


DC Builders & Developers Directory

Monroe Warren					
Biographical Data					
Birth: 6/11/1895	Place: Clayton, Alabama				
Death: 1/16/1983	Place: Bordeaux, France				
Family: wife, Dorothy B.; son, Monroe Jr.; brothers, R. Bates Hugh, and Benjamin					
Education					
High School: Western High School, Washington, D.C.					
College: University of Virginia					
Graduate School: N/A					
Source: "Best Addresses," 179.					
Career					
Permit Database (through 1958)					
As Builder		Earliest Permit: 1920	Latest Permit: 1943	Total Permits: 157	Total Buildings: 817
As Owner		Earliest Permit: 1921	Latest Permit: 1955	Total Permits: 177	Total Buildings: 824
*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.					
Practice		Position		Date	
M & R. B. Warren, Inc.		Founder, Senior Partner		1920-1930	
Meadowbrook, Inc.		President		1932-1966	
Professional Associations					
Societies or Memberships: Home Builders Association of Washington, Inc. (organizer, president)					
Awards or Commissions:					
Buildings					
Building Types: Apartment houses, single family dwellings, row houses					
Styles and Forms: Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, Classical Revival, Art Deco					
D.C. Work Locations: Cleveland Park, Woodley Park, Adams Morgan, Southeast, Montgomery County, MD					
Notable Buildings		Location		Date	Status
Kennedy-Warren Apartments		3133 Connecticut Ave., NW		1931	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site
Tilden Gardens		3000 Tilden Street, NW		1927-1931	In Cleveland Park Historic District/ Apartment Buildings Multiple Property
Apartment House		2540 Massachusetts Ave., NW		1925	<input type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site
Apartment House		1661 Crescent Place, NW		1925	<input type="checkbox"/> NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> DC Historic Site
Apartment Houses		3018-3028 Porter St., NW		1923-1924	In Cleveland Park Historic District/ Apartment Buildings Multiple Property

Significance and Contributions

Monroe Warren was the founder and senior partner of the prolific construction company of M. and R. B. Warren, Inc., which he founded with his brother, Robert Bates (R. Bates) Warren (1897-1976, see directory entry), in 1920. One of four sons of Benjamin S. Warren, a former assistant surgeon general of the United States Public Health Service, Monroe Warren planned to enter the medical profession until a college summer job working for his uncle, local builder and real estate lawyer Bates Warren (1869-1940), piqued his interest in construction.

Warren was born in Alabama and moved to Washington, D.C. in 1911 with his family. He attended Western High School, graduating in 1913, and received a Bachelor's of Science from the University of Virginia in 1917. He went on to serve as a first lieutenant in World War I and returned to Washington after the war. Another of his uncles, also a prominent developer, John L. Warren (1872-1921), lent him the funds to start his own company, M. & R. B. Warren. In the early years of the business, the Warrens built mostly small, single-family dwellings, like the bungalows at 3718-3726 Brandywine Street, NW, constructed from 1920 to 1922. These dwellings were designed by Monroe and R. Bates's brother, Hugh Warren. Because of their family connections, Bates and R. Monroe were also able to work with prominent Washington architects in the early years of their business, including George N. Bell (see Architect's Directory entry) and his firm, Rich & Bell. Rich & Bell designed single family dwellings for the Warrens as well as row houses like those at 229-247 17th Street, SE (1922). During the early 1920s, the Warren brothers were also working in Chevy Chase, Maryland. They developed Leland, a subdivision of modest single-family houses, on a 57-acre tract east of Wisconsin Avenue and west of Chevy Chase Section 4. This subdivision initially had small bungalows and was advertised as an automobile community with paved streets, landscaping, water, and sewerage. A commercial zone on Wisconsin Avenue was also built in the early 1920s, becoming Bethesda's first shopping center.



