

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received SEP 26 1986

date entered JAN 5 1987

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

1. Name

historic Riggs - Tompkins Building

and/or common The Riggs National Bank 14th & Park Road Branch

2. Location

street & number 1403-05, 1413 Park Road NW; 3300, 3306-16, 3328  
3336 14th Street NW not for publication

city, town Washington vicinity of Walter E. Fauntroy, delegate

state District of Columbia code 11 county N/A code 001

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Park Road Limited Partnership

street & number Four Faneuil Hall Marketplace

city, town Boston vicinity of state Massachusetts 02109

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder of Deeds

street & number 515 D Street NW Room 304

city, town Washington state District of Columbia 20001

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

1) Request for Determination of Eligibility (state and federal)  
title National Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

2) District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Sites (local)  
date federal: 8/30/84 state: 12/23/82 local: 6/26/85  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Historic Preservation Division, Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs 614 H Street NW Room 305

city, town Washington state District of Columbia 20001

# 7. Description

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

## Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

### Summary Description

The Riggs-Tompkins Building (1922) is a free-standing, three-story, multi-use commercial structure designed in the Neo-Classical Revival style. One full block in length, the building has five principal facades, all clad in limestone. The principal entrance, the Riggs Park Road Bank, is oriented south toward the urban center and fronts on the intersection of Fourteenth Street with Park Road. The master plan of the building is unusual and is shaped like a skewed "U". The result is a natural response to the parallelogram shape of the original site. The building rests on a granite base and has eighteen bays on the east, two canted corners at the north and south ends of one bay each, and eight bays on the northeast and southwest, respectively. The 1928 addition on Park Road also has three stories and is designed with the identical architectural vocabulary of the main block. The flat, deck-type roofs of the structure are concealed behind a limestone parapet with a simple projecting cornice. A stepped, low-profile, two-story roof addition was appended to the building during the 1984-86 rehabilitation of the property. The principal elevations - Fourteenth Street, Park Road, and Monroe Street - are adorned with classical architectural forms and details of the ancient Greco-Roman orders, and supplemented with cast iron and bronze features. The trabeated construction of the building is defined with simple flat piers supporting a complete entablature of the Greek Ionic order. The tri-partite steel windows and storefronts are stacked vertically within each bay, creating a predictable, consistent fenestration. The salient design feature of the composition is the monumental pedimented entrance to the Riggs Bank. Two and one-half stories in height, the recessed opening is flanked by massive fluted columns with Ionic capitals, surmounted by a full classical entablature. The projecting pediment continues the order of the entablature, forming an integral part of it at the third story.

The Riggs-Tompkins Building was scheduled for demolition until 1982 when local interest in rehabilitation was expressed. After being determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, plans for Certified Rehabilitation of the building were approved in 1983. Rehabilitation for continued commercial use and banking, and adaptive re-use of the upper levels for 150 apartments, was completed in 1986.

### Exterior Description

The Riggs-Tompkins Building is a detached, three-story structure with a reinforced concrete frame which is irregular in plan and occupies a site 270' ± by 200' ± average depth. The building, including the 1928 addition on Park Road, has a skewed plan forming a "U", roughly in the shape of a parallelogram, with the legs extending

(continued)

# 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1922-1950		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1922; (1926, 1928 additions) **Builder/Architect** Charles H. Tompkins, builder  
George N. Ray, architect

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Riggs-Tompkins Building is significant for its role in the development, history, and cultural growth of the District of Columbia during the second quarter of the twentieth century, notably in the areas of economics, commerce, communications, and architecture. Erected in 1922, the block-long, temple-inspired structure was designed for one of the first branches of the Riggs National Bank (the Park Road Branch) - an event which foreshadowed a national trend in the expansion of the banking industry permitted by de-regulation in 1927. The Riggs-Tompkins Building, of landmark character, was erected at the terminus of the Fourteenth Street street railway line, a principal north-south transportation artery. The structure was the largest and most important commercial building in the developing Mount Pleasant district of Washington. Together with the Tivoli Theater (1923) across Fourteenth Street, the building defined the commercial and social nucleus of this burgeoning northwest sector of Washington. The favorable site and elevation of the Riggs-Tompkins Building also provided the location for an important technological development in the emerging field of mass communications: radio broadcasting. The studio and transmitters of the Radio Corporation of America's Station WRC, the city's oldest radio station in continuous operation, began broadcasting during the summer of 1923. WRC, the "Voice of the Capitol," was Washington's second commercial radio station and was considered a pioneer in the field of radio and political journalism. (Criterion A) Designed by George Nicholas Ray, prominent Washington architect of the period, the Riggs-Tompkins Building was constructed by Charles Hook Tompkins, prolific local builder and an innovative engineer noted for the development of reinforced concrete structures, (Criterion B) Designed in the popular Neo-Classical Revival style, the building and its contemporary, the Riggs Dupont Circle Branch Bank are significant in that as the earliest banks in the branch system, they were modeled after the Riggs National Bank headquarters building (1898) on Pennsylvania Avenue. Utilizing the popular "classical style," expressing strength and permanence, the Riggs National Bank created a familiar landmark in communities where its branches were erected, successfully developing depositors' confidence and patronage with architectural symbolism. (Criterion C)

Criterion A

The Riggs-Tompkins Building is a post-World War I commercial structure, whose landmark character is derived from the formal, Neo-Classical Revival architectural style and its prominent siting on the plateau of Fourteenth Street. The simple but imposing

(continued)

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

(See Continuation sheet)

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1.46 ± acres

Quadrangle name Washington West

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A 

1	8
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3	2	3	7	6	10
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4	3	1	10	8	2	10
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C 

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

(See Continuation sheet)

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Christopher W. Closs, Principal Consultant

organization Closs Planners Inc. date September, 1986

street & number Four Bicentennial Square telephone 603-224-6714

city or town Concord state New Hampshire

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  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.

