

945

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). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners – Local 132  
other names The Carpenters Building

2. Location

street & number 1010 10<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W./1001 K Street, N.W.  not for publication  
city or town Washington, D.C.  vicinity  
state District of Columbia code DC county \_\_\_\_\_ code 001 zip code 20001

3. 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments).  
[Signature] \_\_\_\_\_ Date 7/23/03  
State or Federal agency and bureau National Historic Preservation Service

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:  
 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): \_\_\_\_\_

[Signature] \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action 9/17/03

The Carpenters Building  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**  
0

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/Business  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

COMMERCE/TRADE/Business  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY  
AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/Chicago  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

foundation Concrete  
walls Brick  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof Not known  
other Limestone  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

The Carpenters Building  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
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 pattern of our history.
- B** Property 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)

Property is:

- 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)

### Area of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce  
Industry  
Architecture

### Period of Significance

1926-1949

### Significant Dates

1926

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

### Cultural Affiliation

### Architect/Builder

O. Harvey Miller

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

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

### Previous documentation on files (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:

The Carpenters Building  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 5,000 square feet

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

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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 Elizabeth Jo Lampl  
Organization Lampl Associates date 4/1999; updated 7/03  
street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Bethesda State Maryland zip code 20816

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

### Maps

- X A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- X A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

### Photographs

- X 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 SHPO or FPO)

name 1001 K Street Associates, Zuckerman Gravelly Management, Inc.  
street & number 2 Wisconsin Circle telephone 301 657-8300  
city or town Chevy Chase state Maryland zip code 20815

**Paperwork Reduction 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

The Carpenters Building

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 7 Page 1

## Description Summary:

The 1926 Carpenters Building, at 1010 10th Street, N.W., occupies Lot 811 (old Lots 1 and 2) of Square 342, at the northwest corner of 10th and K Streets. Designed by Otho Harvey Miller, it is a highly notable structure in the east end of the downtown--an area that has seen substantial demolition of historic properties. D.C. Permit No.10466 (April 22, 1926) identifies O. Harvey Miller as the architect and James L. Parsons, Jr. as the builder. The building was completed in March 1927. The original drawings are reportedly in the possession of the current owner, Barry Zuckennan Associates, which received them from Carpenters Local No.132 when it sold the building in 1980.<sup>1</sup>

The Carpenters Building is an eight-story office structure with penthouse, 50 feet wide by 100 feet deep, constructed in the Commercial style, also known as the "Sullivanesque" style because it was developed and popularized by Louis Sullivan in his tall office buildings of the 1888-1900 period. The Carpenters Building is the direct descendant of Sullivan's late 19th-century structures, which manifested some of the earliest uses of curtain wall construction. The 1926 Carpenters Building rests upon Sullivan's philosophy that the tall office building be conceived as a block, with tripartite division into base, window wall, and cornice. Like its predecessors, the Carpenters Building exhibits Sullivan's axiom that form follows function. Unlike Sullivan's work, however, which depends on the interplay between piers and spandrels and upon the energy of luxuriant decoration, the Carpenters Building has a decidedly vertical orientation (given its smooth window wall and window proportions) and omits decoration as the articulation of the underlying skeleton. It is, therefore, representative of a more restrained era of office building construction in the District, but nonetheless characterized by the three-part organization of the block and a highly pronounced attic and cornice.

+

## General Description:

At 24,000 square feet, the Carpenters Building has the footprint of a rectangle, minus a narrow, 8' 41" "open court" sliced out of the western end of the building approximately 56 feet back from the front wall. Structurally, the building appears to consist of a concrete frame<sup>2</sup> with 18"-thick curtain walls at the first-floor level and 13"-thick curtain walls above. The south and east walls are the primary facades, and feature Indiana limestone at the base and cornice levels, and pressed brick at the window walls segment. The west and rear/alley walls are treated as secondary, unadorned elevations, being constructed of rougher brick laid with wider mortar joints. The west wall features a fire escape and the building's brick chimney.

The flat-roofed building features a prominent wood cornice with modillions. Decoration, overall, is elegant, but used with restraint, consisting of the two limestone entrances, and Classical panels with swags at upper wall locations on the south and east faces.

<sup>1</sup> Information from Carpenters Local No. 132.

<sup>2</sup> "Concrete and Steel Reports" within the D.C. Building Permits relating to the Carpenters Building date from June through October 1926 and refer to forms for the 9<sup>th</sup> floor (sic), roof and penthouse. One member of Local No. 132 recalled that the building was framed in structural steel, but he permits and insurance atlases contradict this information.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

The Carpenters Building

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 7 Page 2

Window openings feature limestone sills but are devoid of decorative lintels. An original rendering by O. Harvey Miller, which appeared in the 1926 edition of *The Carpenter*, shows 1/1, double-hung sash for the primary elevations (Figure 1). Based on a photograph that may date to 1975, however, the original windows on the south and east walls appears to have been 3/3, double-hung sash (Figure 2).<sup>3</sup> These have been removed and replaced with one-over-one, operable metal sash. The windows on the west and north walls still feature the original wood units, and are three-over-three, double-hung sash in most areas (the upper sash being of wire glass). In some locations on these walls, two-over-two, double hung sash are used. On the west wall, several of the openings have been filled in with brick. There are tile floors throughout, which are now covered in linoleum and carpet. The building has always featured an elevator system.