3718 Brandywine Street, NW. EHT Traceries, August 2012.

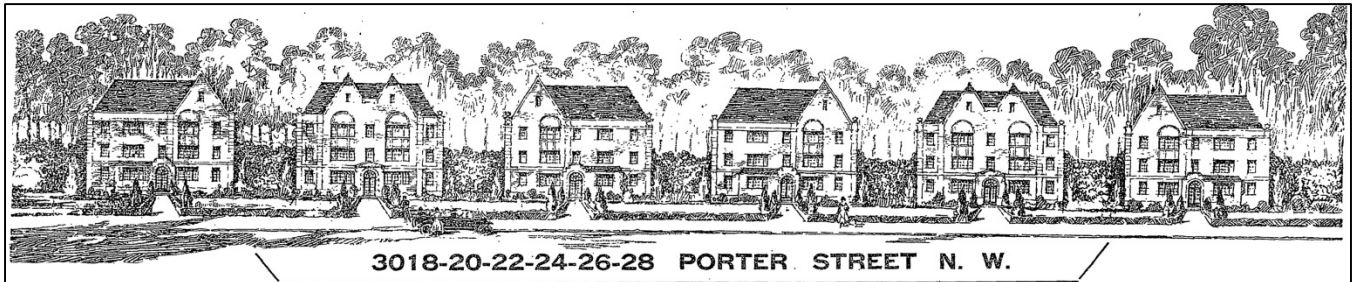


Leland Shopping Center, Wisconsin Avenue (Bethesda, MD)
between Leland and Walsh Streets. EHT Traceries, August 2012.

The firm is best remembered, however, for their apartment building construction. The Warrens' first apartment building, constructed in 1922, is located at 2525 Ontario Road, NW in Adams Morgan. Designed by Rich & Bell, it is a simple three-story, U-shaped, Colonial Revival-style brick building that cost only \$50,000 to construct. They recreated this design later that year at 1725 Lanier Place, NW. Another design that Neal Bell developed for the company was a two-story, five-bay Colonial Revival-style apartment building with a rectangular plan. This form was repeated at various locations, including 3407, 3409, and 3411 29th Street, NW; 1445, 1447, and 1449 Oak Street, NW; and 3527 Center Street, NW.

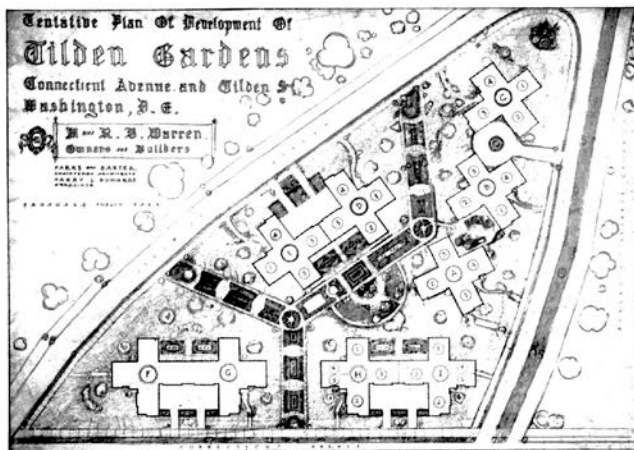
The Warrens began to develop more elaborate apartment buildings in 1923 with the construction of 1705 Lanier Place, NW. This is a four-story brick building designed by prominent Washington architect James E. Cooper (1877-1930) in the Tudor Revival style. This apartment building is notable because, while converted co-ops had become popular in the early 1920s, this was the first building in the city to be initially marketed as a cooperative. During construction, Edmund J. Flynn, who had recently left the Allen E. Walker Company (see Directory entry for Allen E. Walker) and established his own firm specializing in cooperative ownership and cooperative plans, approached the Warrens about attempting to sell the apartments as co-ops. Cooperatives featured a novel real estate ownership

model—instead of individuals owning physical property, as with a condominium, individuals purchased shares in a corporation that owned the building, giving them the right to live in a specific unit. Co-op ownership also entitled residents a say in matters concerning the building as a whole. The Warren brothers commissioned Flynn to sell shares in the building while it was still under construction; when he sold them all before construction was complete, the Warrens decided to partner with him on their next project, the Cleveland Park Apartments.