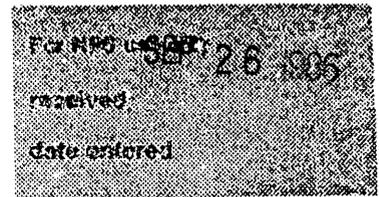
State Historic Preservation Officer signature Carol B. Thompson  
title State Historic Preservation Officer date 9/24/86 / preparing letter

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Patrick Andrews date 1/5/87  
for Keeper of the National Register

Attest: Chief of Registration date

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 2

along Park Road and Monroe Street. (See Site Plan.) The principal facade (Fourteenth Street - east elevation) is aligned along a north-south axis. Resting on a gray granite base, the building's northeast, east, and southwest elevations are faced with Indiana limestone. Elevations which are oriented inward, toward the center of the site, are finished with common red brick, forming rectangular panels within the uniform grid pattern of the exposed reinforced concrete frame. These surfaces have been painted (as they were originally) in a color scheme which reflects the parent materials. There is a small (16' 0" x 66' 0") one-story, concrete block loading dock appended to the 1926 billiard room addition, along the west elevation of the latter, with access from Monroe Street.

The main block has eighteen bays on the Fourteenth Street facade, one bay at each commercial entrance on the corners of Park Road and Monroe Street, and eight bays on both the northeast (Monroe Street) and southwest (Park Road) elevations. The 1928 addition on Park Road contains two first-story entrance bays and is six bays deep. All of the bays at street level contain storefront entrances and display windows; and windows illuminating Riggs' banking rooms.

The 1926 billiard room addition, which is situated within the interior of the site and has no frontage on the public way, is a plain, utilitarian building now of five stories, three bays by five and rectangular in plan. This structure, originally three stories, has no external entrances and is entered from the main block. The first story is open and is used for parking; the two upper stories comprise the 1984-86 roof addition.

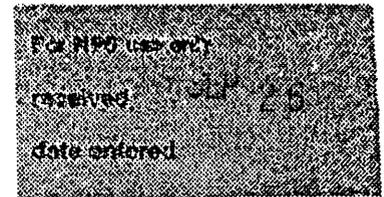
All three building elements have flat, deck-type roofs with rubber membrane surfaces. A large, square, original brick exterior furnace chimney articulates the north elevation of the main block behind the Park Road facade. The stepped-back two-story roof addition, visible only from the rear (west), which is carried around the entire roof plane, was constructed in 1984-86 as part of Certified Rehabilitation and contains residential apartments. This structure is finished in synthetic stucco matching the color of the original limestone below.

Designed in the "classical style," the exterior appearance of the Riggs-Tompkins Building derives its origin from ancient Greek architectural forms and orders. Application of this architectural vocabulary gained widespread popularity during the first quarter of the twentieth century with the Neo-Classical Revival movement. (See Exhibit I - Historic Views)

The classical character of the building is defined by its trabeated construction and monumental, albeit restrained pedimented portico. The long, broad wall planes of the principal facades are articulated with simple, flat piers supporting a complete entablature rendered in the Greek Ionic Order. The caps above the piers are from the Doric Order, attesting to the eclectic nature of the Neo-Classical Revival treatment. The wall piers also establish the fenestration for the building, which is carried to the third story in reduced scale. Engaged pilasters with simple Doric caps circumscribe all principal elevations at this level and complement the clean, unbroken linearity of the roofline. A simple roof cornice terminates the vertical thrust of the building.

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

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



Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 3

The salient architectural element of the Riggs-Tompkins Building is the classical pedimented portico of limestone enframing the main entrance to the Riggs National Bank. The monumental entrance is two and one-half stories in height and is composed of two fluted columns with Ionic capitals supporting a full entablature. The frieze and architrave have been usurped and covered with a panel which serves as the title block for the branch bank. The entrance is surmounted with a pediment which is integral with the cornice. Dentils adorn these elements and are carried around the building. Pateras adorn the wall plane of the third floor above the pediment. The Art Deco style standing wrought iron lamps which originally flanked the Riggs Bank entrance have been restored in the Certified Rehabilitation of the property.

The same architectural treatment was applied to the 1928 Park Road addition, affording this small structure a monumental appearance. The side and rear elevations of this structure and the main block, while undistinguished in a decorative sense, are revealing with respect to reinforced concrete construction technology of the period, expressing function and economy without decorative ornament.

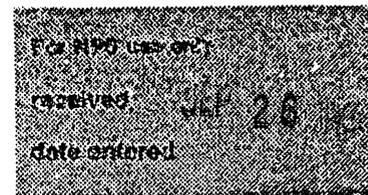
The window sash in the building include a mixture of wooden and steel-frame sash. Storefronts at street level have simple, plate glass display windows in new, replacement aluminum frames painted black. Original casement-type steel windows fill mezzanine level openings above. On the second floor, all original steel "Chicago-style" windows with operable casement sidelights remain extant. The third-floor windows are similar, but smaller, and have a transom light. Wooden window sash exist in the community room on the first floor, near the lobby.

Doors throughout the structure vary in type (wooden and metal), configuration and size. The most important of these are the original doors which serve the Riggs National Bank and the 1928 Park Road addition. These doors are of wood, double-leaved, and have single, large bevelled plate glass lights and wood panels. Doors to storefronts and House of Jerry's (clothing store) have all been replaced with contemporary aluminum frame, plate glass units.

Other significant elements original to the structure include massive cast iron screens covering the window openings of the Riggs branch bank. Ostensibly used for security purposes, each of these elements is cast with ornate Greek floral motifs enframing a grid pattern, which creates the effect of tracery inside of the building. All screens remain intact within their original openings on the eastern and western elevations of the structure.

