


<b>Lester A. Barr</b>		 <p>Source: <i>Washington Post</i>, January 18, 1937.</p>		
<b>Biographical Data</b>				
Birth: 1/12/1854	Place: Hagerstown, MD			
Death: 1/17/1937	Place: Washington, D.C.			
Family: wives, Ida, Almeda; sons, John L., L. Stewart; daughters, May, Margaret				
<b>Education</b>				
High School: unknown				
College: unknown				
Graduate School: n/a				
<b>Career</b>				
<b>Permit Database</b> (through 1958)				
<b>As Builder</b>	Earliest Permit: 1889	Latest Permit: 1905	Total Permits: 39	Total Buildings: 186
<b>As Owner</b>	Earliest Permit: 1886	Latest Permit: 1931	Total Permits: 49	Total Buildings: 208
*Note: In many instances, the subject is both the builder and owner. The permit counts also include permits issued to the individual and any company with which he was affiliated.				
*As a part of nineteenth century building regulations, building permits were required for the first time in 1872 and were often not archived until 1877.				
<b>Practice</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Date</b>		
Barr & Sanner	Founder	1889–1897		
<b>Professional Associations</b>				
<b>Societies or Memberships:</b> Director of the American National Bank, Federal American Co., Board of Trade Committee, Columbia Country Club, Columbia Historical Society, Member of the Episcopal Church				
<b>Awards or Commissions:</b>				
<b>Buildings</b>				
<b>Building Types:</b> Apartment Buildings, Row-houses				
<b>Styles and Forms:</b> Multi-story brick structures; Queen Anne, Beaux-Arts				
<b>DC Work Locations:</b> Northwest Quadrant: Adams Morgan, Columbia Heights, Dupont Circle, Kalorama Triangle, LeDroit Park, Mt. Pleasant				
<b>Notable Buildings</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Status</b>	
Wyoming Apartments	2022 Columbia Road, N.W.	1905–1911	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site	
Row-Houses	1901–1911 4 <sup>th</sup> Street N.W.	1892	LeDroit Park Historic District	
Row-Houses	1724 & 1726 20 <sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.	1890	Dupont Circle Historic District	
Row-Houses	409 & 411 I Street, N.E.	1892	<input type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site	

## Significance and Contributions

Lester Barr, a name synonymous with an era of elegance in real estate at the turn of the twentieth century in Washington, D.C., grew a successful development business and quality builder reputation from his beginnings as a plasterer in Northwest Washington, D.C.

Born in Hagerstown, Maryland, in 1854, Barr was the oldest son of parents David and Margaret Barr. Little is known of his childhood other than record of the family relocating to Washington, D.C. before the outbreak of the Civil War and his father's death in 1862. Barr, a natural entrepreneur, exhibited his adventurous character at age twenty-two with a 1500 mile horseback excursion from Omaha, Nebraska to Cheyenne, Wyoming—legendarily passing through the Battle of Little Bighorn. Later in life, Barr's lively spirit was showcased by his frequent travels and extended stays abroad.

By 1882, Barr was working as a plasterer in the District of Columbia and was married to Ida Lee Stewart, daughter of John and Mary Stewart, from Wilmington, North Carolina. The couple had a number of children before Ida's death in 1893, one of whom was son John Lester (future prominent Washington-area builder). By 1894, Barr had remarried Almeda Stewart, Ida's younger sister. Together they raised four children and kept company among Washington's elite.

In the late 1880's, Barr joined efforts with Franklin T. Sanner, also from Maryland, and together they became a dominant development team. During the 1890s, Barr & Sanner made some of the largest real estate deals in the history of the City, purchasing hundreds of thousands of dollars in property. In total, Barr & Sanner predominately working in Northwest, D.C. developed and built over 150 multi-story masonry dwellings from Connecticut Avenue, N.W. to 4<sup>th</sup> Street, N.E. The majority of their row-houses were designed by B. Stanley Simmons, a noted Washington architect who later continued to work on numerous projects with Barr and his son John L., but they also used architect T. Franklin Schneider in 1890 and Nicholas T. Haller in 1889. While known for the semi-detached brick row-house, Barr & Sanner was one of the first firms to develop the new urban building type, called the apartment house, in the District of Columbia. Mount Vernon Apartment House at Ninth Street and New York Avenue, N.W. was constructed in 1893 and was considered one of the duo's earliest achievements.

