland Architect and News Record 50 (August 1907), p. 17.

¹⁴"The Rambler," Sunday Star (Washington), March 18, 1917.

¹⁵See Bushong, "Glenn Brown, the American Institute of Architects, and the Development of the Civic Core of Washington, D.C., pp. 295-301.

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APPENDIX A

LIST OF EXTANT BUILDINGS DESIGNED BY GLENN BROWN WITH ARCHITECTURAL
INTEGRITY LOCATED IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

T.P. Simpson house (1883), 1324 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
(Logan Circle Historic District).

T.P. Simpson house (1886), 1301 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.
(Logan Circle Historic District).

James C. McGuire house (1889 and 1909), 1732 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
(Massachusetts Avenue Historic District).

National Union Insurance Building (1890), 918 F Street, N.W.
(Downtown Historic District).

Glenwood Cemetery chapel (1892), off Lincoln Avenue, N.E.
(Designation pending).

W.H. Finckel house (1893), 1625 S Street, N.W.
(No action anticipated).

E. Donaldson Wilcox house (1895), 1760 Corcoran Street, N.W.
(No action anticipated).

Mrs. Joseph Beale house (1898), 2012 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
(Massachusetts Avenue Historic District).

Webb School, 14th and Rosedale Streets, N.E.
(Evaluation Pending, D. C. Schools Survey Project).

McGuire houses (1901-1903), 1834-1836 16th Street, N.W.
(16th Street Historic District)

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Hooper Estate Warehouse (1904), 715-719 D Street, N.W.
(Pennsylvania Avenue Historic District)

David Moore house (1905), 2149 California Avenue, N.W.
(No action anticipated).

Mrs. Joseph Beale house, 2301 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
(Massachusetts Avenue Historic District)

Dumbarton Bridge (1913-1915), Q Street, N.W.
(Individual Designation)

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APPENDIX B

GLENN BROWN, 1880-1932. LOCATION AND CONDITION OF OFFICES AND RESIDENCES IN
THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA AND VIRGINIA.

	<u>OFFICE</u>	<u>RESIDENCE</u>
1880- 1882	607 Louisiana Avenue, N.W. [Razed]	115-117 S. Fairfax Street Alexandria, Va. [Extant in NHL District].
1883	Same	1728 10th Street, N.W. [Extant-Altered/Vinyl Siding].
1884- 1890	Same	213 Fairfax Street Alexandria, Va. [Extant in NHL District].
1891- 1892	918 F Street, N.W. [Extant]	2023 O Street, N.W. [Extant-Altered].
1893- 1895	Same	1227 I Street, N.W. [Razed].
1896	Same	1538 I Street, N.W. [Razed].
1897- 1899	Same	1719 Corcoran Street, N.W. [Extant/Retains Integrity].
1900- 1905	Same	2009 I Street, N.W. [Razed].

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1905- 806 17th Street, N.W.
1920 [Razed].

1925 I Street, N.W.
[Razed].

1921- 1502 H Street, N.W.
1926 [Razed].

Same

1927- 806 17th Street, N.W.
1932 [Razed].

401 23rd Street, N.W. #705
[Razed].

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