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

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



Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 4

Interior Description

The Riggs National Bank interior is an architecturally significant space and is largely unaltered from its original 1922 configuration. The banking rooms are replete with a polychromatic coffered ceiling, marble piers enriched with classical detail, marble floors and partitions. A mezzanine at the rear is part of the original design. Extensive use of pressed ornamental copper and brass is found in moldings, office partitions, and entry vestibule. Plaster ornament and imported woods used in trim, doors, and built-in furniture supplement this formal ensemble of neo-classical appointments.

The storefronts and major commercial retail spaces in the building have largely been remodeled consistent with on-going marketing practices. Present finishes include carpeting, wallpaper, and contemporary lighting. Interior surfaces retain their simple, painted hard-plaster surfaces in some spaces. Basement spaces are generally unfinished and are used for storage, engineering rooms and a security vault.

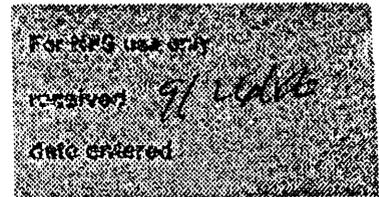
The floor plan and finishes of the second and third stories survived only in the southern portion of the building, prior to rehabilitation and were not considered architecturally significant. Typical offices were oriented about a central corridor and single shaft elevator and were designed as suites, with inter-communicating doors, which provided flexibility in office layout plans. Finishes included simple two-panel doors with transom lights enframed with light molding of yellow pine or poplar, all painted. Walls were finished with plain, hard plaster. Office interiors were articulated with massive, square load-bearing concrete columns evenly spaced throughout the structure. The northern half of the structure was last used as a department store and had suffered an extensive fire c. 1968, leaving the exposed masonry walls and columns intact but resulting in loss of all partitions and finishes. Upper levels have been converted to apartments in the Certified Rehabilitation. The central corridor layout has been preserved but doors and trim have not been retained. Apartment finishes are typical and include carpeted floors, gypsum wallboard walls and ceilings.

The exterior appearance of the Riggs-Tompkins Building has undergone minor changes in its 64 years of existence. The twin, 100' radio transmitting masts were removed c. 1950. Storefronts were continually altered over time, beginning in the 1940s, as building permits show. The building was fully rehabilitated in 1984-86 in accordance with the Secretary's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings (U.S. Department of Interior). A clearly identifiable relationship continues to exist between the Riggs-Tompkins Building and its physical and cultural environment. In economics (banking), commerce (retail and neighborhood functions), and architecture (as a period Neo-Classical Revival example), the building continues to express a strong and recognizable presence.



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

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



Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 6

EXHIBIT I - HISTORIC VIEWS



THE RIGGS NATIONAL BANK  
14<sup>TH</sup> & PARK ROAD OFFI

113932

Historic Photograph #1

The Riggs-Tompkins Building, built 1922

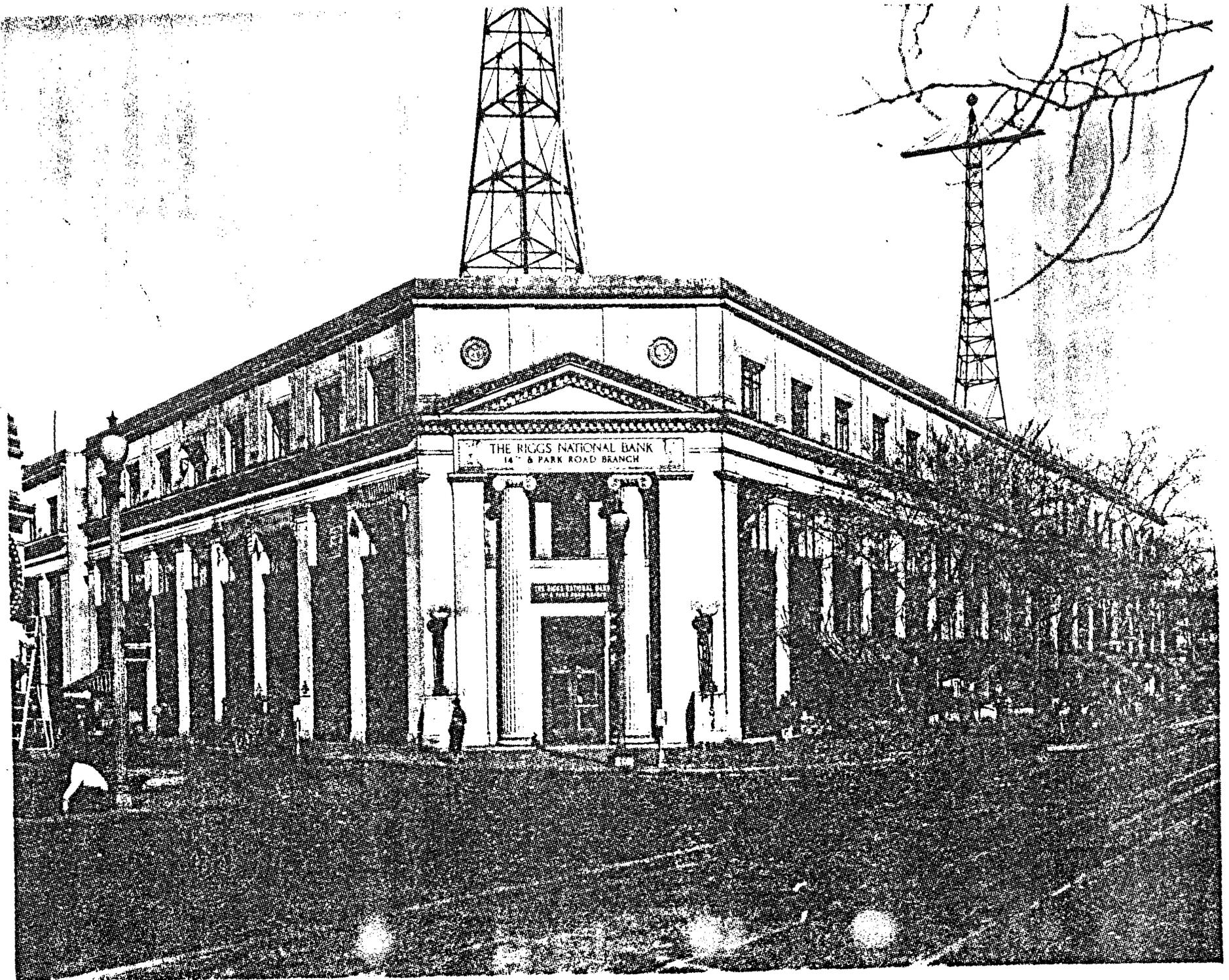
North West Corner, 14th Street and Park Road, N.W., Washington, D.C.

