

**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 or 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 an 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: Washington and Georgetown Railroad Car House  
Other names/site number: Navy Yard Car Barn (preferred)

**2. Location**

Street & Number: 770 M Street, S.E.  Not for Publication  
City or town: Washington  Vicinity  
State: DC Code: DC County: District of Columbia Code: 001 Zip Code: 20003

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
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 certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby, certify that this property is: Signature of the Keeper Date of Action  
 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): \_\_\_\_\_

**Navy Yard Car Barn**  
Name of Property

**Washington, D.C.**  
County and State

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	No. Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> Public-Local	<input type="checkbox"/> District	<u>1</u>	___ Buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> Public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> Site	___	___ Sites
<input type="checkbox"/> Public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> Structure	___	___ Structure
	<input type="checkbox"/> Object	___	___ Objects
		<u>1</u>	___ Total
Name of related multiple property listing <u>Historic Streetcar and Bus-Related Resources</u> <u>In Washington, D.C. 1862-1962</u>		Number of contributing Resources previously listed in the National Register <u>1</u> <u>(Within Capitol Hill Historic District)</u>	

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
<u>TRANSPORTATION/Rail-related</u>	<u>COMMERCE/TRADE/Restaurant</u>
_____	<u>COMMERCE/TRADE/Business</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)	Materials (enter categories from instructions)
<u>LATE VICTORIAN/Romanesque Revival</u>	foundation: <u>Concrete Block</u>
_____	walls: <u>Brick: Five-Course American Bond</u>
_____	roof: <u>Slag</u>
_____	other: _____
_____	_____

**Narrative Description**

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

**Navy Yard Car Barn**  
**Name of Property**

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**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 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.)

**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.)

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation

Architecture

**Period of Significance**

1891-1962

**Significant Dates**

1891

1909

1962

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

NA

**Cultural Affiliation**

NA

**Architect/Builder**

Walter C. Root

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**9. Major Bibliographic References**

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)

previously listed in the NR

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 add. data:

State SHPO office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Specify repository:

Traceries \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property 1-1/2 acres

UTM References

1 /1/8/ /3/2/6/8/8/0/ /4/3/0/5/0/1/8/  
Zone Easting Northing

3 /// // // // // // // // // // //  
Zone Easting Northing

2 /// // // // // // // // // // //  
Zone Easting Northing

4 /// // // // // // // // // // //  
Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The building at 770 M Street, S.E. occupies all of Square 907 in Washington, D.C. Square 907 is bounded by M and L Streets, SE to the north and south, and 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Streets, SE to the east and west.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The building has occupied Square 907 since its construction in 1891 and its enlargement in 1909.

See continuation sheet

**Navy Yard Car Barn**  
**Name of Property**

**Washington, D.C.**  
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**11. Form Prepared By**

Name/title Laura V. Trieschmann and Jennifer J. Bunting, Architectural Historians  
Organization EHT Traceries, Inc. Date September 30, 2000 (revised 4/2005)  
Street & Number 1121 Fifth Street, N.W. Telephone (202) 393-1199  
City or Town Washington, DC State DC 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 PREI 770 M Street Association, LLC  
street & number 1001 E. Hector Street telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Conshohocken state PA zip code 19428-2395

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

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**Description Summary:**

The Navy Yard Car Barn at 770 M Street, S.E. (Square 907) was constructed in 1891, and substantially enlarged in 1909. Kansas City-based architect Walter C. Root designed the two-story building in the fashionable Romanesque Revival style of American architecture. As originally built in 1891, the building served as a car barn for the Washington and Georgetown Railroad Company (W&G). Rectangular in form, the original portion of the building was located in the eastern half of the square, extending along 8<sup>th</sup> Street. In 1909, Capital Traction Company had the building substantially enlarged with the construction of a one-story addition that consumed the remainder of Square 907. As a result, the building now presents a square footprint, standing two stories along 8<sup>th</sup> Street and one story on 7<sup>th</sup> Street. The building, now painted blue, sits in a mixed-use urban neighborhood in southeast Washington, D.C. across from the Navy Yard.

The greatest stylistic statement is presented on the oldest portion of the building, within the canted primary façade at Potomac Avenue. The style of the building mimics the medieval castles and fortresses of the Romanesque with angle towers, watchtowers, blind arrow slits, conical broach roofs, and corbelled parapets pierced by machicolations. The steel structure is clad in brick laid in five-course American bond with concrete detailing. It sits on a rusticated concrete block foundation capped by a beveled concrete water table. The building has a flat roof hidden behind a parapet that is accented by a continuous arcade of blind arches. These semi-circular shaped arches, set just below the coping of the parapet, simulate machicolations of the medieval castles.<sup>1</sup> Projecting angle towers frame the primary entries of the canted façade. Semi-circular in form, the towers rise above the roof and are ornamented with watchtowers. A corbelled brick chimney is visible behind the parapet. The 1909 addition, although not as stylistically ornate, mimics the original portion of the building in design and material.

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<sup>1</sup> Machicolations are openings between a projecting parapet's corbels from which the defenders poured boiling oil or other missiles down on attackers without being exposed themselves.

