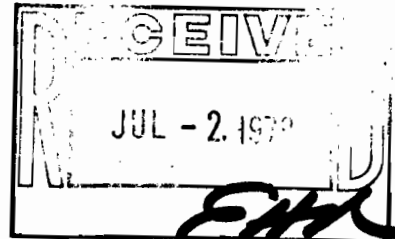


JOINT COMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL

APPLICATION FORM
HISTORIC LANDMARK



APPLICATION TO:

- designate
- amend

summary of amendments _____

rescind

JOINT COMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS
Application for Historic Landmark
Received 7/2/79 EHL
Filed 7/2/79 AHH

GENERAL INFORMATION

Name of Property Demonet building

Address 1149 Connecticut Avenue and 1758 M Street, N. W.

Square and Lot Number(s) square 162, lot 44

Present Owner Helen Demonet Titus (est.?)

c/o D.F. Antonelli, Jr.
Address 1725 De Sales Street, N. W.

Original Use dwelling, shop

Present Use shops, travel agency

Date of Construction c. 1880

Date of Major Alterations, if any 1904, 1911, 1921

Architect possibly John Sherman; for alterations, Totten and Rogers

Architectural style/period late Victorian eclectic

Name of Applicant Dupont Circle Citizens Association

(If applicant is an organization, it must submit evidence that among its purposes is the promotion of historic preservation in the District of Columbia. A copy of its charter, articles of incorporation, or by-laws, setting forth such purpose, will satisfy this requirement.)

Address of Applicant P.O. Box 19022, Washington, D. C., 20036, or c/o A. Luchs, 3633 Appleton Street, N. W., Washington, D. C. 20008

Telephone c/o A. Luchs, 363-1366 or 363-0853

Alison Luchs

Signature of Applicant or authorized representative

June 27, 1979

Date

Art Historian

Title of authorized representative

310.21 A statement of the prehistoric, historic, architectural and/or cultural significance of the property proposed for designation.

Built c. 1880 as part of a block of row houses, the Demonet building is the last Victorian town house on Connecticut Avenue between Dupont Circle and Farragut Square to survive substantially in its nineteenth-century appearance. Its dome, patterned after that of Florence Cathedral even down to the oculus windows in the octagonal tower below, is unique in the city. While today it seems a minor echo of the St. Matthew's Cathedral dome across the street, it in fact predates St. Matthew's by more than a decade.¹

The building permit of April 23, 1880² was granted to John Sherman, Jr., a real estate agent born around 1840. No architect is named, but Sherman sometimes designed his own buildings, which include numerous houses in Cleveland Park that Sherman built and sold around the turn of the century. In this case, Sherman received authorization to build a tract of four three-story brick dwellings (with basements) on square 162 at Connecticut Avenue and M Street, N.W., with a corner tower.

The Demonet building is a survivor of two phases in the history of Connecticut Avenue as an elegant main street of northwest Washington. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Connecticut Avenue was the main thoroughfare of the West End, a fashionable residential area. The Avenue in particular was home to the British Legation, citizens such as Alexander Graham Bell (1215 Connecticut), and the palatial house (1873 ff.) of D.C. governor Alexander Shepherd, with its own corner dome, facing Farragut Square at Connecticut and K. The Shepherd house later became the Russian Legation. Mansions and small but elegant town houses lined Connecticut Avenue. The Demonet building, with the address 1756 M Street, was from 1882 to 1901 the home and office of W. Warrington Evans, a dentist whose name appears on the Washington Elite List in the 1880's and 1890's

After the turn of the century, homes were gradually succeeded by small shops, often formed from renovated town houses. These made the Avenue, as late as 1966, "internationally renowned as Washington's principal thoroughfare for sophisticated shoppers...They think of Connecticut Avenue in Washington as they think of the Rue de la Paix in Paris, Bond Street in London, Fifth Avenue in New York" (Washingtonian, 1, August, 1966, p. 41).

In 1904, Jules Demonet turned the corner town house into a shop for his family's fifty-six-year old confectionery business, which would continue to cater to Washington society up to the second world war. Demonet's parents, John Charles and Ida, had first opened a Washington confectionery in 1848. During the Civil War, their ice cream and candy shop in the 1700 block of Pennsylvania Avenue enjoyed the patronage of General Grant and President Lincoln. Jules acquired the choice Connecticut Avenue location in 1901, and hired the firm of Totten and Rogers (known for mansions in the Dupont Circle area) to remodel it into a confectioner's shop. The confections were prepared at a nearby "factory" on L Street, and Demonet's moved to a new showroom at 1520 Connecticut Avenue in 1928. The wealthy society of the Dupont Circle

(continued)

area, including Evalyn Walsh McLean (the last private owner of the Hope Diamond) kept Demonet's reputation and business strong for nearly forty years. The name vanished from city directories in 1943, but by 1944 is in the telephone book at 1777 Columbia Road--still true today. The Demonet tradition lives on in the building, still belonging to the family, and in the Algara caramels produced by Avignone Freres in Washington under the Demonet name.