showing WRC radio tower transmitters, awnings and signs of various commercial tenants of the building

Circa mid 1920's

Photograph by Rideout, Washington, D.C. (reduced in size for xeroxing)

in RG 15, The Riggs National Bank Archive, 1503 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C.



Historic Photograph #2

The Riggs-Tompkins Building, built 1922

North West corner, 14th St. and Park Road, N.W.  
Washington, D.C.

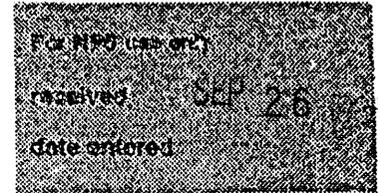
showing WRC radio tower transmitters, awnings of various  
commercial tenants of the building, and tracks of the  
14th Street trolley line

Circa late 1920's

Photograph by W.F. Roberts, Company, Washington, D.C.

in RG 15, The Riggs National Bank Archive, 1503 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.,  
Washington, D.C.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**  
**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

limestone facades of the building, enriched with classical detail, express a strong symbolism of permanence and place. The Riggs-Tompkins Building (1922) and the Tivoli Theater opposite (1923; NR) comprised the commercial and social center of the developing Mount Pleasant district in the 1920s and thereafter. (See Exhibit 1 - Historic Views) The commercial space in the building supplied the area's residents with a variety of services and goods. Among these were shops selling furs, jewelry, clothing, shoes, radios, cemetery plots, stationery and gifts. Beauty and barber shops, restaurants, dancing teachers, doctors, lawyers, and real estate agents were also among the businesses located in the building. In addition, the building's tenants provided entertainment facilities including bowling alleys, a billiard parlor and ping-pong courts. Streetcars operating along Fourteenth Street provided ease of access to the location and fostered the growth of other commercial enterprises such as the Tivoli Theater and the Arcade, which further contributed to the expansion of Mount Pleasant's business center.

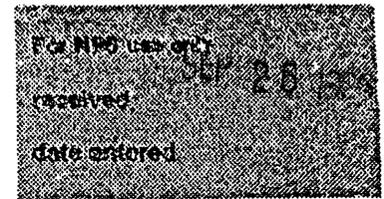
The Riggs-Tompkins Building contained one of the Riggs National Bank's first branches. A nationally influential bank, Riggs' solutions to the problems of branch banking in the early 1920s were touted as models for other banks to follow. Riggs has continued its association with the building, remaining as the prime tenant today.

Before the construction of the Riggs-Tompkins Building, the site was occupied by single family residences, small businesses, and the Berwick Apartments. The Hamilton Savings Bank had its office on the first floor of the latter building.

The historic development plan of the major buildings and streets of Mount Pleasant remain largely intact, although in a depressed state. The Riggs-Tompkins Building retains its pre-eminent position as the community's principal commercial and office building. The structure sustained a high (70%) vacancy rate for years prior to the beginning of Certified Rehabilitation in 1984. Both the Tivoli Theater and Riggs-Tompkins buildings were, until 1983, scheduled for demolition under a recent urban redevelopment plan.

Construction of the Riggs-Tompkins Building began in 1922. Building permits and original plans for the building specify a three-story stone, concrete and brick structure to be erected on the site.<sup>1</sup> The plans, however, show that the columns were built to support a seven-story building. The anticipated continued growth of the Mount Pleasant neighborhood was a factor in this decision, since as the community grew, the bank would need to expand also.<sup>2</sup> Although the floors were not added to the existing structure, an addition was made to the building in 1928.<sup>3</sup> A three-story building located to the west and facing Park Road was constructed consistent in style with the main structure. The two were divided by a narrow alley but joined at the third floor level by a covered bridgeway. The addition replaced an earlier structure which housed the Park Road Station of the U.S. Post Office. The branch post office resumed service on the first floor of the Riggs addition upon its completion.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**  
**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 3

In January, 1923, when the building was opened for public inspection, the surrounding neighborhood of Mount Pleasant had grown from an area of farms and large estates to a homogeneous, generally affluent community able to support the growth of a branch bank and the building's commercial tenants. An article in the United States Investor heralding the opening of the Riggs branch described the neighborhood at that time:

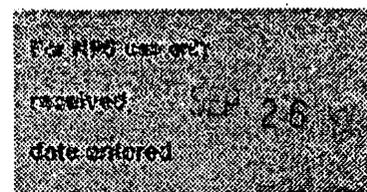
[Topographical conditions and a direct transportation service had brought to Mount Pleasant]...a consistent rather than a scattering development with a civic life that is independent and all its own. The neighborhood has its own stores, its own theatres, and there is also...a perfect army of churches, of every denomination, with each of them large and well supported. The people of Mount Pleasant are conscious of the solidarity of their neighborhood. A surprisingly large fraction of them own their own homes. They take pride in the history of Mount Pleasant whose center is the point where Park Road and Fourteenth Street converge, and within a radius of eight blocks of that point, a population estimated near 100,000. Here people of solid worth make their homes, and develop the retail business which is now reaching considerable volume.<sup>4</sup>

The site on Fourteenth Street and Park Road was a logical location for a branch bank and commercial building. Fourteenth Street developed commercially along with the extension of the transportation system in the District. The commercial uses of land there began with the trolleys that operated daily from the Treasury Department to the terminus at Fourteenth and Park Road in Mount Pleasant. This avenue of access, which began in the 1880s and was further expanded over the next 50 years, contributed to the commercial development of an 'uptown shopping center' and the residential growth of the area.