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**General Description:**

Site:

The building is located at 770 M Street, S.E. in Square 907. The square is bounded by 7<sup>th</sup> Street to the west, L Street to the north, 8<sup>th</sup> Street to the west, and M Street to the south. At the intersection of 8<sup>th</sup> and M Streets, Potomac Avenue runs diagonally northeast to southwest, clipping the southeast corner of the square. The primary façade, standing two stories, faces southeast on this sliver of Potomac Avenue and wraps around along 8<sup>th</sup> and M Streets. The primary pedestrian entries into the building are located at the Potomac Avenue elevation, stretching northward along 8<sup>th</sup> Street and westward along M Street. The original vehicular entries marked the building along 8<sup>th</sup> Street. With the building's expansion in 1909, additional vehicular entrances were located along 7<sup>th</sup>, M and L Streets. The Navy Yard is located to the south, with mixed-use residential and commercial buildings surrounding to the east, west, and north

Exterior Description:

The canted primary façade, facing southeast on a small section of Potomac Avenue at the corner of M and 8<sup>th</sup> Streets, measures two bays in width. Two semi-circular arched bays flanked by angle towers mark this two-story elevation. The arched bays present a tripartite pattern created by slightly recessed openings that are divided by brick piers and stringcourses, which also read as mullions. The tripartite pattern of the westernmost arch is pierced on the first story by a wide single entry. This central entry holds a metal two-light replacement door capped by a three-light transom. It is reached by a modern handicapped accessible side ramp with a central stair. Composed of brick with a concrete pad, the ramp and stair share a metal balustrade. Two vinyl six-light windows with square-edged aluminum surrounds flank the entry opening. The beveled stone water table over the rusticated stone foundation doubles as a sill for the window openings. Similarly, over the window and entry opening there is a continuous brick lintel that also reads as a stringcourse. Above the lintel, former fixed window openings have been infilled with parged concrete blocks and partially obscured from view by a large canvas awning.

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The easternmost arch is similarly finished on the first story. This arch historically held three windows within the tripartite pattern. Although the side openings are present, the central bay has been infilled with concrete blocks and parged. Two six-light fixed vinyl windows with square-edged aluminum surrounds flank the infilled bay. The windows use the beveled water table as a sill and have brick lintels that meet the two-story brick piers making up the tripartite pattern. Again, above the lintels, the former fixed window openings have been infilled with parged concrete blocks. A continuous stone stringcourse, which historically served as a mullion, marks the upper portion of the tripartite.

A wide brick band defines the second story of the semi-circular arched bays. This band historically encircled the original portion of the building with a molded brick cornice. Within the arched bays, the cornice has been removed to expose the brick structure underneath. Framed by a five-course header bond lintel that springs from the extant cornice, the second story of the arched bay is divided into three parts by the two brick piers that serve as mullions. The central opening holds a segmentally arched twelve-light replacement window that attempts to look like a double-hung sash. The side openings hold similar windows, although a number of the lights have been cut at an angle because of the semi-circular arch of the bays in which they sit. A continuous stone sill replaces the upper molding of the no-longer extant cornice.

Running from this primary façade, west along M Street, the building is ornamented by a double row of dentil molding. Constructed of stone, the dentil molding is finished with a bead-and-reel motif that acts as bedmolding. Fifteen small semi-circular arches adorn the flat parapet, above the dentil molding. These blind arches, set just below the coping of the parapet, simulate machicolations of the medieval castles. The arches are edged by a single soldier-course of bricks. The brick parapet is capped with flat stone coping.

Flanking the primary façade are semi-circular angle towers that project beyond the wall plane of the structure. The foundations of the angle towers, which are similarly ornamented, are finished with rusticated concrete blocks and a concrete water table. Buttresses rise from the tops of the water table to flank the approximate center of the window openings. These buttresses are constructed of rusticated concrete blocks with beveled concrete coping. Continuing the tripartite pattern, the angle towers are ornamented with brick piers that rise one-story and stone mullions



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that once served as sills for the now infilled windows of the towers. The center bay of the westernmost angle tower holds a single six-light replacement window with a square-edged aluminum surround. A stone lintel ties the opening to the flanking brick piers. A continuous stone stringcourse, which historically served as a mullion, marks the upper portion of the tripartite. The first story is finished with a rough-cut stone lintel that also reads as a stringcourse. The first and second stories are separated by a band of five-course American bond brick. The second story is defined by three elongated window openings separated by wide expanses of brick that continue the tripartite pattern of the first story. The openings hold 4/4 double-hung, wood sash windows with narrow beaded surrounds. A continuous, smooth stone sill encircles the angle tower. Similarly, a continuous, rough-cut lintel caps the tops of the windows.

