

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received DEC 18 1985

date entered

JUN 2 1986

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic The Plymouth

and/or common The Plymouth

2. Location

street & number 1236 11th Street, NW not for publication

city, town Washington, D.C. vicinity of

state code county code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Mia Soughyahaar (1236 11th Street LTD Partnership)

street & number 1821 19th Street, NW

city, town Washington, D.C. vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. District of Columbia Courthouse

street & number ?

city, town Washington, D.C. state

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date June, 1985 federal state county local

depository for survey records D.C. Historic Preservation Office

city, town Washington, D.C. state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Plymouth is seven stories tall (79'3") plus basement, 94' deep, and has a 7-bay (78'3") main facade. In plan, the building exhibits a double-E shape, thus providing U-shaped light and ventilation wells on each side facade. The building is free-standing, separated slightly from neighboring buildings and facing an alley to the rear. The roof is flat. Designed to be fire-proof, the building was constructed using a combination of brick, cast-iron, steel, and concrete. Decorative elements strongly reflect the influence of Neo-Classical design.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The sides and rear of the building are faced in plain red brick and are completely unadorned. In contrast, the main facade facing 11th Street is faced with buff-colored brick and is trimmed with decorative details of Indiana limestone and galvanized iron. Symmetrically arranged, the elements of the main facade relate to a central vertical axis, which is emphasized by a slightly projecting central pavilion that extends the height of the building. Providing secondary horizontal emphasis is the visual division of the facade into three sections (composed of the first story, the second through sixth stories, and finally the seventh story) corresponding to the division of the classical orders into base, shaft, and capital.

Below the first-story "base" of the building is a basement story, the openings of which are accessible from a below-grade areaway. At the northern end of the building, iron steps lead down from the street to the lower level. At the opposite end of the building there is a ramp, designated on the original plans of the building as a "bicycle run." Apparently designed in response to the huge popularity of bicycling near the turn-of-the-century, this bicycle ramp is interesting evidence of the social history of the period during which The Plymouth was erected.

The first story's function as the "base" of the building is articulated by horizontal courses of raised brick, capped by a stone cornice. Projecting from the central pavilion is a columned stone porch, which establishes the location of the building's entrance. Covered by this porch is the round-arched entrance to the building's open vestibule and two flanking windows with dressed stone lintels and sills. On either side of the central pavilion, the first story is lit by two sets of paired windows with rusticated stone lintels and dressed stone sills. All windows on the front facade are 1/1 sash windows. (Windows on the side and rear facades are 2/2 sash.)

The bulk of the first story's decoration is concentrated in the porch and vestibule area. Supporting the entablature of the porch are four Ionic columns with pendants. Projecting from the entablature is a central panel inscribed, "The Plymouth." On the facade of the building, there are four brick pilasters capped with stone Doric capitals. These pilasters are located directly in line with the corresponding porch columns. Between the two central pilasters is the round-arched entrance to the vestibule, defined by a moulded stone surround with corinthian keystone. Within the vestibule itself, there are several decorative motifs. The lower half of the vestibule walls are faced with marble, while the upper walls are decorated with moulded plaster elements. To each side of the door, there is a floral pendant motif, capped by a flowing ribbon. Each side wall is decorated by banded-leaf mouldings, designed in the shape of a rectangle with a wreath in the center. Each wreath encloses a large letter "P," symbolizing the

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1903 **Builder/Architect** Frederick Atkinson, arch.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Plymouth embodies the distinctive characteristics representative of early apartment houses developed for middle-income residents in Washington, D.C., at the turn of the century. Constructed in 1903, the building was erected during the first great wave of apartment house construction in Washington and is representative of the era, ca. 1890–1917, in which the apartment house was popularized in America. Of particular importance to the success of the apartment house form during this period was acceptance by the middle class, and The Plymouth is symbolic of this crucial middle-class approval. The significance of the building is heightened by the increasing scarcity of Washington apartment houses of this vintage. The Plymouth's importance also derives from its exceptional architectural integrity, making the building a fine example of the Neo-Classical Style as it was applied to the apartment house form.