The Riggs National Bank was a venerable and very successful banking institution. Through its founders (William Wilson Corcoran and George Washington Riggs, Jr.) and its predecessor banks, (Corcoran & Riggs and Riggs & Co.) Riggs National Bank maintained a unique position in the financial world of Washington, DC. It was chosen to be a federal depository in 1841 after the closing of the Second Bank of the United States. The institution has maintained a close association with the federal government ever since.

By 1922, the Riggs National Bank had controlling interest in the Hamilton Savings Bank. Hamilton Savings Bank was operating with great difficulty late in 1921, when Riggs started to absorb the bank. The major asset Hamilton possessed was its branches at Seventh and Eye Streets, NW and at Fourteenth Street and Park Road, NW. Riggs motives for consolidation with Hamilton Savings Bank were three-fold. First, Riggs wished to acquire branches in important commercial centers. Second, Riggs needed to enlarge its downtown institution, but zoning regulations prevented any additions to that building. (Since many of Riggs clients were residing in the Dupont Circle area, Riggs opened a branch of the Hamilton Savings Bank there on May 1, 1922.) Third, Riggs wished to prevent the failure of Hamilton Savings Bank. When the

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 4

consolidation of Riggs and Hamilton was completed on June 10, 1922, the "Hamilton had only a few thousand dollars of deposits at its Mount Pleasant branch and no deposits at all at Dupont Circle."<sup>5</sup> Riggs brought "its greater strength and larger banking skill to the service of these neighborhoods."<sup>6</sup> The erection of two new buildings, designed by George N. Ray and keeping the classical lines of the main branch, brought an influence of tradition and economic stability into these communities. The branch banks subsequently paralleled the growth and prosperity of the communities which they served.

Although not a forerunner nationally in the branch banking system, Riggs National Bank nonetheless occupied a significant role in its development. In the 1920s it was chosen, as a bank of national prominence, as a model for solving some of the problems in branch banking. This was often translated as maintaining neighborhood character when a larger bank merged with a smaller community bank. Riggs managed this by maintaining the staff of the bank it absorbed in their same location. The directors of the previously independent bank comprised an advisory board which would make recommendations to the parent bank. Upon consolidation with Hamilton, Riggs created an "Advisory Council of the Outside Offices" (which included Charles H. Tompkins, owner of the northern half of the Riggs-Tompkins Building, who was serving on the Riggs Board of Directors by 1928).

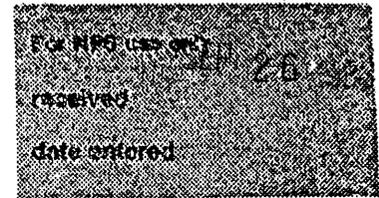
These initial ventures proved so successful that Riggs consolidated with Northwest Savings Bank in 1925, establishing a new branch bank at Eighteenth Street and Columbia Road, NW, and consolidated with Farmers and Mechanics Bank in 1928. This afforded Riggs two more branches, one in Georgetown and one in Friendship Heights. When the Chevy Chase Savings Bank closed in 1933, Riggs acquired its assets and opened the Chevy Chase branch of the Riggs National Bank that same year. This major expansion for Riggs resulted in branches in all the major Northwest communities during an era of a rapidly developing District economy. It relieved the problems of servicing a growing and diffuse population and provided a stable banking institution to replace failing or considerably weaker banks, thus making a real contribution to each community.

The decade of the 1920s witnessed the expansive growth of commercial radio communications as a new industry. The Riggs-Tompkins Building played an important role in the development of this technology in Washington, serving as the location of the Radio Corporation of America's station WRC broadcasting studios and transmitting towers.

The natural elevation of the site (195') at Fourteenth Street and Park Road afforded a natural advantage for radio transmission. Transmitting capability was enhanced by twin 100-foot radio masts. (See Exhibit I - Historic Views) Appearing in the original plans, these transmitters were constructed on the roof of the Riggs-Tompkins Building and remained there until the 1950s.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 5

Station WRC sent its first of nightly broadcasts from Room 201, 3308 Fourteenth Street, on August 1, 1923. Aware of its unique status from its inception,

...WRC, termed The Voice of the Capitol, sent out practically every day some address or event of national interest and importance through its microphones and transmitters into the homes of hundreds of thousands of radio listeners all over the U.S.<sup>7</sup>

WRC was among the first to broadcast from the U.S. Congress and the first to transmit a Presidential address. Although not Washington's first radio station, WRC remains today as Washington's oldest station.<sup>8</sup> Its studios remained in the Riggs-Tompkins Building until 1930.

WRC and the District of Columbia were part of the 'radio fever' that swept America in the 1920s. Locally, this is evidenced by the plethora of business that evolved around radio - differences revealed in the listings in the City Directory between 1921 and 1923. In 1921, only the Eastern Radio Co. is listed under the heading "Radio." 1922 lists the Radio Corporation of America in the Woodward Building and AT&T in the Pope Building. But, by 1923, a new focus is emphasized by a comment in the beginning of the Directory:

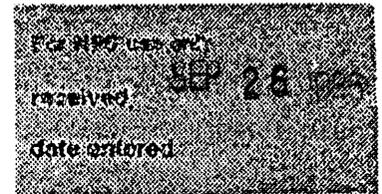
...the use of radio communication for municipal functions has been recognized by the assignment of a band of wave lengths in the regulations being promoted by the Department of Commerce and the utilization of the new art by the District in the near future may be advantageous.<sup>9</sup>

Under the heading of "Radio" in the 1923 City Directory, there are listed three radio companies (RCA but not AT&T is mentioned), three radio manufacturers, one radio outfitter, one radio repair specialist, and six radio suppliers. This represented a substantial increase in a new industry in the District of Columbia. The District of Columbia was also the site of four Radio Conferences between 1922 and 1925.

