

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Multiple Property Documentation Form**

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

 X New Submission Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

American University Park in Washington, D.C.: Its Early Houses, pre-Civil War to 1911

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

- I. Rural Origins of American University Park**
- II. The Residential Subdivision and Early Development of American University Park: 1896-1911**
- III. The Residential Development of Asbury Park/Robeyville in American University Park**

C. Form Prepared by

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D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature and title of certifying official

Date

State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Table of Contents for Written Narrative

Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and the title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

	Page Numbers
E. Statement of Historic Contexts (If more than one historic context is documented, present them in sequential order.)	E-1 through E-16
F. Associated Property Types (Provide description, significance, and registration requirements.)	F-1 through F-5
G. Geographical Data	G-1
H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods (Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.)	H-1 through H-2
I. Major Bibliographical References (List major written works and primary location of additional documentation: State Historic Preservation Office, other State agency, Federal agency, local government, university, or other, specifying repository.)	I-1 through I-3

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 120 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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PROJECT OUTLINE

A. MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING NAME

American University Park in Washington, D.C., Its Early Houses: pre-Civil War-1911

B. ASSOCIATED HISTORIC CONTEXTS

Rural Origins of American University Park

The Residential Subdivision and Early Development of American University Park: 1896-1904

The Residential Development of Asbury Park/Robeyville

C. ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

A. Residential Buildings

a. Pre-Subdivision Farmhouse

b. Early Subdivision Houses: 1897-1911

B. Building Clusters/Districts

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AMERICAN UNIVERSITY PARK, ITS EARLY HOUSES: Pre-Civil War to 1911

American University Park is a residential neighborhood in northwest Washington, D.C. that is located north of Massachusetts Avenue and The American University, and bounded on the north by River Road, on the west by Western Avenue, and on the east by Nebraska Avenue. The neighborhood was developed as a series of subdivisions, initially platted in the late 19th century, but was principally built out in the mid-20th century. Architecturally, the neighborhood consists of a more than twenty blocks and a large collection of mid-20th-century single-family dwellings representing a variety of revival styles. These houses are located on urban-sized building lots surrounding the approximately 20 older Victorian dwellings that were built in the subdivision's initial phase of development. This Multiple Property Document, *American University Park, Its Early Houses: Pre-Civil War-1911*, identifies three historic contexts related to the original 19th-century development of the American University Park subdivision in northwest Washington.

The first, *Rural Origins of American University Park*, addresses the area's early history as part of the large Friendship tract of land in the 18th century, and its later ownership and use as a farm by the Murdock family, in particular during the Civil War years.

The *Residential Subdivision and Early Development of American University Park (1896-1911)* describes the residential subdivision of American University Park in 1896 and the forces of change, namely the establishment of The American University, that led to its residential development. This context provides a chronological history of the development of the residential subdivision, including its initial spurt of growth and its quick end less than a decade later.

The third context, *The Residential Development of Asbury Park/Robeyville* details the subdivision of an adjacent area within today's American University Park that developed separately from the slightly earlier American University Park subdivisions.

The chronological period for the multiple property listing extends from the pre-Civil War to 1911. The beginning date corresponds to the period in which the oldest surviving houses that preceded the area's subdivision were constructed. The end date corresponds to a transitional period in the development of American University Park and marks the date in which the neighborhood's first bungalow was built just a few years after the subdivision's last Victorian house was erected, and more than a decade before the neighborhood attracted speculative builders who erected extensive collections of single-family dwellings on the older subdivision's lots.

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Introduction

The area currently known as American University Park is a neighborhood in far northwest Washington, D.C. that was platted for residential development through a series of independent subdivisions beginning in 1896. Despite the strategic location of American University Park west of Tenleytown and north of the new American University campus, the first attempt at development in the 20-block residential subdivision did not succeed beyond an initial spurt of growth of approximately one house per block. The neighborhood ultimately reached maturity during the 1920s through the 1940s, when large-scale speculative builders constructed middle-class single-family dwellings on the lots to either side of the Victorian predecessors. Today, the approximately 16 Victorian (and several pre-Victorian) dwellings stand out architecturally from the repetitive mid-20th-century residential dwelling forms. As noted above, it is these first dwellings of American University Park that are the focus of this multiple property document.