Like the main block of the building, the angle tower is ornamented by a double row of dentil molding and a bead-and-reel bedmolding. Six blind arrow slits with slanted stone sills ornament the upper portion of the tower. Semi-circular in shape, the slits are capped by a double row of soldier-course bricks. A flat parapet with stone coping edges the flat roof of the tower. Joining the angle tower with the main block of the building are two watchtowers. The bases of the towers are round balls that hang from the double row of dentil molding and bead-and-reel bedmolding. Semi-circular in form, the watchtowers have solid shafts. The upper portions of the watchtowers are ornamented with two rows of square-edged moldings. The lower course of molding continues along the parapet of the angle tower to serve as the coping. Above the molding, on the watchtowers, are small blind arrow slits. The arched slits, constructed with inset brick, are semi-circular in shape. Conical broach roofs, with expansive overhangs and beaded finials, top the watchtowers. The easternmost angle tower is similarly finished from foundation to roof. This tower, however, holds three windows on the first story, rather than just one.

The east elevation, running along 8<sup>th</sup> Street, measures eleven bays wide because of the rear addition on the north end. The southern end of the elevation continues the ornamentation of the primary façade with the rusticated foundation, semi-circular arched bays with brick piers, dentil molding with bead-and-reel bedmolding, and machicolations. Five semi-circular arched bays mark the original portion of the building. Wide brick pilasters divide the arches of the east elevation. Ornate stone and brick capitals composed of an egg-and-dart bedmolding, header bond bricks, an ogee cornice, and square-edge caps top the pilasters. The five-course header-

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bond brick lintels surrounding the semi-circular arched bays rise from these capitals. Historically holding windows and doors, the first-story bays are now infilled with concrete blocks and bricks set on smooth concrete sills. Molded wood lintels with beaded caps top the first story openings. Divided by two brick piers that serve as mullions, the central openings of the second story hold segmentally arched twelve-light replacement windows that attempt to look like a double-hung sash. The side openings hold similar windows, although a number of the lights have been cut at an angle because of the semi-circular arch of the bays in which they sit.

The second arched bay from the primary façade serves as the entry for the east elevation. The center portion includes a two-light single-leaf metal replacement door with a one-light transom and three-light sidelights. A vinyl eight-light window and a square parged opening top the entry. A portion of the foundation has been removed, suggesting this entry opening was historically wider than a single-leaf. Flanking the entry to each side are two stacked six-light vinyl windows capped by square parged openings. All of the windows have square-edged aluminum surrounds. The lower window openings have slanted rowlock brick sills. The bay is crowned at the roofline by a stepped brick parapet with aluminum coping. A canvas awning shelters the entry.

Within the 1909-rear addition that extends along the east elevation are five similarly arched bays with three elongated openings that have been infilled with cinderblock. The northernmost bay displays an elongated central portion that has been infilled with brick and crowned with a square opening closed with cinderblock. A cinderblock-filled rectangular blind opening is located to each side. The slightly projecting bay at the northern end of the east elevation appears as three columns with arabesque Byzantine cushion capitals. The shafts are constructed of five-course American bond brick with rounded corners. Between each column there is a six-light vinyl window over a four-light vinyl window. A band appearing as a brick balustrade separates them. Each balustrade has three blind arrow slits, a square-edged concrete cap, and a rusticated concrete base. The lower four-light windows have projecting square-edged concrete sills.

The north elevation displays an identical Byzantine columned first bay on the second story. It appears as three columns with arabesque cushion capitals. The shafts are constructed of five-course American bond brick with rounded corners. A six-light vinyl window over a four-light vinyl window, both surrounded by square-edged aluminum casings, pierces that space between

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each column. A band appearing as a brick balustrade separates them, each with three blind arrow slits, a square-edged concrete cap, and a rusticated concrete base. The lower four-light windows have slightly projecting square-edged concrete sills. The first story has a garage door opening capped by a metal I-beam lintel decorated with two florets. The bay is slightly inset and infilled with concrete block. It has an off-center entry with a single-leaf flush metal door with two square lights and a canvas awning. The remainder of the original main block continues the detailing of the east elevation with an arcade of semi-circular arched fenestration. Unlike the second story tripartite openings of the east elevation and primary façade, the center opening has been infilled with brick. The parapet is similarly ornamented with dentil molding, bead-and-reel bedmolding, and machicolations. The third bay, moving east to west, has a central elongated rectangular blind opening that has been infilled with cinderblock. The former opening, now filled by a rusticated concrete-block sill, displays no evidence that a rusticated concrete-block foundation ever filled this bay, suggesting that it was once a streetcar entry. The fourth bay similarly lacks the typical foundation cladding, but the cinderblock infilled opening is not as wide.

The construction of the 1909 addition has obstructed nearly all of the west elevation of the original main block. However, a portion of the second story is visible over this one-story addition. The second story is divided symmetrically into repeating bays separated by slightly projecting brick columns. Each bay consists of two vinyl-6/6 replacement windows with segmentally arched brick lintels. Because of the addition, only the upper portion of the original rear elevation is visible. This portion of the main block is ornamented with dentil molding, bead-and-reel bedmolding, and machicolations that wrap around the corner and extend one bay. The southern window of the second bay has been infilled.

