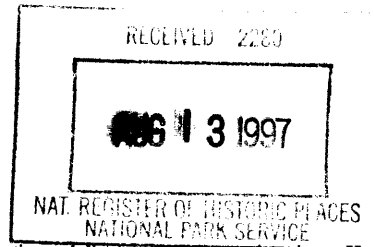


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and 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 any 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).

1. Name of Property

historic name 3901 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 3901 Connecticut Avenue, N.W. not for publication N/A

city or town Washington vicinity N/A

state District of Columbia code DC zip code 20008 county N/A code N/A

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 Benjamin Cron

Date 8/4/97

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 commenting or other official _____

Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of Keeper Edson H. Beall

Date of Action 9/11/97

☒ entered in the National Register
(See continuation sheet).

☐ determined eligible for
National Register

(See continuation sheet).

☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register

☐ removed from the National Register

☐ other (explain): _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property (Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property: Apartment Buildings in Washington, D.C. 1880-1945

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

Cat: Domestic Sub: multiple dwelling

Current Functions

Cat: Domestic Sub: multiple dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

EARLY 20TH CENTURY
Tudor Revival

Materials

foundation _____
roof _____
walls BRICK
STONE: Limestone
other _____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 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 a 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.

Areas of Significance

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance 1927

Significant Dates 1927

Significant Person _____

Cultural Affiliation _____

Architect/Builder Architect: Santmyers, George T.

Developer/builder: Bralove, Harry M.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- ☐ 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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other

Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

1 18 321400 4311940 3 _____

2 _____ 4 _____

____ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Stephen Callcott / Architectural Historian

organization D.C. Historic Preservation Division

date January 1997

street & number 614 H Street, NW, Room 305

telephone (202) 727-7360

city or town Washington

state D.C. 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 Chevy Chase Land Company

street & number 8401 Connecticut Avenue

telephone _____

city Chevy Chase

state MD zip 20015

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 the 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 Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024 -0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 1 **3901 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.**
Name of property
Washington, D.C.
County and State

The apartment building at 3901 Connecticut Avenue, N.W. is a five-story structure with a flat roof, clad in red brick with cast stone detailing. The footprint is roughly U-shaped, with a deep courtyard facing Connecticut Avenue and a small wing projecting off the rear. The building's facade is symmetrical; each of the two projections on the front have enclosed projecting porches. The recessed entry has a three-sided projecting oriel bay centered over the entrance doors that extends beyond the cornice into a tower.

The building is a good example of 1920s architectural eclecticism, with historically-derived Tudor Revival ornamentation applied to a contemporary building form. The windows are six-over-six wood sash and are used both singly and paired in alternating bays on the front facade. The front elevation of each wing was designed with the following fenestration pattern: A-B-A-C-C-A-B-A, where A = a single window, B = a paired window, and C = four eight pane casement windows. Only one apartment unit retains the original C windows; the remainder have been replaced with sash windows. The two banks of C windows in each wing are contained in a projection which has brick quoins, precast window hoods, and a decorated parapet with contrasting precast quoins, an heraldic shield inset panel, and finials. The parapets on each side of the projecting bays are crenelated. The building's detailing is particularly elaborate on the oriel bay and tower atop the building entrance located at the back of the entry courtyard. The three entrance doors have arched ashlar surrounds flanked by small square, hooded windows. The three-sided oriel bay, on floors two through five, has precast quoins and paired casement windows. The bay culminates in a square tower with precast quoining and decorative inset panels with heraldic shield motifs and finials.

As was typical for the best apartment buildings in this period, the high degree of ornamentation is continued through into the vestibule and lobby. The lobby is a large room measuring approximately 18' x 63.' It has a grayish-tan marble floor with green marble edging. The north side of the lobby contains a reception desk and telephone switchboard; the south side contains a decorative fireplace surround with a plaster coat of arms above. The mantelpiece is derived from 18th century English prototypes. On each side of the fireplace is a mirrored door; the left door leads to an office, the right door is false. Atop the doors on the fireplace wall and above the companion doors on the opposite wall are plaster panels with leaves and flowers in an Art Deco style. The ceiling is finished with plaster panels and a cornice with heraldic shields, all in an English derived style. The ceiling panels were originally mirrored, but have been painted. Six marble stairs, with decorative wrought iron and brass railings, lead up to the elevators and first floor hallway. An arcade separates the lower lobby from the first floor hall. The lobby remains essentially intact to its original appearance.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 2 **3901 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.**
Name of property
Washington, D.C.
County and State

The apartment units are organized off double-loaded corridors, and include a mixture of efficiencies, one, two and three bedroom units. Individual apartment doors are grained to resemble mahogany. Corridor halls are laid in terrazzo which matches the color of the marble lobby floor. The hallway walls are comprised of plaster applied to hollow terracotta tile, and are painted and scored to resemble stone. The plan of the building remains essentially intact to its original construction, however, several of the largest units were subdivided in the 1930s. Originally, there were 58 units, today there are 66.