HISTORY AND SUPPORT

The concept of the apartment house was introduced in America during the 1850s. However, despite the connection between the early, so-called "French flats" and the sophisticated Parisian apartments upon which they were based, most Americans were slow to accept the apartment concept, associating it with the familiar lower-class tenement. It was not until the period 1890–1917 that the apartment house began to attain widespread acceptance as a viable residential alternative.

In Washington, D.C., the relatively transient nature of the population provided an excellent environment for the apartment house to develop. From the city's inception, the cyclically changing Federal government with its ever-expanding bureaucracy created an impermanent population with special housing needs. During the late-18th and early-19th centuries, the boarding house provided the major answer to this housing problem. Then, from the 1860s through the 1890s, the so-called "residential hotel" became a popular housing alternative, offering the combination of full-time residency with the communal rooms and services associated with hotels. Finally, beginning in the late 1890s, the apartment house, which had been introduced to the city in 1879, rapidly gained popularity. Illustrating how quickly apartment house construction escalated after this point, the fifteen luxury apartment houses built in 1900 numbered nearly as many as were constructed during the previous twenty years combined. One of the buildings constructed during this critical period in the development of the Washington apartment house is The Plymouth.

Located at 1236 11th Street, NW, near the corner of 11th and N Streets, The Plymouth was constructed for the Carolina Apartment Company, which applied for a building permit on 8 June 1903. This company operated the Carolina Apartments, about five blocks to the south at 706 11th Street, NW. To design and construct their second apartment house, company officials chose Frederick G. Atkinson as architect and Peter Fersinger as builder.

Architect Frederick G. Atkinson (1838?–1911?) was a native of England who had immigrated

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet 4.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1/5
Quadrangle name Washington West Quadrangle

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A 18 324200 4308130
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

Square 314, Lot 45

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries N/A

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Druscilla J. Null, Consultant

organization date July 1, 1985

street & number 7731 Riverdale Rd. telephone (301) 577-1293

city or town Washington, D.C. state

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

 national X state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Carol B. Thompson

title date 12-5-83 (letter)

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hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Patrick Andrews
Keeper of the National Register

date 6/2/86

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

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name of the building. The building's name is referred to again in the floor of the vestibule, where small, multi-colored tiles spell out the name. In the original plans for the building, the porch/vestibule area was further decorated by a galvanized iron balustrade topped by iron urns, which was designed to cap the porch. This element is not currently extant, and its absence represents the only substantial difference between the building's current appearance and its original design.

Rising above the base of the building, the second through sixth stories are a visually unified section which represents the "shaft" in the building's columnar configuration. On each upper story, the fenestration mirrors that of the first story. However, highlighting the distinctiveness and unity of this section of the facade, the window trim is different from that of the first story, with the windows to the sides of the central pavilion having simple stone cornices rather than rusticated stone lintels. On the central axis, in line above the vestibule entrance, each story has a doorway opening onto an iron balcony. These doors and the flanking windows have plain dressed-stone lintels. The iron balconies were part of the building's original design and were intended to serve as a fire escape. While thus eminently practical in design, these balconies are, however, also decorative, each having delicate reversed-curve balusters and scroll brackets. The repetitive pattern created by the series of iron balconies serves as the focal point of the building's central section and serves to draw the eye upward toward the decorative upper story of the building.

Separated from the lower portion of the building by a galvanized iron cornice, the seventh story and its crowning cornice and parapet serve as the decorative "capital" of the building. The pattern of fenestration and central doorway established on the lower stories is repeated, but the seventh story is distinguished from those below by the use of round-arched openings with brick surrounds. Between each opening is an inset brick panel, while another small iron cornice and courses of raised brick provide horizontal linkages across the facade. Capping the seventh story is a dentilled and modillioned cornice of galvanized iron. Supporting this cornice in the central pavilion are four pairs of oversized iron consoles, with each pair decorated by a heavy decorative garland. The scale established by these consoles is continued in the decoration of the parapet, which rises above the roofline of the building in the central pavilion. The central section of this parapet rises from either side in reversed-curves and is decorated with foliated scroll motifs. In the center and at either end of the parapet, oversized urns serve as terminating finials.