The street level features a continuous band of metal and glass shop fronts over a concrete-block base. The entire element, which projects three feet beyond the building line, is an original feature of the building. The majority of the original metal window framing and cornice for this retail use is intact, with the exception of the panels facing K Street and a few on 10th Street, which were recently replaced with aluminum. Towards the rear of the building, on 10th Street, several of the glass panels have been removed and replaced with gravel pre-cast panels. Heavy metal security grates are in place over most of the storefront windows today. Above the housing for these grates, a tall wooden sign band identifies the current tenant and obscures the original triple "frieze" windows that exist on the main plane of the building just above the glazed shop fronts. These windows originally lit the upper portions of the retail space, which measured approximately 18 feet on the interior, from floor to ceiling. While these window openings are still intact behind the sign band, much of the sash has been removed to accommodate ventilation equipment or simply to allow for airflow. While these storefront changes are largely reversible, the oversized sign band, in particular, obliterates a proper reading of the building's original proportions.

The lobby of the building is small, and despite having marble surfaces covering a portion of its walls, the area's architectural significance is not substantial. Neither are the building's corridors or stairwells. Other than the luminous windows, there is nothing apparent on the eighth floor that would signify any particular decorative treatment of Carpenter's Hall.

<sup>3</sup> The 3/3 configuration remained popular in the 1920s and therefore would not be inconsistent. In addition, none of the building permits indicates that the windows were altered.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

The Carpenters Building

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 8 Page 1

## Summary Statement of Significance:

The Carpenters Building is historically significant for its association with a prominent, local affiliate of the powerful United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America. The United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners (hereafter the “Brotherhood,” or “UBC”) and its local District affiliates have played an extremely prominent role in the emergence of a national labor movement in the late 19th century. The Carpenters Building at 10th and K Streets, N.W., constructed in 1926 for Carpenters' Local No.132, marks a pinnacle of union organization for the District carpenters and remains the sole historic edifice to mark the UBC’s prominent place within the national labor struggle. The building served as the focal point of union activity in the area, as the tenants of the building were overwhelmingly associated with the labor movement in the District. At the time of its construction, the Carpenters Building was considered the largest building owned by any Local Union in the United States. The Carpenters Building thus meets Criterion A of the National Register.

In addition, the Carpenters Building meets Criterion C of the National Register. The building is architecturally significant as the representation of a local building type and sub-type—office buildings associated with the labor movement. The building stands around the corner from the national headquarters of the American Federation of Labor, and was executed in the same Commercial style. This building type represents an important aspect of the development of office buildings in Washington, and in particular, of institutional office buildings associated with the organized labor movement. The building possesses sufficient integrity to convey the values and qualities for which it is judged significant, and sufficient time has lapsed since it was constructed to permit proper evaluation in its historic context. +

## Resource History and Historic Context:

### Carpenters and Trade Unionism in the First Stages: 1724-1880

The carpenters were one of the first building trades to unionize in this country in the 18th century, and for two centuries have maintained their position as one of, if not *the*, most powerful trade union in America. One of the earliest carpenters' organizations in the country was the Ship Carpenters and Caulkers Club of Boston, which existed by 1724. Primarily a political organization, the ship carpenters are said to have been instrumental in the launching of the Boston Tea party.<sup>4</sup> The organization that would rank as the first carpenters *trade* union—as opposed to a political union—was the Carpenters' Company of Philadelphia, established in 1724. As an organization for both master and journeymen carpenters, its mission was the adoption of a system of measurement and prices so that “everyone concerned in building may have the value of his money and every working man the worth of his labor.”<sup>5</sup> In addition, the Company provided its members with sickness, death, and unemployment benefits, benchmarks of the trade unions to follow.

<sup>4</sup> “They Kept Ahead of the Future: United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America (A Condensed History).” The Apprenticeship Department of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, Washington, D.C., undated.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

The Carpenters Building

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 8 Page 2

In 1770, the Carpenters' Company constructed a hall for its meetings that would come to hold an extraordinary place in the events leading up to the American independence. On September 5, 1774, the Continental Congress first convened in "Carpenters' Hall" to begin formulating the Declaration of Independence. From that day on, the Carpenters played an integral role in the founding of this country throughout the Revolutionary period. In 1788, the Constitution of the United States would be drawn up within the walls of Carpenters Hall.

As part of its mission, the Carpenters' Company developed a book of prices to prevent unfair competition, but the master carpenters forbade the journeymen from knowing the contents of the book, which identified "piece rates" for each portion of a job. At the time, carpentry was still an itinerant profession, undertaken by skilled workmen who could do everything from cutting lumber, to designing buildings, to completing all finish work. The standard method of payment was a daily fee. The book of prices enabled the master carpenters to continue paying journeymen by the day, while enlarging their own profit base on the new "piece work" rate system.

Tired of this practice, the journeymen broke from the master carpenters in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to form their own trade associations in the major cities. The first carpenters' union in the District of Columbia was established during this era, around 1835-36.<sup>6</sup> Many of the journeymen unions were secret societies, organized so members could press for better wages and a standard wage throughout the year. A convention of carpenters was called in 1836 by the Journeymen House Carpenters of Philadelphia to lobby for the ten-hour day. Delegates from Albany, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Washington and Philadelphia attended the event. Despite the showing, a constitutional convention, called for in 1837, never materialized.

It was not until 1865, in New York, that the carpenters would aspire to the challenge to form a national union again. On June 3, 1865, the New York State Carpenters' and Joiners' Union issued a call to local carpenters' unions to convene in September. Delegates from 24 cities responded and were asked to contribute money towards a national treasury and to affiliate with the new body, which they named the Carpenters' National Union. Recommendations were drawn up, including a proviso encouraging caution in the issue of strikes. Timing, however, was inopportune, as the Reconstruction period proved to be a difficult era for unionism. The Carpenters' National Union only managed to survive until 1871.