In the third phase of Connecticut Avenue's history, when massive office buildings are marching north from K Street, the Demonet dome enlivens the skyline as a unique survivor of the Avenue's high society days. Its "Florentine" silhouette sets it apart as a colorful example of late-nineteenth-century eclectic architecture, dramatically effective on its corner site, visible across the wide expanses of avenues. With its high Victorian ruggedness, the Gothic-early Renaissance associations of its pointed dome, and a touch of Second Empire elegance in the oval cartouche windows, the Demonet building makes a pleasing contrast with the cool, neo-classical, grey stone facade of the Elizabeth Arden building (1929), its recently-restored adjoining neighbor to the south. In 1969, Washington Post architecture critic Wolf von Eckardt singled it out as "a gem of a whimsical whitewashed old brick building that has a pert little turret on the M Street corner," and expressed the hope that the owners would "restore the building and preserve it for ever."

1. There is no reason to doubt that the present dome was part of the original building. It appears in the background in an engraving of Farragut Square published by J. W. Moore in 1887 (Picturesque Washington, p. 238). It is visible with its present details in two photographs in the Martin Luther King Library's Washingtoniana collection, datable around the turn of the century based on the presence of trolley cars and horse-drawn buggies in the streets (Connecticut Avenue, no. 6559, by C. M. Bell, undated; Farragut Square, no. 3027, undated).
2. A permit was granted to John Sherman on April 23, 1880, to build four brick houses, three stories plus basement, including a corner tower, at M Street and Connecticut Avenue, N.W. The permit is no. 1297 for square 162, lots 42 and 43, on that date. The G. M. Hopkins 1887 survey of Washington plats and all subsequent surveys have a lot 44 on square 162 (with a brick building with tower at Connecticut and M), but no lot 42 or 43. The corresponding address, description and square number indicate that the permit refers to the Demonet building, erected just before the present lot numbers were fixed. This is confirmed by lot numbers for the map of square 162 in John J. Bogue's plat books of Washington for 1873-1883 (vol. 1).

310.22 If property is proposed for designation principally for its architectural significance, a detailed architectural description of the property, including where possible its original and present appearance.

Situated at the southeast corner of Connecticut Avenue and M Streets, N. W., the Demonet building is a three-story brick structure, irregular in plan, with a tier of mezzanine windows between the present first and second floors. Its octagonal corner tower rises above the three stories with a ribbed tin dome made up of eight curving facets, four of them pierced by oval windows in cartouche frames, and crowned by a spire. The tower has an oculus window on each of three sides.

Of the original structure, part of a block of row houses begun c. 1880, two bays with a pair of windows each front on Connecticut Avenue, one and a half bays on M Street. A lower annex with three upper windows extends the building to the south along Connecticut Avenue. The bays alternately project and recede. The projecting bay on Connecticut Avenue has chamfered corners, and a fire escape attached.

A frieze of molded brick lies below the wooden cornice, which is topped with acroteria. Courses of molded brick separate the stories. A mottled coat of white paint covers the original red brick.

The tall windows on the upper stories have segmental tops, with peaked moldings above the second-floor windows. The squat mezzanine windows with their mitered window-heads are blocked-up. They appear to be truncated remains of taller windows that existed before 1904, when the entrance and first floor were above street level, accessible by steps.

An ornate door frame surrounds a window high above the present street-level entrance at 1758 M Street. This frame marks the location of an earlier entrance to the house. The steps approaching it were removed in 1921, when the narrow interior staircase leading to the present upstairs offices was added. The tower served until recently as an artist's studio.

The ground floor shop, the former Demonet Confectioner, still has traces of delicate molded plaster decoration visible on the high ceiling, particularly a design with a web of beaded lines within a square, and a cross of serrated leaves at the web's center.

The original residential building was altered in 1904, 1911 and 1921 at the order of Jules Demonet. Show windows were introduced on Connecticut Avenue and M Street, and the southern extension, 14 by 18 feet and three stories high (including the mezzanine), was added by the firm of Totten and Rogers. The annex now houses a separate shop. The first floor (or basement?) ceiling of the main building was removed to make a taller sales room (probably the one with the present ceiling), and a marquise was built around the tower over a new entrance.

Parts of the adjoining town houses on M Street were obviously razed at uncertain later dates.

310.23 If property is proposed for designation principally for its prehistoric, historic and/or cultural significance, a description of the existing physical condition of the property and its relation to the prehistoric, historic and/or cultural significance of the property.