Through the 1930s the Riggs-Tompkins Building was a center for the growing radio communications industry. In addition to the WRC broadcasting studios and transmitting towers, the building housed retailers of radio equipment, a service center, and a radio school. Among these were the WRC sales studio, the Capitol Radio Engineering Institute and its Residence School and Service Center. The National Broadcasting Corporation also had a transmitting room in the building.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 6

Criterion B

The Riggs-Tompkins Building is associated with two individuals important in the physical development of Washington, DC during the twentieth century. The Riggs-Tompkins Building and the 1928 Park Road addition were designed by the prominent and prolific Washington architect George Nicholas Ray (1889-1959). Ray, a native of the city, received his training at the University of Pennsylvania. After his return to Washington, he worked as an architect before entering partnership in 1917 with Clarke Waggaman. Following Waggaman's death two years later, Ray continued to practice architecture until 1931 when he joined the real estate firm, Randall H. Hagner & Co., as sales manager. In 1937, he became president of the firm, a position he held until 1953.

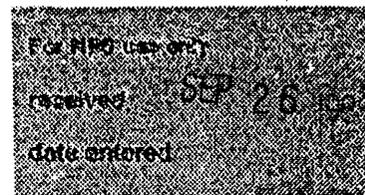
Ray designed both commercial buildings and residences in the city. Among these are the Dupont Circle branch of Riggs National Bank, the Rust Office Building at Fifteenth and K Streets NW, "The Sorrento" apartment building at Eighteenth Street NW and Kalorama Road, and a number of large residences along Massachusetts Avenue and Kalorama Circle.<sup>10</sup> He was responsible for the remodeling of many of the store fronts along Connecticut Avenue between K Street and Florida Avenue and also designed the Federal Building in Fairbanks, Alaska.<sup>11</sup>

For his design of the Riggs-Tompkins Building and the later addition, Ray chose the "classical style" then considered appropriate for bank design. This style provided a basis for the design of banks in the early decades of the twentieth century and garnered wide-spread popularity.

More specifically, the Riggs-Tompkins Building and its contemporary, the Riggs' Dupont Circle Branch, were modeled after York and Sawyer's 1898 classical design for the Riggs National Bank Building at Fifteenth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW. The purpose for doing this was stated in the United States Investor in 1929.

The fronts of these buildings were designed to look just as much as possible like the classic front of the building which the Riggs has occupied for a generation on Pennsylvania Avenue. The theory of the management was that the Riggs name is so highly regarded in Washington (and all over the United States for that matter) that businessmen, establishing themselves in these districts, and people taking up their residences there, would turn naturally to their bank. They wished the front of the bank, therefore, to be a constant reminder that the Riggs Bank, its strength and its services, were right in their midst. The results have justified the plan.<sup>12</sup>

The builder of the Riggs-Tompkins Building and its additions, and owner of the northern half of the building was Charles Hook Tompkins, a prominent and highly successful Washington businessman. Educated in engineering at Lehigh University and George Washington University, he was the founder of the Charles H. Tompkins Company, a company still active in Washington. With his wife, Lida R. Tompkins,

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 7

the first woman civil engineer graduate of George Washington University,<sup>13</sup> he began the business in 1911 specializing in reinforced concrete construction, and soon enlarged the scope of the business to general contracting. By the early 1930s, Tompkins' firm had erected approximately 500 structures including the Riggs-Tompkins Building, the Dupont Circle Branch of Riggs National Bank, the Washington Filtration Plant, Sibley Hospital, the Garfinckel Department Store, the National Red Cross Building and the Rust Office Building.<sup>14</sup> Tompkins' firm was also responsible for the construction of Meridian Hill Park (1916-1929), a pioneering project in the use of exposed aggregate concrete for architectural expression.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, Tompkins is noted for his invention of a system for the distribution of concrete in the erection of large engineering construction projects.<sup>16</sup>

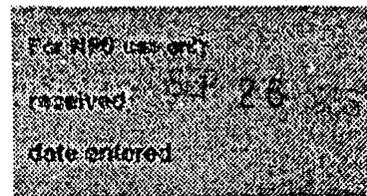
Criterion C

The quality of significance of design, detail, and materials exists in the Riggs-Tompkins Building by virtue of its architectural style, exterior articulation, and choice of building materials.

As an example of the Neo-Classical Revival style, the Riggs-Tompkins Building is part of a twentieth-century, uniquely American design continuum whose origins may be found in the outgrowth of the Second Renaissance Revival of the 1880s. The American Renaissance, now more commonly referred to as the Academic Reaction, was fueled by rekindled interest in the classical forms of ancient Greek and Roman architecture. Spurred by public enthusiasm following the Columbia Exposition (1893) and the Pan American Exposition at Buffalo (1901), the Neo-Classical Revival was expressed widely, principally in civic, governmental and other institutional buildings. New York's Pennsylvania Station (1906-1910), the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1912), and the Lincoln Memorial (1917) are notable examples.

A large concentration of Neo-Classical Revival architecture exists within the nation's capitol - to the point, some have observed, of creating a certain homogeneity among the city's public buildings. Modern criticism notwithstanding, this extensive collection of structures is representative of an important design era - a turning point, one for which debate has not yet ended.