It was the Panic of 1873 and its aftermath that served as the wake-up call for trade unionism in this country. The economic depression of the 1870s created mass worker discontent, and a greater number of laborers, including German-born carpenters coming from the socialist tradition, once again looked at the possibility of trade unionism. By 1880, the interest and momentum had become palpable.

With respect to the carpenters, the nature of the industry had changed so dramatically in the dozen or so years following the Civil War that it became imperative for workers to organize for protection. The introduction of factory machinery that could produce window sash and frames, doors and door trim, and

<sup>6</sup> Walter Galenson, *The United Brotherhood of Carpenters: The First Hundred Years* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), 8.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

The Carpenters Building

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 8 Page 3

all types of moldings made it possible for employers to hire unskilled carpenter labor -a direct threat to journeymen carpenters. In addition, the availability of prefabricated parts furthered the distasteful system of piecework, whereby the job of carpentry was broken down into ever smaller tasks. Local carpenters' unions sprang up across the country with the purpose of stamping out the piecework system and obtaining higher wages.

## 1881-1886: The Turning Point for Labor

In 1881, three seminal events occurred that would change the face of the carpenters' unions and of trade unionism in general: 1) a powerful, new carpenters' union was founded in the District of Columbia; 2) a new *national* carpenters' union was organized; and 3) a *national federation of trades* was established. The first event had local and national significance. At an organizational meeting held in April 1881 at Cosmopolitan Hall at the corner of Eighth and E Streets, N.W., Gabriel Edmonston, a carpenter who would become both a local and national labor leader, described the desperate need for a carpenters' union in the District:

Prior to 1881, the condition of the journeymen carpenters was wretched in the extreme. The country was slowly recovering from one of our worst financial panics. ...Wages were so far below the cost of a decent living that the most skillful carpenters were often reduced to the point of beggary. The hours of labor were long. The introduction of the piece-work system, together with the constantly diminishing amount of yearly employment, owing to the multiplied use of machinery, was slowly but surely sapping the manhood of our craft.<sup>7</sup>

The group of assembled men heeded Edmonston's call and founded a new local union of carpenters, the name of which is not readily available in historical source materials. This carpenters' group functioned, for a brief period, independent of any national body.

In St. Louis, two men were fighting the same struggle as Edmonston. They were Peter J. McGuire and Gustav Luebker, the former, the head of the St. Louis carpenters and the latter, the leader of its German-speaking equivalent. In 1881, these two men called for a convention of the roughly two dozen carpenters' locals that existed at the time in various cities. Publishing a newsletter titled *The Carpenter*, they called for the formation of a national carpenters' union. Upon receipt of the newsletter, two Chicago unions offered to host the organizational meeting at Trades Assembly Hall in that city free of charge. In August 1881, 36 delegates from 14 local unions representing 11 cities attended the Chicago convention for the purpose of forming a national carpenters' union. Foremost among them was Gabriel Edmonston of the District of Columbia. Peter McGuire was the keynote speaker at the convention:

In the present age there is no hope for workingmen outside of organization. Without a trades union, the workman meets the employer at a great disadvantage. The capitalist has the advantage of past accumulations; the laborer, unassisted by combination, has not.

<sup>7</sup> *The Carpenter*, October 1904, p. 7.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

The Carpenters Building

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 8 Page 4

Knowing this, the capitalist can wait, while his men, without funds, have no other alternative but to submit. But with organization the case is altered; and the more widespread the organization, the better. Then the workman is able to meet the employer on equal terms ...If the strong combine, why should not the weak?<sup>8</sup>

The Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America was founded in Chicago in August 1881 at that convention.<sup>9</sup> As one of the key initiators of the national body, Gabriel Edmonston was elected its first General President. McGuire became the only paid staff person of the organization, taking on the role of its General Secretary. Charter applications came in from Washington, Cleveland, Buffalo, Cincinnati, Kansas City, Philadelphia, Indianapolis, Detroit, New York, St. Louis, Brooklyn, New Orleans, and even, Ontario. In recognition of the role of the District of Columbia's carpenters' local in establishing the Brotherhood, the Brotherhood issued its first charter to the District local on January 13, 1882. From then on, Edmonston's District local became known as District Local Union No. I.

Galvanized by the response of the carpenters, Edmonston and McGuire set their sights on further organizational goals. Edmonston saw the need for a District of Columbia trades council in order to raise wages. Soon after the 1881 convention, he organized an affiliation of the carpenters, granite cutters, bricklayers, and plasterers to join in a Washington Federation of Labor. On a larger scale, McGuire and Edmonston recognized the need for a national federation of all labor organizations. It was McGuire who attended a meeting called by a group of disgruntled members of the Knights of Labors in August 1881 for the purpose of forming a rival, national labor organization. In November 1881, the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions (FOTLU) was created and Edmonston made treasurer.

After five years of marginal success, the FOTLU was foundering. Once again, the leaders of the UBC came to the forefront, spearheading the effort to reorganize the Federation. They succeeded in 1886 by establishing the American Federation of Labor (AFL) in place of the FOTLU and elected Samuel Gompers, a cigar maker, to be its first president. Gompers, born in London to Dutch parents, moved to New York where he eventually engaged in the cigar-making trade and became active in the Ethical Culture Society. With Gompers at the helm, Gabriel Edmonston and Peter McGuire remained officers of the new organization.