A. Rural Origins of American University Park:

Prior to its growth as a residential neighborhood, the area that would become American University Park was largely rural both before and after the Civil War. It was, during the early-to-mid-19th century, considered part of the larger Tenleytown area. Like Tenleytown, the area traces its early settlement roots to 1713 when Charles Calvert granted "Friendship," a 3,124-acre tract of land to James A. Stoddert and Colonel Thomas Addison. Through inheritance, a significant portion of the "Friendship" tract descended through the Addison family into the hands of John Murdock. In 1760, John Murdock built a frame house for himself which he called "Friendship" and which enjoyed expansive views south towards the Potomac River and the port at Georgetown. This one-story hall-parlor plan house, known from early 20th-century photographs (*Figure 1*), was the first known dwelling in the undeveloped area. The house stood on the south side of present-day Massachusetts Avenue until it was demolished for the construction in 1925 of the chancellor's house on the campus of the new American University. This 18th-century house and later the American University campus formed the southern edge of what would become the American University Park neighborhood.

At the northern border ran River Road, an old Indian trail that was cleared and improved in 1779-1780 for wheeled vehicles to connect Great Falls in rural Maryland to the 18th century port at Georgetown. As cut, River Road paralleled the Potomac River and extended from the western reaches of the Great Falls on the Potomac to the small settlement at Tennallytown. There River Road merged with the Frederick-Rockville Road (present-day Wisconsin Avenue) that led from Tennallytown down to the river and to the official tobacco inspection station in Georgetown.

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At the beginning of the Civil War, the Murdock family still retained ownership of a significant tract of land in the area. John Murdock's grandson, W.D.C. Murdock owned approximately 800 acres south of Murdock Mill Road. North of Murdock Mill Road, however, the land was no longer in Murdock family hands, but was owned instead by Samuel F. Burrows and his brother, Levi, who farmed the land and resided thereon. During the War, Union forces constructed Fort Bayard, one of the 26 forts built to form a defensive ring around the nation's capital. Fort Reno, sited to the east of Fort Bayard, stood at the District's highest point, just above the intersection of present-day River Road and Wisconsin Avenue and immediately above the then-village of Tennallytown. Fort Bayard was constructed on top of a soapstone outcropping at the western corner of the city's ten-mile-square boundary. The Burrows land abutted Fort Bayard and was, during the Civil War, used for barracks and parade grounds. At the 1924 funeral of Harriet Burrows, her eldest son, Otho Burrows eulogized:

“Mrs. Burrows personally knew President Abraham Lincoln... Oftentimes Lincoln accepted the hospitality of the charming young matron of the Burrows farm, quenching his thirst at the old well still on the farm and partaking of a cold glass of fine rich milk from the splendid dairy herd and some of the dainty artistries of the comely hostess of the farm house.”¹

Fort Bayard is now a park and forms the northern edge of American University Park.

The Burrows farmhouse referred to in the above eulogy survived not only the 1896 subdivision of land into residential building lots, but also a later move. The house was historically located near the corner of 45th and Ellicott Streets, but in 1924 after the death of Mrs. Burrows, it was moved almost nine blocks south to the 4624 Verplanck Street where it still stands. The two-story Italianate-style frame dwelling sits mid-block along the south side of the street forming a noticeable juxtaposition to the surrounding mid-20th-century single-family dwellings.

At least three other rural farmhouses that pre-date the residential subdivision of American University Park also survive in the neighborhood: 4716 48th Street, 4308 46th Street, and 4330 Yuma Street. A photograph of the property at 4716 48th Street (**Figure 2**) is highlighted in the 1897 promotional brochure for AU Park and shows a very rural setting, including a barn at the back of the main house.² Although it lacks its rural setting and its agricultural outbuilding, the main house at 4716 48th Street still

¹ Eulogy for Harriet America Burrows delivered by her son, Otho Burrows, 1924. Written copy from the files of the Tenleytown Historical Society.

² The promotional brochure refers to the property as the “Old Mansion House” and as the “Residence of Samuel Burrows.” Although Samuel Burrows owned the property, research indicates that he and his wife, Harriet America Burrows lived in the house now on Verplanck Street.

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stands. The house at 4308 46th Street dates to as early as 1800 according to oral histories. The architecture of the building does not support such an early date, and in fact appears more likely to be a product of the 20th century; however, there may be vestiges of an older house within the present structure. The house at 4330 Yuma Street has stood on the site since at least 1878, as indicated on the G.M. Hopkins Map. The house and surrounding land was owned by Englebert Enders, an immigrant from Baden, Germany who operated a dairy farm on the property.