Decorative motifs seen on the exterior of the building are echoed on the interior, which, although vandalized, retains much original fabric. Decorative details are concentrated in the first-floor hallway. Reflecting the fact that The Plymouth was not designed to be a luxury apartment house, there is no large lobby on the first floor. Instead, a modified hallway/lobby runs the length of the building. Upon entering the front door, this hallway is narrow and straight, with an area for built-in mail boxes along the left wall. Near the center of the building, the hall opens up into a wider, polygonal shape, with a stairway on the left and an elevator on the right. The hall then narrows again and continues to the rear of the building. The decorative details of the hall are generally intact. As in the vestibule, the lower half of the walls were faced in marble, although all of these marble panels are not still in place.

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to the United States ca. 1870. After living for some period in New York, Atkinson moved to Washington ca. 1883. Unfortunately, Atkinson's architectural career is not well documented. However, it is known that in addition to The Plymouth, he designed a number of homes in the area and at least one other apartment house, The Stanton at 128 C Street, NE. Assisting Atkinson as the builder of the Plymouth was Peter Fersinger (1854?-1934), who was described at the time of his death as a "well-known contractor here for half a century." Born in Switzerland, Fersinger immigrated to the United States as a child. He first appears in Washington City Directories in 1887. Fersinger built numerous houses in the District and several apartment houses. Two of these, The Savoy (1897) and The Olympia (1898), were among the city's largest and most distinctive apartment houses of the 1890s. By helping to document the careers of Atkinson and Fersinger, The Plymouth offers significant information on their contributions to the physical development of Washington.

Built during the first years of apartment house popularity in Washington, The Plymouth is significant as documentation of the development of this important residential form. The building's documentary importance is heightened by the increasing scarcity of apartment houses of this vintage within the District. Demonstrating the attrition rate of early Washington apartment houses, a recent tabulation of apartments built between 1895 and 1904 indicated that fewer than half were still standing. A pertinent illustration of this trend is the fact that another early apartment building, The Alabama, that was located just cater-corner to The Plymouth, is no longer extant.

The significance of The Plymouth is further heightened by its exceptional architectural integrity. Comparison of the building today with its original design, as shown in drawings that accompanied the original building permit, reveals only one exterior feature that is not intact, namely an iron balustrade which capped the front porch. This high degree of physical integrity makes the building a valuable visual document of architectural design in Washington near the turn of the century. The building is particularly important as a representative example of the transition from the eclecticism of the architectural styles of the Victorian era to the formalism of the Neo-Classical Revival. Apartment houses designed in the Victorian mode tended to be asymmetrical, with organic, projecting forms and to be made of dark, earth-tone materials. In sharp contrast, The Plymouth exhibits the symmetry, light tones, classically-derived decoration, and monumentality of the Neo-Classical. The Plymouth helps to document this stylistic transition and increases our understanding of the permeation of the Neo-Classical style and of its impact on the development of the Washington apartment house.

The Plymouth is also significant for the information it provides concerning its residents. During the "boom" years of Washington's early apartments, buildings were constructed to meet the needs of various income brackets. For the affluent, there were sprawling, luxurious apartment houses such as The Wyoming (1905) and Stoneleigh Court (1902), with costs of approximately \$200,000 and \$600,000 respectively. However, the bulk of the apartment houses constructed were built to house members of the middle class, whose acceptance of the housing form was crucial to its success. Indicative of the relatively unpretentious nature of The Plymouth is its estimated construction cost of \$80,000. Advertised as "in the heart of the city," "fireproof and all modern improvements and

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conveniences," The Plymouth drew a solidly middle-class clientele. Typical occupations of residents identified in the 1910 census include government clerk (the most prevalent occupation), stenographer, real estate man, physician, nurse, clergyman, teacher, jeweler, tailor, etc. The Plymouth serves as visual evidence of the lifestyles of these individuals and serves to increase our understanding of the housing option offered to middle-class Washingtonians by the apartment house.

Reflecting changing urban demographic patterns, characterized largely by the suburbanization of the middle class, recent occupancy of The Plymouth has been less stable than in earlier decades and has contained a higher percentage of low-income individuals. For the past several years, the building has been underused, and today stands vacant. However, although derelict, The Plymouth retains its historical and physical integrity. Representative of the era when the apartment house first became an important force impacting Washington's social and cultural history, The Plymouth remains a significant visual document of this crucial development.

SOURCES

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