## **The UBC, Gabriel Edmonston, and the Fight for the Eight-Hour Day**

The UBC was the largest of the unions represented in the AFL. Its early goals were competitive wages, a reasonable work day, opposition to piece-work and subcontracting, the reestablishment of an apprenticeship system, and benefits. The Brotherhood specifically sought to stay out of political matters. It was during the 1882 convention in Philadelphia that UBC members first resolved to aim for a nine-hour day. While a few cities across the country had established the eight- and nine-hour day, it was by no

<sup>8</sup> McGuire, Peter J., ed., *The Carpenter*, 1881.

<sup>9</sup> Beginning in 1881, and lasting for 15 years, the Knights of Labor and the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners engaged in a battle to position themselves as the central union representative of the District's carpenters.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

The Carpenters Building

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 8 Page 5

means standard labor practice in the 1880s. In addition, it was the UBC's McGuire who developed the notion for a "labor holiday."<sup>10</sup> Writing anonymously in an 1882 issue of the *The Carpenter*, he stated:

It is now suggested that the first Tuesday in September shall become the labor holiday of New York and be celebrated every year by a parade and picnic. It is also proposed that this day should be likewise observed throughout the country, that labor by its own will should establish its own universal holiday... The ruling classes have their Decoration of Days and Thanksgiving; why should not labor declare its own holiday?<sup>11</sup>

Within a few years of forming the UBC, however, Edmonston had to untangle himself from a series of troubles involving his D.C. local. The members D.C. Local No.1 were not willing to support the UBC's benefits plan, preferring instead a plan being offered by the Knights of Labor. The discontented members sought to use Local No. 1's funds for admission to the Knights, and ousted Edmonston as president when he was authorized by McGuire to go to any legal terms to protect those funds. Local No. 1 stopped paying dues to the UBC and thereby lost its affiliation with the national body. McGuire then simply authorized a new charter for Edmonston on June 8, 1886, creating Carpenters' Local No.190, the second chartered D.C. carpenters' union of the UBC.

In 1884, thinking strategically, Edmonston proposed that the AFL fight for the eight-hour day as the standard for all industries and that all members of the organization reach that goal by May 1, 1886, or be prepared to strike. Although the idea didn't go as planned, the UBC entered into a series of strikes in pursuit of the eight-hour day and became recognized as the national leader of the movement for standardized work hours. In 1890, when the AFL decided that one trade union should spearhead the national movement for the eight-hour day, the choice of the UBC was obvious. Samuel Gompers stated his selection in a letter to the head of the Brotherhood:

Permit me, dear sir, on behalf of the American Federation of Labor, to congratulate your grand Brotherhood upon the proud distinction...in being chosen as the best disciplined, appropriate, and determined to lead the movement for a reduction in the hours of labor to eight per day. There is no doubt in my mind that few of the historians of the great events in the history of the development of our people will accord a higher place of honor and distinction than to the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> There is controversy surrounding the founding of the day. Although most labor historians believe it was Peter McGuire who developed the idea for the holiday (and McGuire himself took the credit), others cite Matt McGuire, a member of the Machinists and Blacksmiths local of Brooklyn, as the originator.

<sup>11</sup> *The Carpenter*, September 1882.

<sup>12</sup> Letter from Samuel Gompers to the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners in 1890 in "They Kept Ahead of the Future," p. 18.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

The Carpenters Building

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 8 Page 6

After several years, the fight for a reduction in hours was finally won, and the Carpenters had led the way. By 1900, 186 cities and towns were upholding the eight-hour day. Several states began adopting a label to identify Brotherhood woodwork in "closed shops," those that employed union laborers working an eight-hour day. At the dedication of the Carpenters Building in the District in 1926, AFL President William Green would describe the carpenters' role in the eight-hour fight in military terms:

Like the great wing of a big army, you were ordered into action, led by able generals and made up of men whose courage was of the highest order... Out on the field of industrial battle you engaged the enemy... It was almost a revolutionary reform ...because the public mind had not been educated to accept such a revolutionary doctrine... The United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners established for themselves the eight-hour workday. It came to them as a result of their heroic efforts.<sup>13</sup>

## The Emergence of Carpenters' Local No.132

The Panic of 1893 and the ensuing years were rough ones for the Carpenters, given the economic downturn and the rise in the immigrant labor pool. The increasing use of steam-powered machinery to outfit buildings also took a heavy toll on carpenters' jobs. A planing machine could produce fourteen times the product of a man toiling with his hands; a molding machine, twelve times. Out of necessity, the Brotherhood began to take an interest in organizing the skilled and semiskilled machine operators who worked in the wood products factories, thus converting itself from a true "craft" union into an increasingly industrialized union.

With this new strategy, the Brotherhood's population began to swell after the turn of the century. In the District alone, four additional carpenters locals were chartered: Local No.884, chartered July 29, 1901; Local No.1103, chartered April 28, 1902; Local No.1651, chartered May 25, 1903; and Local No.1638, chartered May 12, 1905. Then, on October 23, 1905, Local Union No.132 was chartered. It was the consolidation of the five District of Columbia locals.

As a powerful union, Local 132 displayed a staunch show of independence in its early years. It refused to affiliate with the AFL's Central Labor Union in the District, which had been established in 1897 as a requirement for AFL affiliation. (The D.C. locals maintained resentment against the AFL for its years of not recognizing an earlier central labor body, the Washington Federation of Labor, which had been controlled by the Knights of Labor.) It is not known when Local 132 was re-affiliated with the AFL, but certainly by the mid-1920s, when it erected the Carpenters Building with the strong support of AFL.