As Tenleytown grew into a sizable village during the second half of the 19th century and became the commercial and social center of the rural community, the area that would become American University Park remained rural and sparsely developed. Like Samuel F. Burrows, most of the nearby residents were small-scale farmers who cultivated their land primarily for personal consumption and for sale at the local market. Raymond Johnson who lived in the village of Tenleytown from 1891-1907 described the outlying area including present-day American University Park as “wooded...with many farms in the near vicinity. It was a beautiful place in the (spring) when fruit trees and fields were in bloom.”³

Despite Johnson’s childhood memories, the rural landscape around Tenleytown had already begun to change. In 1889, the Methodist Church had purchased 90 acres of the old Murdock estate south of present-day Massachusetts Avenue upon which it planned construction of the Methodist-backed American University campus. In 1890, the Georgetown and Tennallytown Railway line opened along present-day Wisconsin Avenue, providing the necessary transportation for the ever-expanding population of the city to move north beyond the city center, and in 1893 Congress passed the Permanent Plan of Highways that established a system of paper streets beyond the original city boundaries, allowing for the subdivision of land into suburban communities. Together, these developments forever altered the rural nature of this part of rural Washington County.

American University:

As early as 1861, Methodist leaders had discussed the possibility of a Methodist University and in that year, William W. Corcoran had even offered the land for such an institution. But it would take several more decades and the advocacy of Methodist Bishop John Fletcher Hurst, as well as the establishment of the Catholic University to add urgency to the desire. Strong anti-Catholicism in the period, the existence of two Roman Catholic universities in D.C. and the fear of increased Catholic power and influence in the nation’s capital generated support. Bishop Hurst’s goal was to establish a graduate school, initially referred to as National University that would be supported by the denomination. Hurst’s choice of

³ Unpublished reminiscences of Raymond Johnson, taken 1973. From the personal files of Judith Helm.

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Washington, D.C. as the location for the Methodist University was in response to the increasing national and international importance of the capital city. As quoted by Hurst,

“There is not a city in the land which compares with this in its far-reaching power, but especially in its facilities for students. A University in Washington does not need to establish a general library, for the National Library, with the special libraries and the various collections, number a million of volumes, and this number is constantly increasing...Washington is not only the political, the social and the scientific center, but is fast getting to be the literary center, of the United States.”

After a ten-day search for a site in the city that began in December 1889, Bishop Hurst had purchased ninety acres of the Murdock's Friendship estate, then owned by Achsah C. Davis. The site included the Murdock homestead, and the route for the anticipated extension of Massachusetts Avenue to the District of Columbia line. The American University was incorporated in D.C. in 1891 and chartered by an Act of Congress in February 1893. Its early subscribers included such nationally known people as Leland Stanford and Susan B. Anthony. Local subscribers included John R. McLean, William Sibley, John and Thomas Waggaman, Woodward & Lothrop, Dr. Armistead Peter, and Charles C. Glover.

A description of the university site, as described in *Harper's Weekly*, echoes the memories of Raymond Johnson:

“The American University...is domiciled on the ninety beautiful acres (where stood Fort Gaines) that crown one of the most picturesque eminences four miles from the Capitol...eye roams over the wooded hills and hazily charming ranges of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the luxuriant vistas of Maryland and the gracefully artistic palaces of Washington.”⁴

Despite expectations, construction of The American University did not begin smoothly. Funding was slow to materialize and though the first building, Hurst Hall was completed in 1897, the second, McKinley Hall, was not completed until 1914. During its first decade, it operated only as a graduate school, eventually opening up to undergraduates in 1925. Despite its slow beginning, The American University provided an important catalyst for development of adjacent land.

Real estate developers and speculators responding to the post Civil War population boom anticipated that the University, along with the area's natural beauty, would provide a strong attraction for residential homebuyers. New roads and streetcar service as well as the establishment of the 1893 Permanent

⁴ Richard Wheatley, DD, “An Interesting Account of the Great American University,” *Harper's Weekly*, December 5, 1896.

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Highway Plan provided greater incentives for speculative development in the area. In particular, the Georgetown and Tennallytown Railway Company opened in 1890 with service between M Street in Georgetown and the District line at today's Western Avenue. That same year, Massachusetts Avenue was cut and paved between Florida Avenue and Wisconsin Avenue, with the expectation that it would be extended beyond that to the district boundary at Western Avenue, further opening up the area around the new university for development. The area's higher elevation offered the promise of healthful living and a respite from the perceived ills of the city.