The remaining portion of the north elevation, built into a slight incline, consists of a one-and-a-half-story, flat-roofed brick addition. The addition is an integral part of the building's development as a twentieth-century metropolitan streetcar facility. The architectural detailing is compatible with the Romanesque Revival main block, although it reflects the utilitarian nature of the building. The addition is constructed of brick with a five-course American bond and a molded brick cornice. A beveled concrete water table caps the brick foundation. The elevation consists of seven bays that have been slightly altered. All but the first and second bays have

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entablature-like detailing, which consists of a corbelled cornice, two courses of brick dentil molding, and a flush architrave. The first bay is slightly inset and parged. An off-center recess houses a flush single-leaf, metal door. The second bay displays three 6/12 fixed vinyl replacement windows with square-edged aluminum surrounds. The foundation of this bay is parged concrete with a beveled cap. Both bays share a continuous parged lug lintel. Beneath the simplified classical detailing, the third bay holds a single-leaf metal door with two-square lights. It is flanked by six parged panels and displays a soldier-course brick lintel. Above the entry, there are three four-light fixed vinyl windows with narrow aluminum surrounds. A canvas awning shelters the openings. The brick foundation and concrete water table are absent from this bay, suggesting it was once a streetcar entrance. The fourth bay consists of two slightly recessed fixed 12/8-vinyl windows with square-edged aluminum surrounds. A stretcher bond brick column separates them. The next two bays have the similar decorative architrave and three 9/9-vinyl fixed windows with aluminum square-edged surrounds. The bay on the westernmost end of the north elevation is similarly detailed but displays two 12/12-fixed vinyl windows with square-edged aluminum surrounds.

The west, or rear, elevation consists of the 1909 one-story addition facing 7<sup>th</sup> Street. It is twelve bays wide with a brick foundation and a high water table capped by beveled concrete coping. All of the bays, except for two bays that consist of roll-up garage entries, have entablature-like detailing beneath the molded cornice roofline. This detailing consists of a corbelled cornice, two-course brick dentil molding, and a flush architrave. The first and second bays display two fixed 12/12-vinyl windows, located beneath the classically detailed architrave. The windows share a lug square-edged concrete sill. The third bay has cinderblock infilling and displays an off-center single-leaf flush metal door. There is a one-light plated glass window with a narrow molded wood surround located to the north of the entry. The door is accessed by a wooden handicapped accessibility ramp with a lattice foundation covering and a wooden post balustrade. The ramp reaches across the first three bays. The fourth bay displays the architrave-like pattern and three 9/9-fixed vinyl windows with square-edged aluminum surrounds. The fifth bay is detailed similarly with three fixed 9/9-vinyl windows and concrete square-edged sills. A canvas awning shelters this bay. It also has a single-leaf entry that extends just beyond the height of the foundation. The door is flush metal with two square lights, three-light sidelights and rowlock brick lintel. The sixth and seventh bays are similar in style, exhibiting three 9/9 vinyl fixed

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windows with square-edged aluminum surrounds and lug square-edged concrete sills. The eighth and ninth bays have two 12/12-fixed vinyl windows with aluminum square-edged surrounds and lug square-edged concrete sills. The next two bays consist of two roll-up metal beaded fourteen feet high garage doors. They do not display the classical architrave detailing exhibited in the other ten bays of the elevation. The area around the doors has been clad with corrugated metal sheeting, as have the slightly projecting posts flanking the doors. Additionally, the garage doors are each flanked by a single-leaf entry. The doors are flush metal with two square lights and three-light sidelights. Canvas awnings shelter the entries. The last bay on the southern end of the west elevation consists of the classically inspired architrave-like cap and two 12/12-vinyl windows with square-edged aluminum surrounds and a lug square-edged concrete sill.

The south elevation, facing M Street, consists of the main block and the one-story addition. The main block portion extends from the primary facade to the west. To the west of the previously described angle tower, the elevation is marked by a two-story semi-circular arched bay that is similar to those of the original façade and side elevations. Originally a streetcar entry, the arched bay is infilled with concrete block at the foundation level. Brick piers, stringcourses, and infilled window openings mark the first story. Tripartite windows pierce the second story. The central opening holds a segmentally arched twelve-light replacement window that attempts to look like a double-hung sash. The side openings hold similar windows, although a number of the lights have been cut at an angle because of the semi-circular arch of the bays in which they sit. A continuous stone sill replaces the upper molding of the no-longer extant cornice. Running from this primary façade west along M Street, the elevation is ornamented by a double row of dentil molding. Constructed of stone, the dentil molding is finished with a bead-and-reel motif that acts as bedmolding. Small semi-circular arches adorn the flat parapet, above the dentil molding. These blind arches, set just below the coping of the parapet, simulate machicolations of the medieval castles. The westernmost bay of the original main block was historically not marked by a semi-circular arched bay. This bay is finished with a rusticated stone foundation, beveled stone coping, two nine-light fixed first story windows with transoms and rough-cut stone lintels. Set above the molded cornice are two elongated 6/6-fixed vinyl windows with rough-cut stone lintels.