Local 132 was busy fighting important labor battles in the early years of its organization. One of its first targets was the National Employers' Association, which was bent on introducing the "open shop" system to Washington. The "open shop" concept revolved around an employer's right to hire non-union labor. Local No.132 fought the introduction of the open shop in D.C. and won, a gain it would enjoy only temporarily. (See below.) In 1916, the Washington carpenters were able to extract their first formal

<sup>13</sup> *The Carpenter*, September 1926, p. 27.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

The Carpenters Building

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 8 Page 7

agreement from contractors. Now paid by the hour, the agreement provided for union carpenters to receive a 7-1/2 cent wage increase, for a total of 62 ½ cents per hour.

## The Labor Movement in the Early 20th Century

Nationally, the trade union movement was thriving by the early part of the 1910s. The UBC engaged upon a new and lasting course of jurisdictional raids, which expanded its membership significantly. Indicative of its position within the national labor movement, the UBC constructed a national headquarters building in Indianapolis in 1909. It was a simple, but handsome brick structure with decorative work at the piers that was obviously derived from the work of architect Louis Sullivan.<sup>14</sup>

Six years later, in October 1915, the AFL would begin the construction of its new headquarters in Washington, D.C. to much fanfare. The elegant office building, designed by Washington's most active office building architects, Milburn and Heister & Co., was constructed at 901 Massachusetts Avenue at Mount Vernon Square. Samuel Gompers presided at the cornerstone laying ceremony. When the building was completed in 1916, a labor parade comprising all of the various trade unions passed proudly in front of the new edifice.

With the United States' entry into World War I in 1917, however, the labor unions were called upon to temporarily forego some of their achievements. They were recruited to work in an "open shop" environment for the construction of military training camps and ships. William Hutcheson, then president of the Brotherhood, opposed this arrangement and argued to maintain collective bargaining. In 1918, Hutcheson was asked to coordinate a National War Labor Board to arbitrate labor disputes. The Board succeeded in establishing the following rules of procedure: labor unions would be maintained where they existed, war plant workers had a right to organize, the eight-hour day was to be treated as the standard, and wage increases were to be tied to the cost of living. The Department of Labor was instructed to act as the government's mobilization engine and to work through the trade unions in recruiting for war work.

## The Construction of the Carpenters Building at 1010 10th Street, N.W.

With the war ended, construction during the 1920s was booming across the country. Housing starts were at an all-time high. Inspired by the AFL and the Department of Labor, other labor unions were establishing headquarters in Washington, in close proximity to the White House or Congress.<sup>15</sup> In addition to carpenters, the following trades had established unions in the city by 1921: sheet metal workers; blacksmiths; boiler makers and iron shipbuilders; draftsmen; electrical contractors; engineers; foundry employees; machinists; metal polishers; iron, steel, and tin workers; moulders' pattern makers; plumbers and gas fitters; firemen and oilers; and stove mounters.<sup>16</sup> In the same year, the following

<sup>14</sup> The architect of the building is not known.

<sup>15</sup> The Office Buildings Survey, Design Forum Associates for the D.C. Historic Preservation Division, 1992.

<sup>16</sup> The District of Columbia Union Directory, 1921. (Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, Washingtoniana Division).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

The Carpenters Building

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 8 Page 8

international organizations had headquarters in Washington (some listed with addresses): the International Association of Machinists, the International Brotherhood of Bookbinders, the National Association of Letter Carriers (the Kresge Building, 11th and G, N.W.), the National Federation of Post Office Clerks (AFL Building, Suite 301), the Steel Plate Transferers Association of America (1024 Park Avenue, N.W.), the International Jewelry Workers Union, Local No.2 (918 H Street, N.W.).<sup>17</sup> The United Mine Workers Union moved into the former University Club building on 15th Street, the International Machinists commissioned Milbum and Heister, architects of the AFL Building, to construct its own building at 813 Mt. Vernon Square in 1919. The National Cannery Association building, located at 1739 H Street, N.W., was completed in 1927. Acacia Mutual Life had its first offices on Louisiana Avenue.

The 1921 District Union Directory identified the offices of the Washington District Council of Carpenters and the Washington UBC office as the LeDroit Building (8th and F Streets, N.W.). In the early 1920s, Local 132 still held its meetings at the Typographical Temple. An important 19th-century labor edifice, the Italian Renaissance Revival, brownstone building at 425 G Street, N.W. has been demolished, as have so many of labor's strongholds. Other local unions who did not yet have their own headquarters met at the Temple also, or at various other meeting halls, including the large, brick Pythian Temple (which stood at 1014 9th Street), the Perpetual Building Association Building (11th and E Streets, N.W.), Washington Hall (3rd and Pennsylvania, N.W.), and the Building Trades Hall (at 6th and G Streets, N.W.).

In what was considered a workingman's part of town, around the corner from the AFL headquarters and the Pythian Temple, Carpenters Local No.132 purchased land to erect its own headquarters. Moving from offices at 702 9th Street, N.W., Local No.132 purchased two lots containing brick dwellings and stables. The Union then hired local architect Otho Harvey Miller to design the building in the same Commercial style adopted by the AFL for its headquarters.