By the time construction had begun on the first classroom buildings at the new University in the late 1890s, several surrounding subdivisions had been platted: Wesley Heights (1890), American University Heights (1894), American University Park (1896), Addition to American University Park (1897), and Asbury Park (1898). Together, the platted subdivisions overlaid the once rural land with paper streets that would soon be cut and laid. Today, Wesley Heights, located south of the University campus below Massachusetts Avenue and American University Heights (part of today's Spring Valley) stand as their own distinct neighborhoods. As platted, American University Park, Addition to American University Park, Asbury Park and later subdivisions comprise the present neighborhood of American University Park. As defined today, American University Park is bounded by present-day Massachusetts Avenue on the southwest, Western Avenue on the west, River Road on the north, and Nebraska Avenue on the east.

B. The Residential Subdivisions of American University Park:

The Platting of American University Park (July 1896) and the First Addition to American University Park (May 1897):

The American University Park subdivision was the product of real estate investors John D. Croissant and David D. Stone. Croissant, an active Methodist who had trained for the Methodist ministry, came to Washington, D.C. in 1877. He appears to have first worked as a postal clerk, but eventually became involved in real estate and actively advocated for city improvements, namely the extension of Massachusetts Avenue and the construction of electric lights—important city infrastructure which would directly enhance his developments and financial interest. David D. Stone came to Washington, D.C. in 1886 where he founded a real estate firm David D. Stone & Co. Well aware of the Methodist Church plans to build a university and seeing the opportunity to capitalize on it for real estate development, the two businessmen teamed up to purchase land north of the University property. Croissant was clearly

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optimistic about the area surrounding the new university, as he had already platted the nearby American University Heights and was actively engaged in its promotion.⁵

The first purchase of land for American University Park included an area of 54.367 acres. The second purchase included 70 acres along Murdock Mill Road, described in period newspaper coverage as the “Burrows Tract.” The purchase of the Burrows tract which Croissant and Stone purchased indirectly from Samuel Burrows through Lloyd Irvine, was highlighted in the April 11, 1897 *Washington Post* as “one of the features of the week’s business.”⁶ Of particular note, the *Post* remarked that the streets have been “laid out in accordance with the highway act for street extensions within the District of Columbia” and further informed the reader that “Massachusetts Avenue lies on this land, and the grading of this portion will result in the opening of this great boulevard its entire length to the District line.”⁷

As platted in 1896 and 1897, the streets of American University Park and First Addition to American University Park did conform to the Permanent Plan for Highways for this section of the city. The plats generally followed a fairly rigid grid plan due in part to the relatively level terrain of land. Although the official Permanent Highway Plan map for this section of the city was not published in final form until 1898, a draft version of the map had been released by 1897 and was known and in use by surveyors and developers probably before that time. While Massachusetts and Western Avenues cut through the paper grid on strong diagonals, the only other alternative to the rigid grid was the existing windy and narrow Murdock Mill Road. Lots followed standard long and narrow urban-sized layouts and typically measured 20’ x 100.’ Narrow H-shaped alleys cut through the squares providing several access points to the rear of the lots and offering service areas out of view from the public rights-of-way.

Lot Sales, House Construction and Promoting the American University Park Suburb:

With no amenities in place other than graded streets, Croissant and Stone began construction of several houses within American University Park, and set about promoting the new subdivision. The first house to be constructed, 4701 Fessenden Street, was highlighted on a decorative plat of the subdivision that happened to be included with the D.C. Permit to Build for the dwelling (**Figure 3**). This promotional plat includes picturesque renderings of three houses, one of which is 4701 Fessenden Street, surrounding

⁵ Croissant took out several quarter- and half-page ads in local real estate pages, beginning in 1894, in an effort to promote American University Heights.

⁶ “Real Estate Market, Sale of Burrows Tract to a Syndicate,” *The Washington Post*, April 11, 1897.

⁷ Ibid.

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a plan of the subdivision with a set of notes.⁸ The notes tout the subdivided area's attributes and in particular extol its proximity ("only five blocks") to American University and ("only two and one-half blocks") to the electric streetcar line. Most notably and perhaps as overcompensation for the lack of amenities provided by the developers, the notes emphasize the increasing value of land in the area and the investment potential of simply purchasing lots.

As advertised, lots in American University Park cost \$500 for inside lots, \$600 for alley lots, and \$1,200 for double corner lots. Other than graded streets and planted trees, Croissant and Stone offered no amenities. The developers were clearly banking on the city to provide services to newly developing suburbs outside of the city limits, including that of American University Park.