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The west portion of the south elevation consists of the 1909 addition, which measures one story in height. It is constructed of brick with a five-course American bond pattern and a molded brick cornice. A beveled concrete water table caps the brick foundation. The elevation consists of four bays that have been slightly altered. Each bay has entablature-like detailing, which consists of a corbelled cornice, two-course dentil molding, and a flush architrave. The first bay following the 1909 addition consists of a 12/12 fixed vinyl window with a square-edged aluminum surround. The architrave detailing forms the lintel, with a square-edged concrete sill. The remaining three bays each have three fixed 12/12 banked vinyl windows with square-edged aluminum surrounds. The southwest corner of the building is beveled and displays no fenestration.

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Interior Description:

As indicated on historic maps, the interior of the building originally contained offices, mechanical devices to operate the streetcars (both cable and electric traction), workshops, storage space, and repair troughs that were cut into the floor. The workshops, an oil room and a water closet were located in the southeast corner, offices and the steam heating mechanisms occupied the northeast corner, while the remainder of the building was open for car storage and repairs. Original track layout diagrams place central transfer tables surrounded by individual parking spaces on both the first and second floors. Historic photographs reveal that the original streetcar entrances were located along the 8<sup>th</sup> Street elevation and consisted of paneled-with-lights roll-up doors. With the building's expansion in 1909, additional entrances were located along 7<sup>th</sup>, M and L Streets. Following the end of the streetcar industry in 1962, the interior was divided to create office space with access from 8<sup>th</sup> Street and a commercial storefront at Potomac Avenue. Thus, little of the original interior detailing and floor plan is extant.

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**Summary Statement of Significance:**

The Washington and Georgetown Railroad Company constructed the Navy Yard Car Barn at 770 M Street (Square 907) in southeast Washington, D.C. in 1891. The brick-clad steel-frame car barn was originally built by the construction company of S. H. and D. F. Adams, to the designs of Kansas City-based architect Walter C. Root. Romanesque Revival in style, the car barn is the only extant structure of the four streetcar-related buildings designed by Root in Washington, D.C. The car barn was one of four cable resources completed in the early 1890s by the Washington and Georgetown Railroad Company, and stands today as the only extant purpose-built cable building from this period. A short-lived venture that extended from 1890 to 1899, cable was utilized experimentally by only two District companies as a substitute for horse-drawn traction. With the end of cable propulsion, the Navy Yard Car Barn was modernized to provide electric traction. The building is one of only a few streetcar resources to continue to operate as such until the demise of the industry in 1962.

As such, the Navy Yard Car Barn stands as an important example of both a stylized industrial building in a predominantly residential neighborhood and as a historic cable/electric traction resource. The building is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C with architecture and transportation as the areas of significance. The period of significance ranges from 1891 when the building was constructed to 1962 when, with the demise of the streetcar, the building ceased to function as a car barn.

**Resource History and Historic Context:**

Washington and Georgetown Railroad Company

The Navy Yard Car Barn is a storage and repair facility that serviced the Washington and Georgetown Railroad Company's streetcars in southeast Washington, D.C. Henry D. Cooke, a Philadelphia businessman who relocated to Georgetown about 1860, organized the first street railway company in the nation's capital with the aid of his brother Jay Cooke.<sup>2</sup> Known as the

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<sup>2</sup> John W. Boettjer, "Street Railways in the District of Columbia," Master's thesis, George Washington University,



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Washington and Georgetown Railroad Company (W&G), the new company purchased the horses, omnibuses, and personal property of Gilbert Vanderwerken's "urban stagecoach" company for \$28,500 in 1862. Maintaining his interest in transportation systems, Vanderwerken became a director in the new company and his stables at 3222 M Street became the location of important repair shops.

The new transit company was an immediate success, quickly exceeding the financial expectations of its investors. The W&G's well established, centralized lines served as the backbone of the streetcar railway system in Washington, D.C. throughout the horse-drawn era, a period that extended from July 29, 1862 to May 26, 1900. With net earnings in the first year of over \$61,000, the railway company was operating seventy streetcars and 490 horses a day. The service was regular and reliable with just a five-minute headway between cars on each line. In 1865, the company provided public transportation service for more than 8,651,223 passengers for a span of about fourteen miles.<sup>3</sup>

The three decades of horse-drawn streetcars in downtown Washington gave way to experimentation with mechanically powered cable cars in the 1890s. As early as 1872, a successful cable road was built and operated in San Francisco, California. Slowly, during the late 1870s and early 1880s, thirty other American cities deployed cable for some of their major routes. The system used stationary power sources to operate underground steel cables. The United States House of Representative's Committee on the District of Columbia began to investigate the use of a cable car system in the mid-1880s. In 1886, the Committee published a report, describing cable as "the best known method of passenger transit through city streets, insuring speed, safety, cleanliness, and a uniformly cheap service."<sup>4</sup> The transition to underground cable cars was boosted by the 1889 Congressional legislation that mandated the phasing out of horse-drawn railway vehicles and prohibited the use of overhead electric wires. Since the only feasible electric traction system in use during this period required overhead electric wires, the law gave great funding advantage to cable car railways within the original

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1963, pp. 18-23.

<sup>3</sup> Boettjer, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee of the District of Columbia, Washington Cable Railway Company, 49th Congress, 1st Sess., Rept. No. 2549 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1886), p. 1.