The side and rear elevations are utilitarian, with paired and triple paired six-over-six windows. The rear elevation contains seven garage doors serving a basement parking garage.

The building occupies approximately 60% of Lot 2 in Square 2234; the lot measures 240' fronting Connecticut Avenue and is 170' deep. The grounds include formal and informal landscape features. The entrance courtyard is a formal, architecturally-defined space, which focuses on the entry tower. It includes a rectangular planting bed in the center of the walk, with a clipped yew hedge and roses, and planting beds on each side of the walk with a variety of plantings. The front and south side of the building have informal landscaped spaces, comprised of lawns and foundation plantings. These areas are important in establishing the building's suburban imagery. The rear of the lot behind the building has a gravel parking area for the building's tenants.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 1 **3901 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.**
Name of property
Washington, D.C.
County and State

The building at 3901 Connecticut Avenue is located on Square 2234, which, like much of northwest Washington, remained undeveloped open land until the early 20th century. While included within the boundaries of William King Ryan's 1890s subdivision "Fernwood," the land remained unimproved. Much of the surrounding area was purchased in 1903 by Edward J. Stellwagen, a trustee for the Newlands Company, who formally transferred its ownership to the Newlands Company in 1910.

The Newlands Company (incorporated in Nevada) and its related local entity, the Chevy Chase Land Company, were created by the heirs of William Sharon (1821-1885), one of the partners in Nevada's Comstock Lode. Francis Griffith Newlands (1848-1917) married Sharon's daughter and helped Sharon build his real estate empire that consisted of holdings in Arizona, California and Nevada. In 1890, three years before he became a congressman from Nevada, Newlands formed the Chevy Chase Land Company, with the intent of developing an exclusive suburb just north of the District of Columbia in Maryland. Through intermediaries, Newlands spent approximately \$1.5 million buying more than 1,700 acres of farmland between Calvert Street in the District of Columbia and to a point well north of his projected Chevy Chase residential development. The Chevy Chase Land Company went on to spend an equal sum grading and building bridges along Connecticut Avenue and installing an electric streetcar line.

As was their practice, Newland's real estate companies held their land holdings until the demand for development greatly increased their value. The enactment of zoning regulations in 1920 restricted apartment building construction in northwest Washington to Connecticut Avenue, serving both to protect the surrounding subdivisions from encroachment and to increase the value of land on the avenue. The subdivision of square 2234 began in 1922, when the Newlands Company began selling off parcels of land for development by others. In 1922, the Tilden Hall apartment building was constructed at the corner of Connecticut Avenue and Tilden Street. 3901 Connecticut Avenue, the second parcel to be developed on the square, was constructed in 1927. The enormous Broadmoor apartment building was constructed in 1928 at Connecticut and Quebec Street. In 1940, the land around Melvin Hazen Run, a tributary of Rock Creek, was purchased and transferred to the National Park Service. Two large apartment buildings on either side of Melvin Hazen Run were constructed in 1949.

3901 was constructed by developer Harry M. Bralove, a prominent builder of apartment houses and hotels during the 1920s. Bralove hired the prolific George T. Santmyers (1889-1960) to design the building, which cost approximately \$350,000 to build. Santmyers was responsible for the design of 440 apartment buildings

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 2 **3901 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.**
Name of property
Washington, D.C.
County and State

in Washington between 1916-1960; his buildings from the 1920s are uniformly distinguished by their spacious floor plans and handsome use of historical detailing, most often in the Colonial Revival.

3901 Connecticut Avenue illustrates several important trends in the evolution of apartment building design. It represents the popularization of the apartment building in the 1920s, during which time apartment living became much more widespread for the middle class. The units are spacious, the exterior is handsomely detailed, and the amenities offered -- modern kitchens and bathrooms, sun porches, garage parking, location along a streetcar line, an impressive building facade and public lobby, and a suburban setting convenient to but removed from the downtown commercial district -- were all designed to appeal to Washington's growing middle class. The finer apartment buildings of the period, such as 3901 Connecticut Avenue, provided thousands of middle class residents with a respectable and less expensive alternative to homeownership.

The modified U-shaped plan, with projections, illustrates how Santmyers successfully manipulated the massing and plan of the building to provide the maximum amount of light and air to the apartment units. Almost all the units at 3901 have two exposures, providing improved ventilation, natural light and views. The front courtyard not only provides interior units with greater light, but creates a handsome ceremonial entry into the building. The architect created a dramatic entry experience by concentrating the most elaborate architectural ornamentation on the entry and its impressive tower, and through the use of a formal entry courtyard and ornamented lobby. The use of the front courtyard and small areas of green space at the front and sides of the building provided a more suburban feeling residence than could be provided by downtown apartment buildings.