Barr & Sanner went their separate ways around 1900 and Barr continued as an independent builder, forming one of Washington's most successful development companies. While assisting in the development of Kalorama Triangle, Barr began work on the Wyoming Apartments, located at the corner of Columbia Road, Wyoming Avenue, and 19<sup>th</sup> Streets, N.W., in 1905. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the seven-story luxury apartment building is an example of the "Golden Age" of pre-World War I development. The buff-brick Beaux-Arts building was constructed in three separate phases to the designs of B. Stanley Simmons. At the time of its completion, the Wyoming was one of the largest apartment complexes in the City. With large



*547-539 Florida Ave, NW, example of Barr & Sanner row-house development, 1889. Photo by EHT Traceries, July 2012.*



*The Wyoming Apartments. James M. Goode, Best Addresses (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1988), 149.*

## DC Builders & Developers Directory

individual units and a luxurious marble lobby, the building exudes elegance. Barr himself resided in the Wyoming Apartments' penthouse from 1909 to 1937, from where he also operated his development business.

Barr's legacy persists in the many buildings he constructed that contribute to the character of Northwest Washington. In addition, his status as a prominent builder in the City is elevated by his son, John Lester Barr's success. Following an education from Harvard and the George Washington University School of Law, John followed in his father's footsteps and constructed modern high-rises, including apartment buildings, offices, and hotels, in the D.C. area from 1916 until his death in the 1960s. John's best-known development is the eleven-story Gothic Revival-style Barr Building located on Farragut Square. The structure, designed by B. Stanley Simmons was completed in 1927.



*13<sup>th</sup> and Fairmont Streets, NW. EHT Traceries, July 2012.*

Lester Barr, like many other builders, saw an opportunity in the construction of housing for the upper and middle classes during a time of transition in Washington, D.C. Barr played a significant role in forming D.C.'s urban residential identity, embracing the City Beautiful movement. Often mentioned alongside Washington real estate tycoon Harry Wardman, Barr met financial success in his career, constructing a large number of the City's characteristic Queen Anne-style row houses and some of the earliest apartment buildings. Unlike others who ventured into real estate and struggled through the depression era of the 1890s, Barr supported his two sons through law school, supported his daughters through debutant seasons, and acquired additional real estate in the District and Massachusetts. When Barr died at the age of 83, he left behind an estate valued around \$1,000,000.

<b>Sources</b>		
<b>Vertical Files</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> HSWDC	<input type="checkbox"/> MLK Library
<b>Other Repositories:</b> DC Building Permits Database, Ancestry.com		
<b>Obituary:</b>	Publication: <i>Washington Post</i>	Date: 1/18/1937
		Page: 5
<b>Biographical Directories</b>	<b>Year/Volume</b>	<b>Page</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Who's Who in the Nation's Capital	1921–1922; 1923–1924; 1926–1927; 1929–1930; 1934–1935	22; 25; 54; 64; 65
<input type="checkbox"/> History of the City of Washington: It's Men and Institutions	1903	
<input type="checkbox"/> Washington Past and Present	1932	
<input type="checkbox"/> Prominent Personages of the Nation's Capital	c. 1924	
<b>Other Sources:</b>		
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“Apartment Auction on October 26: John L. Barr is Appointed by Court to Operate Wyoming,” <i>Washington Post</i> , October 4, 1931, Proquest Historical Newspapers.		
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## DC Builders & Developers Directory

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### Notes:

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