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boundaries of the District of Columbia.

A short-lived venture that extended from 1890 to 1899, cable was utilized by only two District companies – W&G and the Columbia Railway Company. Charles C. Glover, W&G's vice president, had been the driving force behind the decision to install cable. Together with company president Henry Hurt, Glover had spent five weeks touring street railway systems across the country before selecting Daniel Bontecou of Kansas City to design the District's first cable line.<sup>5</sup> On May 12, 1890, the District of Columbia's first cable car operation opened along W&G's existing 7<sup>th</sup> Street line. It ran from the Arsenal (now Fort McNair at 4<sup>th</sup> and P Streets, S.W.) at the waterfront through a major shopping district and the dense residential neighborhoods around 7<sup>th</sup> Street. Established by W&G, the single line was three-and-one-half miles long with its stationary powerhouse located at the Arsenal terminus. Following the immediate success of their 7<sup>th</sup> Street line, the W&G quickly converted its other two lines -- along Pennsylvania Avenue and 14<sup>th</sup> Street -- to cable operation.

With the transition to cable, W&G undertook a massive \$3,500,000 building campaign that included the erection of new car barns, powerhouse complexes, and the installation of miles of cable. According to the company's president (Henry Hurt), the aim was to establish a transportation model for the country. Walter C. Root, following his tenure with his brother's Chicago firm of Burnham and Root, was commissioned to design their three new cable car houses and the main powerhouse. The choice of an out-of-town architect is not all that unusual as the company was financed largely by out-of-town capitalists who had no real estate interests in the Washington, D.C. area. Additionally, at the time Root was hired to design the new cable buildings for the nation's capital, he had been working in Kansas City, the home of the systems designer Daniel Bontecou. The new buildings designed by Root included the Mount Pleasant Car Barn located at 3200 14<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.; the 7<sup>th</sup> Street Car Barn and Powerhouse at P and Water Streets in S.W.; the Navy Yard Car Barn at 770 M Street, S.E.; and the Pennsylvania Avenue Powerhouse at 14<sup>th</sup> and E Streets, N.W. This investment demonstrated "the growing importance of this city" according to a contemporary account.<sup>6</sup> The buildings were all

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<sup>5</sup> "The New Cable Road," *Evening Star*, July 2, 1892, p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> "The New Cable Road," *Evening Star*, July 2, 1892.

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completed in 1891 in the distinctive Romanesque Revival style of architecture.<sup>7</sup> The W&G Pennsylvania Avenue Powerhouse, one of the biggest and best equipped in the industry, was also one of the largest private buildings in the city at the time. The company claimed it was the most expensive structure of the kind ever erected.<sup>8</sup> The building's excess space allowed portions of it to be rented to individual businesses that could make use of the convenient steam power source on the first floor.<sup>9</sup> Of these four buildings, only the Navy Yard Car Barn is extant.

The *Evening Star* published detailed accounts of the railway company's operations in 1892. The articles recounted that the "public will be able to travel by streetcar from Georgetown to the Navy Yard in about forty minutes.... In a little more than twenty minutes a passenger can go from the Center Market to Mount Pleasant."<sup>10</sup> Serviced by the powerhouse at Pennsylvania Avenue, the lines ran from Georgetown along Pennsylvania Avenue to the Navy Yard and from the former Baltimore and Ohio Depot northwest of the Capitol to Mount Pleasant via Pennsylvania Avenue and 14<sup>th</sup> Street. This line served the major business and commercial districts in the city, passing the White House, the Treasury, Center Market, the Navy Yard, and the Capitol. The powerhouse at P and Water Streets in S.W. provided service for the 7th Street line, which ran along M Street, S.W. to 7<sup>th</sup> Street, terminating at Florida Avenue.

The Navy Yard Car Barn, like its sister car house in Mount Pleasant, was designed to blend into the existing community. In southeast Washington, the Navy Yard neighborhood in the nineteenth century was divided at M Street, with residential buildings to the north and the Navy complex to the south. The federal presence in this southern quadrant of Washington initially focused on shipping activities, with wharves and associated buildings. The neighborhood adjacent to the Navy Yard developed primarily as housing for the craftsmen and laborers employed at the naval facility, as well as for midshipmen attending the Navy's training school.

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<sup>7</sup> The Mount Pleasant Car Barn was razed in 1907; the 7<sup>th</sup> Street Car Barn and Powerhouse was demolished in 1961; and the Pennsylvania Avenue Powerhouse was destroyed by fire in 1897. The Navy Yard Car Barn is the only Walter C. Root designed streetcar-related building that remains standing in the District of Columbia.

<sup>8</sup> "The New Cable Road," *Evening Star*, July 2, 1892.

<sup>9</sup> George Woodman Hilton. *The Cable Car in America: A New Treatise Upon Cable or Rope Traction As Applied to the Working of Street and Other Railways*. (San Diego, CA: Howell-North Books, 1982), p. 447.

<sup>10</sup> "The New Cable Road," *Evening Star*, July 2, 1892.