While individually distinguished in its design, the significance of 3901 is enhanced by its location on Connecticut Avenue, a unique linear concentration of apartment buildings along a major transportation corridor. This concentration was made possible by the extension of the streetcar line to Chevy Chase around 1900, and the enactment of zoning laws in 1920 which restricted apartment building construction to the avenue. With interruptions only at the low-scaled commercial islands, Connecticut Avenue from Florida Avenue to Chevy Chase Circle is dominated by well-designed, attractively-sited apartment buildings.

While having attractive landscape features associated with it, 3901 Connecticut Avenue is quite different from the garden apartments which were becoming popular in this period. At Tilden Gardens, Cathedral

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 3 3901 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.

Name of property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Mansions, and Hampshire Gardens (all listed on the National Register of Historic Places), these multiple building complexes were designed to be viewed as objects in a park or garden-like setting. Each facade of these buildings received equal architectural emphasis, and the land around the buildings was landscaped as part of a comprehensive plan. In contrast, 3901 was designed to be seen exclusively from Connecticut Avenue, with a highly decorated front facade and utilitarian side and rear elevations. The green spaces at the front and side of the building were important elements in establishing the building's suburban setting as viewed from its primary elevation on Connecticut Avenue.

Developer Harry Bralove

Harry Bralove was born in Philadelphia and graduated from Ohio State University and the Georgetown Law School. After serving under Franklin Roosevelt when Roosevelt was Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Bralove became a Senate reporter and subsequently opened his own law firm. He founded a construction company in 1926, with Edward C. Ernst and John J. McInerney as junior partners. 3901 Connecticut Avenue, built in 1927, was one of the company's first projects. Bralove sold 3901 Connecticut Avenue in July 1929 to a couple who were quickly unable to meet the requirements of the Deed of Trust held by Bralove. The property was purchased by the Chevy Chase Land Company at a foreclosure sale in 1930. The company constructed several apartment houses on Connecticut Avenue before beginning construction of one of its most important projects, the Shoreham Hotel at Connecticut and Calvert Street, in 1930.

Architect George T. Santmyers, Jr.

George Santmyers (1889-1960) practiced architecture in Washington, D.C. for over 40 years. He remains one of the city's most prolific and important architects. While Santmyers is credited with the design of banks, commercial buildings, automobile garages and private residences, the majority of his work consists of apartment buildings. After apprenticeships in several architectural offices, Santmyers opened his own office while in his early twenties. His earliest known commissions in the city were rowhouses dating from 1910. He continued to design until just before his death at the age of 72 in 1960.

The number of apartment commissions executed by Santmyers -- approximately 440 -- is extraordinary. Working in a variety of styles his work is uniformly of a high quality with efficient plans. His early work is traditional, with classically inspired architectural elements; 3901 reflects this period. In the early 1930s, his work remains largely classical, but with art deco stylizing and the incorporation of some modernist elements. The majority of his work, from the mid 1930s through the 1950s, employs pure expressions of the moderne and International styles.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 1 3901 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Name of property
Washington, D.C.
County and State

District of Columbia Plat Map Books:

Real Estate Plat-Book of Washington, District of Columbia, Volume 3, Plate 17 (Philadelphia, 1894)
[D.C. Historical Society], 1894.

Baist's Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Washington, District of Columbia, Volume 3, Plans 27 and 28
(Philadelphia) [D.C. Historical Society], 1907, 1925, 1937, 1945, 1957.

Plats to Designate Parcels of Land in the District of Columbia for the Purposes of Assessment and Taxation
[Surveyor's Office, District of Columbia], 1906.

Unpublished Materials:

DC Apartment Buildings Survey, 1992. Property Survey Records. [DC Historic Preservation Division]

DC Historic Structures Database. George T. Santmyers, 1995. [DC Historic Preservation Division]

National Register of Historic Places, Multiple Property Documentation: *Apartment Buildings in Washington, D.C.: 1880-1945*, 1993.

National Register of Historic Places, Nomination Form: *Carnegie Institution of Washington Geophysical Laboratory*, 1996

National Register of Historic Places, Nomination Form: *Cleveland Park Historic District*, 1987.

National Register of Historic Places, Nomination Form: *Springland*, 1989.

Published Materials:

Atwood, Albert W. "The Romance of Senator Francis G. Newlands and Chevy Chase." Records of the Columbia Historical Society, 1966-1968. Washington, DC: 1969.

Atwood, Albert W. Francis G. Newlands, A Builder of the Nation. Washington, DC: 1969.

Bushong, William and Peira M. Weiss. "Rock Creek Park, Emerald of the Capital City." Washington History, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Fall/Winter 1990-91).

French, Roderick S. "Chevy Chase Villiage in the Context of the National Suburban Movement, 1870-1900." Records of the Columbia Historical Society, 1973-74. Washington, DC: 1976.

Goode, James M. Best Addresses. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 10 Page 1 3901 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Name of property
Washington, D.C.
County and State

Verbal Boundary Description:

The building is located on lot 2 in Square 2234, just south of the intersection of Connecticut Avenue and Tilden Street in the northwest quadrant of Washington, D.C.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes the original lot on which 3901 Connecticut Avenue was constructed.