The new Carpenters Building was described in a September 1926 issue of *The Carpenter*, complete with an architects rendering (Figure 1). The structure would be 50 by 100 feet in dimension, eight stories tall plus a basement, and of entirely fireproof construction. The article described Local 132's plan to occupy offices on the first floor and the District Council to have its offices on the second. The basement was noted as being designed as a lounge equipped with lockers for tools. The entire eighth floor was to be devoted to a meeting hall, with a seating capacity of over 500 persons. The street level would feature "five modern storerooms." The six remaining floors would be configured into eleven offices each, which Local 132 intended to rent. The total cost of the site and building was estimated at \$215,000.

When the Carpenters Building was constructed in 1926, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America was the largest union in the country. Emblematic of the stature of the Brotherhood and of its District local, *The Carpenter* reported: "...it is believed to be the largest building owned by any Local Union in the United States."<sup>18</sup> In a sign of unity and pride, invitations to the cornerstone ceremony of September II, 1926 were extended to the Local's General Officers, members of the Brotherhood's

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> "Washington, D.C., Local Starts the Erection of Its Own Building," *The Carpenter*, September 1926.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

The Carpenters Building

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 8 Page 9

General Executive Board, the officers of all the building trades of the AFL and the officers of Local Unions and District Councils from cities within the area. Over 1,000 members and guests attended this event. AFL President William Green was the keynote speaker, seeing in the construction of the building a snapshot of the flourishing national union movement:

I understand this building was planned and is being erected by L.U. No. 132, United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, a Local Union numbering practically 3,400 members. When we contemplate the whole situation, when we think of the expansion and development of our movement throughout the land, when we are permitted to see the visible expression of the growth and development of this movement, our hearts are made glad and we are filled with thrilling pride... There are several things which you are doing through the erection of this building... First, you are attracting the attention of the people to the permanency and stability of your movement, for a movement that builds buildings and erects structures such as this is going to remain with us a long time... Another thing you are doing is contributing toward the civic betterment and beauty of the city of Washington.<sup>19</sup>

It is clear that Local Union 132 intended for the building to be used as a trade union center, housing not just its own headquarters and meeting hall, but offices for fellow Washington trade organizations and contractors involved in the building trades. The first complete listing of the building's occupants comes in the 1928 City Directory; a sole building permit for 1927 indicates that the Robin Hood Coffee Shop applied for a sign for a store at street level during the final phases of the building's construction. The 1928 Directory reflects that Local 132, as landlord, had a significant number of vacancies before the Crash of 1929 and during the Depression. It reveals that the second floor was vacant except for Room 211, which housed the Carpenters' Headquarters, District Council. The third floor was partially vacant, but housed a few private companies including Fristoe Realty; Robert H. Sanford, contractor; and Washington Tires Stores. The fourth floor was vacant except for the Washington Fidelity National Insurance Company and the Embrey Sales Organization. Room 508 housed the International Labor news Service and Room 509 the American Aucllo Furnace Company. Room 608 was reserved for William A. Rogers, electrical contractor and Room 609, the Federal Fire Proofing Company and General Construction Company. Room 701 was occupied by W.G. Cornell, Heating, and Rooms 707-10 by both the American Mayonnaise Corporation Brokers and the Musher and Company Vegetable Oils business. Finally, Room 711 was designated as the office of Bessie McFarland, advertising agent. The United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, Local 132, was identified at 1010 10th Street, the doorway that served as the entry to the group's meeting hall on the eighth floor.

By 1932, Feole's Pharmacy occupied the majority of the store frontage, while John Robinson had a barber shop at in the building. The pharmacy would remain a tenant of the Carpenters Building for several decades. The second floor had been rented to the International Union of Operating Engineers, which published the *International Engineering Monthly* from its offices. Room 211 remained dedicated to the Carpenters' Headquarters, District Council. The entire third floor was vacant, as was the fourth, except for

<sup>19</sup> *The Carpenter*, November 1926.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

The Carpenters Building

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 8 Page 10

the Washington Fidelity National Insurance Company. The fifth floor held the International Labor News Service which published *The American Labor Banner*, a monthly, and another group called Labor's Purchasing Power, Inc. Building contractors and providers like the Mineral Felt Insulating Company were located on the fifth, sixth, and seventh floors. Room 602 was rented to Labor's National Commission for Modification of the Volstead Act. Gomper's original union, the Cigar Maker's International Union of America, was housed in Rooms 603-607. The International Union of Operating Engineers, Local No.67, had its offices in Room 710, and the entire eighth floor was still devoted to Carpenters' Hall.

By 1933, the area of town around the AFL and Carpenters buildings was further identified with labor when the Samuel Gompers Memorial statue was erected at the intersection of 10th Street and Massachusetts Avenue, N.W. Robert Aitken of New York designed the bronze statue showing a seated Gompers and a circle of allegorical figures representing labor.

By 1938, rental activity in the Carpenters Building grew stronger. The International Union of Operating Engineers still occupied the second floor. The third floor remained vacant, but the fourth floor now housed the Nacrelli Bar Review Law School, along with two insurance companies. The fifth floor served as the headquarters for Gulf Oil Corporation's Engineering Department. The sixth floor held the offices of America's Wage Earners Protective Conference, the Cigar Makers, and three labor news bureaus. The sixth and seventh floors still housed building contractors, but now Rooms 703-704 housed the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Stablemen and Helpers of America. The workers in Room 709 produced the monthly *Plain Talk*, and the eight floor was devoted to Carpenters' Hall. In 1938, the retail picture in the building brightened as well: Charles Feole maintained his drugstore while No. 1002 10<sup>th</sup> Street housed the Frazee Potomac Laundry Company; 1004, the Gas Consumers' Association gas appliances; and 1008, Samuel Katz' laundry.