Advertisement, "Cleveland Park Apartments," Washington Post, September 7, 1924.

Flynn was instrumental in establishing cooperative apartments as a viable and accepted alternative to rental apartments in Washington. He was one of the first real estate men to take out advertisements for his projects, like the one above. Also designed by Cooper and constructed in 1923, the Cleveland Park Apartments (3018-3028 Porter Street, NW) were purpose-built co-ops. Identical in size, each of the six buildings is treated in a slightly different interpretation of the Colonial Revival style. Narrow walkways separate each of the buildings, which face directly onto Porter Street. The expansive gardens and garages were situated to the rear of each building and remain intact today.



From "The Warren Latch Key," August 1930, Tildengardens.org.

By 1930, M. and R. B. Warren had become one of the "leading operators in the co-operative apartment field," as an *Evening Star* article from August of that year proclaimed. After the initial success of the co-ops at 1705 Lanier Place and the Cleveland Park Apartments, the Warrens decided to construct three luxury co-ops—the Army and Navy (now 2540 Massachusetts Avenue, NW) and 1661 Crescent Place, NW in 1925 and, one of their most notable complexes, Tilden Gardens in 1927.

As James Goode writes, "Tilden Gardens was the city's most innovative large apartments house constructed in the 1920s...It was noted not only for its unique landscaping plan but also as the city's largest luxury apartment house built as a co-op—until the Watergate was constructed in

the 1960s." Tilden Gardens still remains the grandest of the "grand Garden" apartments in the District of Columbia. Designed by landscape designers Parks and Baxter with associate architect Harry L. Edwards, the site plan, landscaping, and buildings were conceived as a holistic entity. The Cleveland Park Apartments were a predecessor to the garden-style apartment building and Tilden Gardens took that notion even further, making the landscape an integral component of the development. The triangular-shaped plot of land bounded by Tilden Street, Sedgwick Street, and Connecticut Avenue, comprises three X-shaped and three double X-shaped apartment buildings.

In 1930, R. Bates left the company and Monroe set out on his own. His first project without his brother would be his best-known, the Kennedy-Warren Apartment Building at 3133 Connecticut Avenue, NW. Monroe Warren teamed with successful developer Edgar S. Kennedy (1861-1953, see directory entry) on this massive undertaking. The Kennedy-Warren, completed in 1931 (addition in 1935), stands among the most significant luxury apartment buildings constructed in the Art Deco style in Washington, D.C. At the time of its construction, it was considered to be the largest and architecturally most important apartment building in the city. Its exterior, which is intact to its original design, embodies the geometric and jazzy characteristics of the grand architecture of that age. Its majestic siting—set back from Connecticut Avenue, NW, just north of the National Zoo entrance and abutting Rock Creek Park—sets

the building apart from others and adds to the building's distinctive presence on Connecticut Avenue, one of the important apartment building corridors in the city. It is the best-known and most significant work of local architect Joseph Younger, who also designed the apartment building at 1661 Crescent Place for M. & R. B. Warren. Beset by financial difficulties incurred by the Depression, Younger committed suicide in his Tilden Gardens apartment in May 1932, only a few months after the Kennedy-Warren was completed.

Many Washington developers encountered financial difficulties with the onset of the Depression, and Kennedy and Warren were no exception. As the Depression hit during construction of the Kennedy-Warren, they were only able to construct and fully furnish half of the building; a large H-shape section proposed for the southern end of the building was not constructed. The financing for the completion of the building collapsed and, following a series of unfortunate incidents, Kennedy and Warren lost their ownership interests in the building and their brokers, the B. F. Saul Company, assumed ownership. The B.F. Saul Company has remained the Kennedy-Warren's owner and manager to this day. Despite the fact that only half of the original plan was completed and that the original owners/builders/namesakes filed bankruptcy as a result of the Depression, the Kennedy-Warren became a financial success.