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Together with the nearby federal arsenal on Greenleaf Point (another name for Fort McNair), the Navy Yard neighborhood generated a large volume of trade and activity. Accordingly, as early as 1830, an omnibus line operated by Vanderwerken ran between the Navy Yard and Georgetown. This route created ties between the two waterfront communities, which was an original growth pattern encouraged by Pierre L'Enfant in his 1791 plan for the nation's capital.<sup>11</sup> Shipbuilding at the Navy Yard ceased, thus by 1840 the facility began manufacturing ammunitions and producing ship parts exclusively. Despite the reduction in activity at the Navy Yard, the need for continued public transportation was noteworthy. The Washington and Georgetown Railroad Company recognized this when planning to erect a car house at the terminus of their line, directly across from the main entrance of the Navy Yard.

Prior to the construction of the W&G building, Square 907 was largely undeveloped, even lacking the subdivided lots seen on surrounding squares. A twenty-five foot wide alley that ran north to south between M and L Streets divided the rectangular block. Because of the diagonal route of Potomac Avenue, the southeastern corner of Square 907 was clipped where the wider avenue intersected M and 8<sup>th</sup> Streets. A few three-story dwellings were located in the northwestern corner of the square, with stables and a tannery fronting the bisecting alley. The three-story Seamen's Bethel Home was found on the eastern side of the block, fronting L Street. The Herdic Phaeton Company Stables, dating from the 1860s, were located on M Street, extending northward along the alley. The one-story brick stable measured 50 feet by 100 feet.

The building that Root designed for W&G was to face the Navy Yard at Potomac Avenue, where it intersected M and 8<sup>th</sup> Streets. This siting allowed the primary façade, which fronted south, to be oversized and imposing with exaggerated Romanesque Revival style detailing. The side and rear elevations that faced the existing residential neighborhood continued the architectural interpretation of the style, in a scale more compatible with adjacent dwellings. The Navy Yard Car Barn as originally constructed measured 100 by 283 feet and provided storage space for 250 cable cars. The original building permit (permit #557, September 9, 1891) estimated the Navy Yard facility would cost \$50,000 to construct, \$16,000 less than the larger and more ornate

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<sup>11</sup> National Capital Planning Commission with Frederick Gutheim, Consultant, *Worthy of the Nation: The History of Planning for the National Capital* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1979), p. 48.

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Mount Pleasant Car Barn. Angle towers at M and 8<sup>th</sup> Streets on Potomac Avenue augmented the rectangular shape of the building, while two-story semi-circular arched openings illuminated the interior. The building was located on the eastern half of Square 907, bounded by M and L Streets to the north and south. The structure stretched along 8<sup>th</sup> Street with the primary façade at the southeastern corner of the square on Potomac Avenue.

On September 29-30, 1897, the main powerhouse on Pennsylvania Avenue was completely destroyed by fire, forcing the company to revert temporarily to horse-drawn power. With the fire providing the impetus for electrification, underground wiring for electric traction was installed under Pennsylvania Avenue, 7<sup>th</sup> Street, and 14<sup>th</sup> Street in May 1898, using recent advances in technology to provide electric traction without overhead wires. The Columbia Railway Company, one of the city's original horse-drawn railway companies, continued to experiment with cable despite the systems abandonment by W&G in 1897. Yet, in spite of the expense, Columbia Railway Company eventually began to convert to the electrified conduit system. The last cable car in Washington, D.C. ran on July 23, 1899.<sup>12</sup>

Capital Traction Company

Authorized by an act of Congress in 1895, the Rock Creek Railway acquired the assets of the Washington and Georgetown Railroad Company. The assets included streetcar lines, buildings, and rolling stock. The primary reason for the smaller company's acquisition of the larger and more successful W&G was that the charter for the Rock Creek Railway was more liberal on capitalization. As recounted by LeRoy O. King, Jr. in *100 Years of Capital Traction*, "the W&G's charter, dating from 1862, limited its capital to \$500,000, too small a figure for so successful a road. Rock Creek's charter, however, had no top limit. It was easier to use this method of merger than to get Congressional approval to increase W&G's capitalization."<sup>13</sup> The new enterprise was named the Capital Traction Company.

In its first several years, the Capital Traction Company streamlined and modernized

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<sup>12</sup> King, pp. 35-37.

<sup>13</sup> King, p. 31.

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Washington's public transportation system. Streetcar routes were reworked and tracks were simplified in several locations in order to eliminate congestion, particularly in the area between New York and Pennsylvania Avenues and 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Streets. This modernization also included the demolition of Root's Mount Pleasant Car Barn at 3200 14<sup>th</sup> Street, which was replaced by the 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Decatur Road Car Barn in 1906.

The modernization of the Navy Yard Car Barn did not occur until after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. On April 5, 1909, Capital Traction applied for a building permit for the Navy Yard Car Barn (permit #3669). The permit, estimating the work would cost \$75,000, proposed to erect a one-story brick and concrete structure that would encompass the rest of Square 907. This structure required the closing of the alley that ran north and south through the square, and the demolition of all extant buildings. The expansion to the Navy Yard Car Barn appears to have been designed and executed by architects and builders employed by the Capital Traction Company, as the building permit lists the name of the transit company rather than individuals responsible. As a result of the alterations, the structure now measured 248 feet by 289 feet, standing two-stories along 8<sup>th</sup> Street and one-story on 7<sup>th</sup> Street.