The Riggs-Tompkins Building embodies the elements of classical design, enriched detail, and quality materials characteristic of its stylistic origin, while employing a modern (reinforced concrete) internal frame. Its place within the era of the Neo-Classical Revival is easily recognizable, as is its position within a more unique group, the Riggs branch banks. The design, siting, and size of the Riggs-Tompkins

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 8

Building clearly establish the structure as the principal commercial block of the Mount Pleasant district. The successful integration of classical motifs from the Greek order within the unbalanced, irregular U-shaped plan form an impressive, if not unusual, visual terminus at the apex of Fourteenth Street and Park Road. Constructed of limestone, the focal point of the building is the Riggs National Bank entrance. Monumental in scale, the massive entry portal is flanked by fluted columns with capitals of the Ionic order. The entire entrance is enframed by broad pilasters supporting a partial entablature and triangular pediment. The classical mode of the entrance is carried around the Park Road, Fourteenth Street and Monroe Street facades and includes broad expanses of wall plane with bays divided by simple piers with Doric caps. The second floor is capped with a complete classical entablature with a denticulated cornice. The third story, originally designed to accommodate an additional four stories, resembles a roof parapet and is carried around the principal elevations of the building. Modeled after the earlier facade of the 1898 parent bank building, the design for the Park Road branch bank was intended as a symbol of Riggs strength and longevity and as a familiar landmark to its customers. The structure was heralded as a "real landmark, and...a worthy addition to the many splendid buildings which Washington contains."<sup>17</sup>

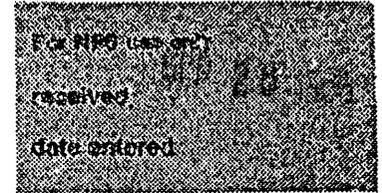
The Riggs-Tompkins Building served as an engine of local economic growth and technological advancement characteristic of the end of the post-World War I recession era which foreshadowed suburban development patterns of the coming period. The building is a product of the investor confidence which fueled the boom economy of the 1920s and a significant and lasting physical contribution to the northwest quadrant community and neighborhood which supported it.

Footnotes

1. Washington, D.C. Building Permit No. 1426, August 9, 1922 and original plans for the Riggs Bank Building, Fourteenth and Park Road, Charles H. Tompkins Co., Washington, D.C.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



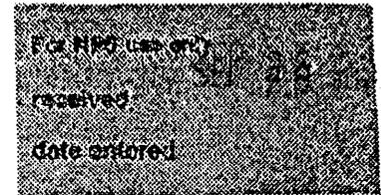
Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 9

2. The Story of Mount Pleasant and Milestones of its Later Day Development.  
(Written for the Riggs National Bank, Fourteenth and Park Road Office).  
January 8, 1923 (Washington, D.C.: W.F. Roberts Press), p. 21 (Riggs National Bank Archives).
3. Washington, D. C. Building Permit No. 9611, June 23, 1928.
4. "Riggs Bank at Mt. Pleasant," United States Investor, January 27, 1923, p. 36 (Riggs National Bank Archives).
5. "A Plan for Branch Banks: How Riggs National Bank of Washington, D.C. is Working Out the Problem," United States Investor, May 25, 1929, p. 40 (Riggs National Bank Archives).
6. Ibid.
7. Bruce Lum, "WRC, 'The Voice of the Capitol'" in the Program of the First Annual Radio Show, sponsored by the Radio Merchants Association, Washington, D.C., March 19-26, 1924, p. 31.
8. AT&T's 'toll' station, WCAP, was launched on July 4, 1923. When it was discontinued in 1926, WRC acquired its air time.
9. Boyd's Directory of the District of Columbia, 1923 (Washington, D.C.: R.L. Polk & Co.), p. 11.
10. "Obituary of George N. Ray," The Evening Star (Washington, D.C.), August 6, 1959, p. B-4.
11. Ibid.
12. "A Plan for Branch Banks,:" United States Investor, May 25, 1929, p. 40.
13. Interview with James W. Mann, Chas. H. Tompkins Co., November 9, 1982.
14. John Clagett Proctor, Washington Past and Present, Vol. 11, (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., Inc., 1930), p. 722.
15. James W. Mann, "Meridian Hill Park - Circa 1916" in Concrete International, October 1979, pp. 84-86.
16. Proctor, Washington Past and Present, Vol. 11, p. 723.
17. "Riggs Bank at Mt. Pleasant," United States Investor, January 27, 1923, p. 36.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number 9

Page 2

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Boyd's Directory of the District of Columbia. Washington, D.C.: R.L. Polk & Co., 1906-1919, 1921-1926, 1932, 1934, 1938, 1940, 1942, 1954, 1960.

Cole, David. The Development of Banking in the District of Columbia. New York: The William-Frederick Press, 1959.

McDevitt, Clevand C. The Book of Washington. Washington, D.C.: Washington Board of Trade, 1927 and 1930.

Proctor, John Clagett, ed. Washington Past and Present, A History, Volumes I-IV. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1930.

Documents

In The Riggs National Bank Archives see Record Groups 7, 8, 13, and 15, among which are found:

The Story of Mount Pleasant and Milestone of its Later Day Development. (Written for the Riggs National Bank, Fourteenth & Park Road Office.) Washington, D.C. W.F. Roberts Co. Press, January 8, 1923.

"A Plan for Branch Banks: How Riggs National Bank of Washington, D.C. is Working Out the Problem." United States Investor, May 25, 1929, pp. 40-42.

"Riggs Bank at Mt. Pleasant" United States Investor, January 27, 1923, p. 36.

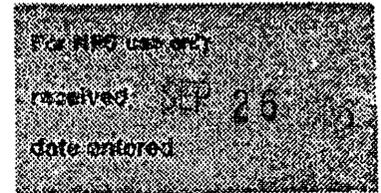
Periodicals

Hopkins, Alfred. "Some Ideas on Bank Building." Reprint from The Architectural Forum, January, 1922.

Mann, James W. "Meridian Hill Park - Circa 1916." Concrete International, October, 1979, pp. 84-86.