During the War, in 1942, Carpenters Union Local 1590 rented space across the street at 1005 K Street, a further indication that the area was a nucleus for labor activity, being so close, as it was, to the AFL headquarters. New renters in the Carpenters Building included B'nai B'rith, the Aleph Zadik Aleph Society, and the *National Jewish Monthly* on the third floor plus the American Wage Earners Professional Conference on the sixth floor. The seventh floor offices were rented to the Bakers and Confectionary Workers International Union of America's Research Department, the Printing Pressmen's Union No.1, and the Retail Clerks International Protective Association, Local No.639 A. In 1943, a permit for a sign taken out by the International Brotherhood of Operation Engineers (sic) asked that a sign be placed flat against the wall on the second floor on the K Street elevation, with the union's logo and the words "948 members in service."<sup>20</sup> In 1946, O. Harvey Miller again was contracted to work on the building, this time to construct interior partitions on the eighth floor, suggesting that the carpenters were no longer using the entire space for their meeting hall at that time.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> D.C. Permit # 261849, June 29, 1943.

<sup>21</sup> D.C. Permit # 287947, August 13, 1946.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

The Carpenters Building

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 8 Page 11

The building continued to house labor functions throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In 1975, a "competitive building analysis" undertaken by Local No. 132 noted: "all tenants of the building are unions." In 1980, Local No. 132 sold the building to a private real estate company, moving its headquarters to Forestville, in Prince George's County, Maryland. The buyer, Zuckerman Associates, currently manages the building as a private office building.

### **Otho Harvey Miller -Architect of the Carpenters Building**

Otho Harvey Miller, the architect of the Carpenter Building, maintained an office as a private architect at 700 10th Street, N.W. (the McLachlen Bank Building) in the early 1920s and lived in a room on H Street, N.W. To date, little is known about his schooling or architectural training. He was a member of the American Institute of Architects<sup>22</sup> and a registered architect in the District of Columbia. In addition, he was certified by the State of Virginia to practice architecture, something he did from his office/residence in Bridgewater, Virginia, in Rockingham County.

Miller continued to work out of his private District office through the 1920s and 1930s, until, at some point during the Depression, he went to work as an associate architect for the Treasury Department. He is listed in that capacity in the City Directory of 1937. In 1942, City Directories reveal that Miller was back at work at his office on 10<sup>th</sup> Street, but moved outside of the District to Bridgewater, Virginia. He did some interior renovation work at the Carpenter's Building in 1946, but by 1948, there is no entry in the City Directories for O. Harvey Miller. Other buildings known to have been designed by Miller include the International Exchange Bank at 477 H Street, N.W. and a building for the American Building Association at 300 Pennsylvania Avenue, S.E. The Office Buildings Survey indicates that "Harvey Miller" designed 102 Indiana Avenue in 1951.

### **The UBC and Washington Local Unions in the Modern Period**

From their base at 10th and K, Carpenters Local No.132 and its fellow unions fought off new "enemies" during the 1920-1950 period. These included: 1) the large industrial companies of the country that had become wealthy during wartime; 2) organized crime, which sought to infiltrate the labor movement; and 3) the Communist Party. Regarding the first threat, industrial companies were determined "open shop" policy, now marketing it to the public as "The American Plan." As the largest of unions, the Brotherhood led the fight against the American Plan. As for "the mob," labor casualties were not uncommon across the country in the late 1920s and 1930s, as union leaders fought to prevent the takeover of their organizations by racketeers. Finally, the rise of the Communist movement in this country in the 1920s posed a threat to organized labor. Russian-backed communist trade organizers, operating under the name of the Trade Union Educational League, began to penetrate the carpenters' locals. In 1926, the same year that the Carpenters Building was begun, the Brotherhood sent out a notice warning all unions to be alert to communist infiltration:

<sup>22</sup> Although he was a member of the AIA, the Institute has no information on Miller.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

The Carpenters Building

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 8 Page 12

While our obligation guarantees to every member no interference with his political opinions, this matter is not and cannot be considered a political matter or a party political matter, but on the contrary, an attempt on the part of the Communists and their agencies to hamper and cripple Labor Unions. The General Executive Board...warns all members not to join them or have anything to do with them...under penalty of forfeiture of membership in the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America.<sup>23</sup>

When the Depression hit following the Crash of 1929, carpenters were by no means immune from its grasp. In 1932, as much as 80 percent of the Brotherhood may have been without jobs. Local unions advised itinerant carpenters to stay away from their cities for lack of work. In 1932, when President Roosevelt passed the National Industrial Recovery Act, it looked as though the unions would obtain some recourse to their predicament through the institution of collective bargaining. However, the Supreme Court's declaration in 1935 that the Act was unconstitutional was a setback. Nonetheless, the legislation had given organized labor a push, and new woodworking unions, including those that allied lumbermen, loggers, and shingle weavers, were created during these years.

In 1933, the AFL began organizing workers employed in the mass production industries such as automobile, cement, and aluminum factories. The leadership of the Brotherhood opposed this idea, worrying, amongst other things, that new national unions would take away millwrights and carpenters who worked in those factories. As a sign that the labor movement was changing towards industrial unionism, the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO) was established in 1935, over the UBC's opposition.