On September 23, 1909, Capital Traction applied for another building permit (permit #2030). This permit proposed to rearrange the existing tracks, interior columns, and supporting girders to accommodate the "new type of large cars."<sup>14</sup> The work also included wiring for new electric lighting, and moving the offices from the northern end of the building to the southern end in the more architecturally prominent corner of the building. Under the direction of the employed architects of Capital Traction, James L. Parsons served as the contractor.

Capital Transit Company

Peak usage, congestion, re-organization, and the gradual replacement of the street railway system with a more economical and more flexible bus system marked the final chapter in the story of Washington's streetcars. This transformation was under the direction of the Capital Transit Company, which was formed in December 1933. The company combined all street

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<sup>14</sup> Permit number 2030, September 23, 1909. Washington, D.C. permits, National Archives.

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railways in the District of Columbia, including the Capital Traction Company, under one management for the first time. During the 1930s and 1940s, the Capital Transit Company was conservatively managed under the utility power company known as the North American Company, which retained most of the earnings for reinvestment. This situation changed in 1949, when a long-postponed divestment required by the Public Utility Holding Company Act led to the purchase of the Capital Transit Company by Louis Wolfson of Jacksonville, Florida. The North American Company had been ordered to divest itself of either the power company or the transit company; however, the problem of finding a buyer had delayed the sale for a number of years. The new managers, under Wolfson, increased stock dividends, cut back on maintenance expenditures, and sought fare increases.

As a result of deteriorating labor management, a five-week strike occurred in the summer of 1955 brought tensions between the Wolfson management, Congress, and the Public Utilities Commission to a head. Congress enacted Public Law 389 that enabled the District of Columbia Commissioners to settle the strike, and also revoked Wolfson's franchise as of August 14, 1956. Furthermore, and most importantly, the law specified that the new operator of the franchise was required to provide an all-bus system. As anticipated by all but Congress, bidders did not materialize. Eventually New York financier O. Roy Chalk arranged to purchase the franchise. The charter of his new company, D.C. Transit Systems Inc., specified the elimination of streetcars from Washington's streets by 1963, although Chalk had initially proposed retaining some rail lines. Ultimately, the lines were phased out over a five-year period, an activity coordinated with other major public works projects in the city and suburbs. Thus, between 1956 and early 1962, all the remaining streetcar lines were either eliminated or converted to bus routes. The streetcars, which had provided transit in and around Washington since 1862, made their last trips on January 28, 1962, thereby ending an era of transportation that had directly affected the residential development and economic growth of the nation's capital.

Following the end of the streetcar industry, the Navy Yard Car Barn remained under the ownership of D.C. Transit. In 1963, the bus company had all of the tracks leading into the building covered with asphalt (Permit B 97118, August 7, 1963). The permit, however, indicates that the newly paved areas of the building were not to be used as parking lots. The permit also stated that the tracks and operating appurtenances were not to be removed, only paved over. The

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paving occurred on the east side of 7<sup>th</sup> Street, between L and M Streets, and on the south side of L Street, between 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Streets.

By the latter part of the 1960s, the property was owned by L Street Estates, Inc. The company leased it to the Department of Labor, which stored records in the building until about 1974. Since that time, until 1990, the building was vacant. It was then sold to the 770 Limited Partnership of Bethesda, Maryland. The Navy Yard Car Barn is currently used as an office space, with a small restaurant occupying the Potomac Avenue façade. All permits relating to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century change in use and configuration were not located, as the records remain on temporary loan to an unidentified agency (loan application dated 1988, D.C. Archives).

Walter C. Root: Architect

Walter C. Root was born in Atlanta, Georgia in 1859. Completing his studies at City College in New York, Root began his architectural training with Burnham & Root, his brother John Wellborn Root's prominent firm in Chicago. In 1886, Root was sent by the firm to Kansas City, Missouri to oversee the construction of the Board of Trade Building. Root remained in Kansas City following the completion of the building, practicing independently. During this period, he designed residential, commercial, and governmental buildings, including the Cass County Court House in Harrisonville, Missouri. In 1896, Root entered into partnership with George M. Siemens. The firm of Root and Siemens was active for thirty years, planning and executing more than six hundred buildings and structures. Among the most important of these was the New England Office Building, Santa Fe Railroad Office Building (1912), and the Grace Episcopal Cathedral (1916) in Topeka, Kansas; ten buildings at St. Mary's College in St. Mary's, Kansas; and the Natural History Museum in Lawrence, Kansas. In Kansas City, Missouri, the firm designed the Scarrit Office Building (1907), Postal Telegraph Building (1908), and General Hospital. Walter Root died in Kansas City on June 25, 1925.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Henry F. Withey and Elsie Rathburn Withey. *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)*. Los Angeles, CA: Hennessey and Ingalls, Inc., 1970), p. 526.



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