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

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



Continuation sheet

Item number 9

Page 3

Building Permits

Riggs Building:

#1426 April 18, 1922 (filed under August 9, 1922)  
#9611 May 26, 1928 (filed under June 23, 1928)

Tompkins Building:

#7349 March 8, 1922 (filed under April 15, 1922)  
#1284 July 9, 1926 (filed under August 4, 1926)

Interviews

James W. Mann of the Charles H. Tompkins Company, Washington, D.C., interviewed by Barbara Hightower, Washington, D.C., November 9, 1982.

Newspapers

The Evening Star. Obituary of George N. Ray, August 6, 1959.

The Washington Star. "First 100 Years in the Nation's Capitol." Special Section, Centennial Anniversary, December 16, 1952.

The Washington Star. "Mount Pleasant Inspires Recollections of Pastoral Conditions." (by John Clagett Proctor), June 10, 1928.

The Washington Times. Obituary of Milton E. Ailes, (former president of Riggs National Bank and Hamilton Savings Bank), November 21, 1925.

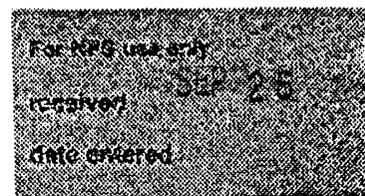
Papers (Unpublished)

Battaglia, Barbara J. "Neighborhood Change and Revitalization in Mount Pleasant: The Long Time Homeowner's Perspective." Unpublished Thesis, George Washington University, School of Government and Business Administration, 1978.

Gale, Prof. Dennis E. "A Survey of Recent Homebuyers in the Mount Pleasant Neighborhood of Washington, D.C." Faculty Paper, George Washington University, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, 1976.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Item number 9

Page 4

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Government of the District of Columbia. Ward 1 Notebook. Comprehensive Plan Publications, June, 1982.

District of Columbia Department of Housing and Community Development. Housing Problems, Conditions and Trends in the District of Columbia. June, 1979.

District of Columbia National Capital Planning Commission in cooperation with the D.C. Government and D.C. Redevelopment Land Agency, Civil Disturbances in Washington, D.C. April 4-8, 1968: A Preliminary Report, May 1968.

District of Columbia National Capital Planning Commission in cooperation with the D.C. Government. Alternative Approaches to Rebuilding Seventh Street, Fourteenth Street, N.W., and H Street, N.E.

Proceedings

District of Columbia Banker's Association. Proceedings of Annual Conventions. Washington, D.C.: W.F. Roberts Co. Press, 1922-1930.

Programs

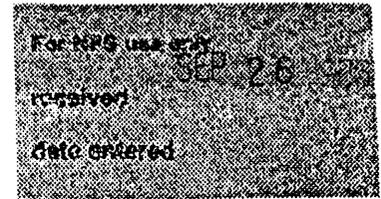
Program of Washington's 1st Annual Radio Show, Convention Hall, March 19-26.  
Sponsored by Radio Merchants Association, 1924. (Located in Washingtoniana Division, Martin Luther King Library of the Washington, D.C. Public Libraries, Washington, D.C.).

Drawings

Original plans for the Riggs Bank Building, Fourteenth and Park Road. Files of the Charles H. Tompkins Co., Washington, D.C.

Ray-Waggaman Files, Library of Congress, Division of Photographs and Prints, Washington, D.C. Commission Os. 194, Riggs Bank, Fourteenth and Park Road; 373, Riggs National Bank, Park Road Office; 199, Dupont Circle Branch of Riggs National Bank.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**  
**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number 10

Page 2

Verbal boundary description and justification

The Riggs-Tompkins Building is bounded by the rights-of-way of Fourteenth Street on the east, Monroe Street on the northeast, and Park Road on the southwest. The rear (west) property line runs from Monroe Street to Park Road and abuts the property of the Temple Church of God in Christ, and a privately-owned row-house. (See Site Plan - Item 7.)

Inclusion of the entire site of the Riggs-Tompkins Building property, as outlined above, is justified by the uninterrupted historical association of the tract with the Riggs-Tompkins Building, beginning with construction of the main block in 1922, and followed by the erection, in 1926, of the billiards room (so-called), and, in 1928, the Riggs Bank Park Road addition.

The legal description of the land and premises is known and described as:

For Lot 757 (recorded in the Office of the Surveyor for the District of Columbia in Record Book 150, page 85) Square 2676, described as follows:

Beginning for the same at the southeasterly corner of said lot and proceeding thence N 62° 21' 45" W, 91.57 feet, thence N 58° 15' 00" W, 100.0 feet, thence N 31° 45' 00" E, 20.0 feet, thence N 58° 15' 00" W, 17.14 feet, thence N 31° 45' 00" E, 115.0 feet, thence S 58° 15' 00" E, 147.90 feet, thence S 6° 30' 00" W, 142.0 feet to the point of beginning, containing 23,611.19 square feet.

All as shown on a plat of computation recorded in the Office of the Surveyor for the District of Columbia in Survey Book 197, page 117.

For Lots 385 and 386 (recorded in the Office of the Surveyor for the District of Columbia in Record Book County 14, page 24) Square 2676; also a tract of land known for the purpose of assessment and taxation as Lot 809, Square 2676, described as follows:

Beginning for the same at the northeasterly corner of said Lot 385 and proceeding thence S 6° 30' 00" W, 132 feet, thence S 70° 41' 17" W, 22.09 feet, thence N 58° 15' 00" W, 133.75 feet, thence S 31° 45' 00" W, 5.0 feet, thence N 58° 15' 00" W, 100.0 feet, thence N 31° 45' 00" E, 135.0 feet, thence S 58° 15' 00" E, 100.0 feet, thence S 62° 21' 45" E, 91.57 feet to the point of beginning, containing 29,883.47 square feet.

All as shown on a plat of computation recorded in the Office of the Surveyor for the District of Columbia in Survey Book 197, page 117, now known as Lot 795, Square 2676 in RLA's subdivision for plat recorded in the Office of the Surveyor for the District of Columbia in Liber 174 at folio 100.