See 310.21

310.24 A map showing the exact boundaries of the property proposed for designation: the square and lot number(s) or parcel number: square footage of property proposed for designation: north arrow: and contiguous streets, if any.

310.25 Contemporary good quality photograph(s) of the property proposed for designation which provide a clear and accurate visual representation of the property and its setting: specify view, date of photograph and list credits, if any. 8" x 10" glossy photographs are preferred. In addition, applicant may supply slides (Applicant shall submit two copies of each photograph or slide.)

Cathedral

159

Rhode Island Avenue

160

M Street

161

30.92

44

53.25

36.17
17.52
21.61

lot 44 = 1096.54 square feet

N

Connecticut Avenue

162

De Sales Street

Mayflower
Hotel

310.24

Map indicating lot 44,
square 162

Map and measurements after
Baist's Real Estate Atlas of
Surveys of Washington, District
of Columbia, Philadelphia:
R. H. Baist, 1957, vol. 1, plan 14

Scale: 80 feet to the inch

310.26 A list of bibliographic and other sources used to prepare the application; indicate where the reference material is archived.

Books and Articles

Barton, Dr. E. E., Historical and Commercial Sketches of Washington and Environs, Washington, D. C.: E. E. Barton, 1884, p. 156 (old Demonet's)

"Connecticut Avenue Rivals Smartest Shopping Districts," The Washington Post, March 20, 1935, p. 12 (Demonet's a pioneer firm on the Avenue)

von Eckardt, Wolf, "Walking up Connecticut Avenue with Wolf von Eckardt," The Washington Post: Potomac, September 14, 1969, p. 18

Glassie, H., "Victorian Homes in Washington," reprinted from Records of the Columbia Historical Society, 1963-1965, Washington: Columbia Historical Society, 1966

Hutchins, S., and Moore, J. W., The National Capital Past and Present, Washington: The Post Publishing Co., 1885, p. 313 (Connecticut Avenue and the West End)

Madden, L. M., and Ruffine, S. D., eds., Cleveland Park, Washington, D. C. Neighborhood. Historic Research, Washington: American University, 1977, pp. 72-73 (John Sherman)

Moore, J. W., Picturesque Washington, Providence: J. A. and R. A. Reid, 1887 (engraving of Farragut Square)

Parris, Albion Keith, "Recollections of our neighbors in the first ward in the early sixties," Records of the Columbia Historical Society, 29-30, 1928, p. 288 (old Demonet's)

The Evening Star, December 20, 1926, obituary of Jules Demonet

The Washington Post, April 14, 1940, obituary of Charles Demonet

Washingtonian, 1, August, 1966, p. 41, advertisement for Connecticut Avenue Association

Survey Atlases

Bogue, John J., Plats of Subdivisions of the City of Washington, D. C., Squares 1-1111, inclusive, and Reservations, from Sept. 1, 1873, printed to Sept. 1, 1883, carefully compiled from the official records by John J. Bogue, West Washington, D.C., 1883, vol. 1, square 162

G. M. Hopkins, A Complete Set of Surveys and Plats of Properties in the City of Washington, D. C. Philadelphia: G. M. Hopkins, C. E., 1887, plate 5

R. H. Baist, Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Washington, D. C., Philadelphia: R. H. Baist, 1957, vol. 1, plan 14

(continued)

Archival Material

United States Archives, D.C. Building Permits, square 162, lot 44

- no. 1297, granted 23 April, 1880 (houses on lots 42 and 43; see 310.21)
- no. 2016, granted 23 June, 1904 (show windows on Connecticut Avenue, remodelling into shop, extension to south; drawings)
- no. 4554, granted 14 April, 1911 (show window on M Street)
- no. 5334, granted 22 May, 1911 (marquise built around tower; drawings)
- no 7975, granted 18 June, 1921 (steps on M Street removed, interior staircase built)

Recorder of Deeds, District of Columbia, 5th and D Streets, N. W.

Lot 44, square 162, instr. no. 39, deed, November 15, 1901, Helen C. Harlow et vir et al to Jules A. Demonet

Photographs:

Martin Luther King Library, Washingtoniana Collection

Connecticut Avenue, no. 6559, by C M. Bell, Russian Legation
Farragut Square, no. 3027, Charles S. Cudlip, Publisher
both are undated, but show Demonet building in background, horses in streets

Interviews

Mr. Pietro Orcino, Avignone Freres, July, 1978



1100 block of Connecticut Avenue, N. W., from southwest, with Demonet building at corner of Connecticut and M, August, 1977



Demonet building, Connecticut Avenue and M Street, N. W., from northwest, August, 1977



1100 block of Connecticut Avenue, N. W., from southwest, with Demonet building at corner of Connecticut and M, August, 1977



Demonet building, Connecticut Avenue and M Street, N. W., from northwest, August, 1977