Kennedy-Warren, ca. 1988. James Stafford Phillips, photographer. From Goode's "Best Addresses," p. 307.

After constructing the Kennedy-Warren, Warren returned to residential neighborhood development. He began his first development in the nearby suburb of Chevy Chase, Maryland in 1930. Called Meadowbrook, it is located in Section 4 of Chevy Chase and part of Bethesda, Maryland on a 70-acre tract of land bounded by Columbia Country Club to the north and east, Aspen Street to the south, and Leland Street and Cypress Avenue to the west. Warren named his new company, Meadowbrook, Inc., after this inaugural project. Meadowbrook contained primarily two-story, brick single-family dwellings designed by Harvey P. Baxter who had also designed Tilden Gardens. Baxter went on to design many of Meadowbrook's buildings. With this company, Warren constructed single family dwellings and row houses throughout Washington, D.C. as well, building low-cost housing on a grand scale. His major developments, however, were in Maryland.

Monroe Warren, Jr. (1918-2009) joined his father's firm after returning from military duty in World War II. After the war, Meadowbrook constructed dwellings of modest scale and standardized design, capitalizing on the mid-century demand for affordable housing in the suburbs of Washington, D.C. Meadowbrook developed Ordway Village, a Colonial Revival-style garden apartments east of Wisconsin Avenue in Cleveland Park (architects Kifkuff and Bagley), Chevy Chase Lake, Arlington Forest, Rockcrest, Landover (Prince George's County), and Woodley Gardens.

Monroe Warren, Sr. retired from the building industry in 1966. He continued to live in Chevy Chase, Maryland until his death in 1983. He was in Bordeaux, France at the time of his death; the reason for his trip is unknown. He is remembered as a pioneer in cooperative apartment building construction, contributing some of the most important apartment buildings to Washington, D.C., including Tilden Gardens and the Kennedy-Warren. Warren's neighborhood developments in Maryland also contribute significantly to his reputation as a prominent builder in the D.C. metropolitan area.

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Sources		
Vertical Files	<input type="checkbox"/> HSWD.C.	<input type="checkbox"/> MLK Library
Other Repositories: D.C. Building Permits Database, Ancestry.com		
Obituary:	Publication:	Date:
Biographical Directories	Year/Volume	Page
<input type="checkbox"/> Who's Who in the Nation's Capital		
<input type="checkbox"/> History of the City of Washington: It's Men and Institutions	1903	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Washington Past and Present	1932	34
<input type="checkbox"/> Prominent Personages of the Nation's Capital	c. 1924	
Other Sources: James M. Goode, <i>Best Addresses</i> (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988). Elizabeth Jo Lampl and Kimberly Prothro Williams, <i>Chevy Chase: A Home Suburb for the Nation's Capital</i> (Crownsville, Md.: Maryland Historical Trust Press, 1998). Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Application, 1203 Crawford Drive, Rockville, Montgomery County, Maryland. From www.rockvillemd.gov . Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties, Monroe Warren House, Chevy Chase, Montgomery County, Maryland, MIHP #M-35-107. National Register of Historic Places, Apartment Buildings in Washington, D.C. 1880-1945, Multiple Property Listing, Washington, District of Columbia, National Register #433852. National Register of Historic Places, Kennedy-Warren Apartment Building, Washington, District of Columbia, National Register #421894. "Town Houses Planned for Woodley Gardens," <i>Washington Post</i> , January 20, 1962. ProQuest Historical Newspapers. University of Virginia, <i>Alumni Bulletin of the University of Virginia</i> , (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 1917), 234. John B. Willmann, "A New Housing Frontier for Rockville," <i>Washington Post</i> , December 3, 1960. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.		
		
<i>Tilden Gardens, 1930. From Goode's <u>Best Addresses</u>.</i>		
Notes:		
Prepared by: EHT Traceries Last Updated: June 2012		