In 1939 and 1940, the UBC experienced difficult times, when the anti-trust division of the Justice Department served several indictments against the Carpenters (and 34 other AFL unions) charging unfair labor practices, including featherbedding, extortion, union refusal to work on new materials, and collusive price fixing. Despite these claims, the local carpenters' unions in the District of Columbia—six in all—were able to induct 1100 new members into its unions over a two-month period in 1940, swelling the ranks to a total of 4,000 local members.

With the entry of the United States in the War in 1941, the Brotherhood and government pledged their cooperation. When large atomic weapons plants were built in Washington and Tennessee, the UBC sent representatives there to monitor the projects, which sometimes employed 6500 carpenters. Local No.132 itself saw 664 of its members serve in the Armed Forces. In 1942, African-American carpenters in the District first received membership cards in the UBC and AFL, when they were hired by the Federal Works Agency to construct war dormitories at 24th and Oklahoma Streets, N.W.

<sup>23</sup> Frank Duffy, "History of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners," p. 460-61, as quoted in Galenson, p. 217.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

The Carpenters Building

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 8 Page 13

In 1947, anti-labor feeling was at an all-time high in this country following postwar strikes. Labor leaders were looking once again at the threat of open shops, company unions, jurisdictional struggles, and blacklists. The 1950s saw the rise of the service-sector economy and its overshadowing of a manufacturing-based economy. The biggest labor event of the decade, however, was unquestionably the 1955 merger of the AFL and CIO, an action that the Carpenters did not support. Whatever the position on the merger, the climate for unionism in the District was indeed strong, as new headquarters were constructed for the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, International Union of Electricians, the International Union of Operating Engineers, and the International Hod Carriers Union.<sup>24</sup> In 1961, the Carpenters joined the trend, constructing a monumental marble headquarters building at the foot of the Capitol at 101 Constitution Avenue. By 1972, the UBC had a membership of 820,000 represented by 1,435 local unions. At the time of this writing (1999), nearly half a million carpenters belong to the union as represented by 1200 locals in the United States and Canada.

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<sup>24</sup> Office Buildings Survey, Phase II, Database, September 1992.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Carpenters Building

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 9 Page 1

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Carpenters Building

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 9 Page 2

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Carpenters Building

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 10 Page 1

## Verbal Boundary Description:

The Carpenters Building occupies Lot 811 on Square 342 in Washington, D.C. +

## Boundary Justification:

The building has occupied this lot since its construction in 1926. +

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Carpenters Building  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

FIGURE 1



Carpenters Building  
(from, *The Carpenter*, September 1926)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

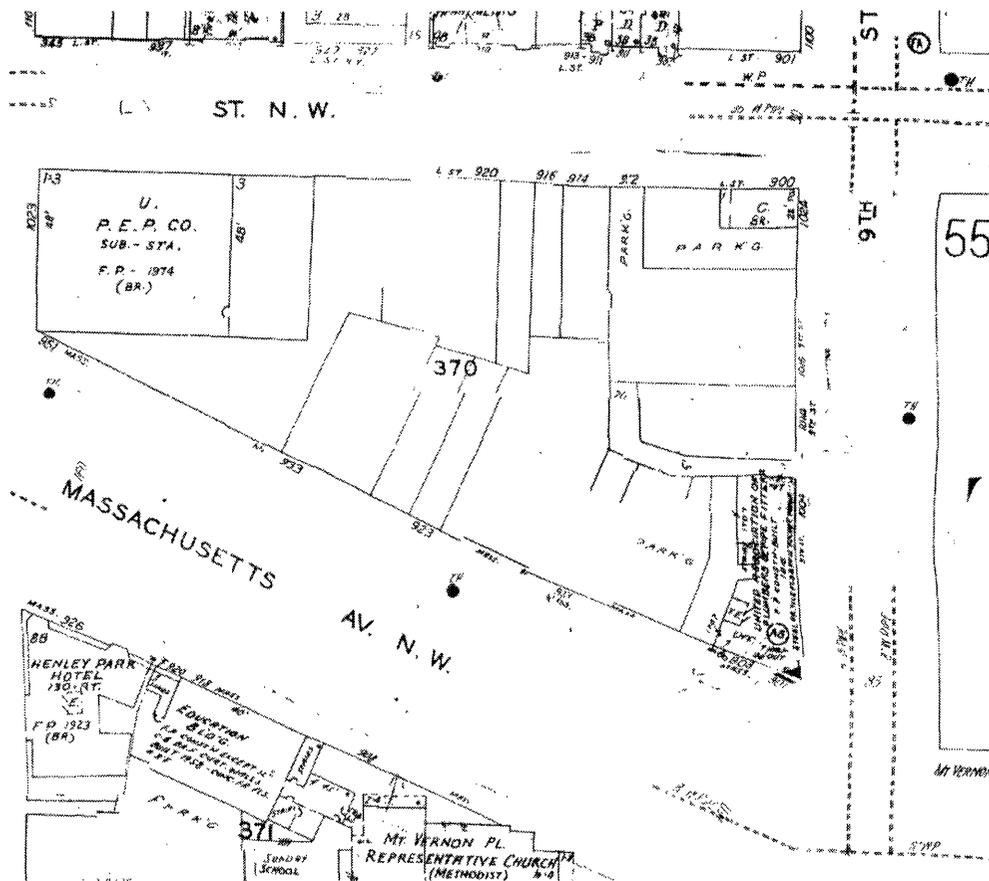
# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Carpenters Building  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

## SITE MAP

County and State



Carpenters Building  
Square 342 Lot 811  
1001 K Street, N.W./1010 10<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C.  
(The Sanborn Building and Property Atlas, 1991)