The house at 4701 Fessenden Street as illustrated on the decorative plat was clearly presented as a "model" home.⁹ As drawn, the 2-1/2-story Queen Anne residence was exuberant in its massing with a panoply of projections including bays, dormers, turrets, projecting gables, tall chimney stacks and a porte-cochere (**Figure 4**). In addition, it was illustrated with ample decorative flourishes such as a variety of shingle types and patterns, applied frieze board decoration and ornate window lintels. As built, the house is significantly smaller in scale and has a much more restrained use of ornamentation. Constructed quickly, the house was completed before the streets were fully laid. Former resident Mrs. Pauline Manning Batchelder vividly recalled, "...the city cut down the streets around our house, digging out the top three or four feet of Fessenden and 47th...Originally our front yard and the Fort had been on the same level. Now our house was left high and dry like a castle."

Upon completion of the subdivision process, Croissant and Stone immediately set about promoting the sale of lots and the construction of houses. According to the developers, "two-thirds of the initial set of lots put on the market were sold in the first six months, while half of the second round of lots put up had also been sold." In 1897 alone, ten houses were under construction, "some of them finished and occupied."¹⁰ Capitalizing upon this initial success and in an effort to encourage more lot sales and house construction, the developers published a heavily illustrated promotional brochure for American

⁸ As shown on the decorative plat, the plan of American University Park subdivision consisted of an approximately 10 block section within the city boundaries, as well as a large two-block stretch of subdivided land on the Maryland side of Western Avenue. The Maryland side included an open stretch of park land cut by a curving drive that provided access to the house lots fronting the park.

⁹ Though no architect or building services appear to have been provided by the developers, the builder of 4701 Fessenden Street, B.J. Burgoyne, built four other early houses in the subdivision and may have had direct associations with Croissant and Stone, rather than with the owners of the lots. The April 11 1897 Post article noted above also states that "H. Lloyd Ervine is building a model frame dwelling in American University Park. B.H. Burgoyne is the architect and builder."

¹⁰ Croissant and Stone, *American University Park*, Promotional brochure, 1897.

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University Park in 1897. Entitled *The American University Park*, this promotional piece was full of the standard 19th-century flowery writing that touted the subdivision's principal attributes, namely that of location in terms of its proximity to churches, schools and streetcar line (at Tennallytown), healthy heights, and rising land values. In juxtaposition to illustrations of the existing rural and rugged landscape and the "old" farmhouses, the developers illustrated seven of the newly built or still under construction Queen Anne residences. Although the houses appear alone on unlandscaped lots and adjacent to newly cut and unpaved streets, the brochure promised that the "pictures are old already, as since they were taken the houses have been finished, and the graders have nearly completed this Fall's work. We expect next year to surpass this in improvements and buildings."

In terms of its improvements and amenities, the brochure indicated that maple trees had already been planted around every block, that more grading would follow, and that sidewalks would be laid. Knowing the all-importance of transportation to drive development, the developers optimistically noted, "We hope soon to have a car line running through the Park, and it will be built as soon as we can get the charter from Congress." Indeed, Croissant and Stone, along with several others, had incorporated the Washington and University Railroad, a streetcar company that would provide streetcar service from 11th and E Streets downtown, north on Connecticut Avenue, then west past Oak View (present-day Cleveland Park) to the American University and then through the Park to the junction of Boundary [Western] Avenue and River Road. A bill for the Washington and University Railroad was introduced to Congress in June 1897 and was passed the following year.¹¹ In January 1899, a contract for the construction of the line had been awarded and it was anticipated that service on the line would be open by the Spring of 1899.¹²

Based upon the assumed confidence that the streetcar line would "connect this property with the city" and be "in operation before the year is out," the general feeling was that American University Park had the ingredients to become a successful residential neighborhood. As noted in the *Washington Post* in April 1899, "The phenomenal growth of this lovely suburb of Washington is a matter of much comment, and it is safe to predict that it will shortly be one of the most popular residential sections."¹³

By May 1900, the streetcar line had not been constructed; instead, Croissant had resorted to providing wagon service from Tenleytown to AU Park, as advertised in the *Washington Post*:

"A most enjoyable ride can be had by taking the electric car to Tennallytown and River Road, where will be waiting a wagonette, which will hold ten persons, and starting from that point at 9,

¹¹ "New Electric Road Proposed," *The Washington Post*, June 26, 1897.

¹² "A New Suburban Line: Contract Let for Washington and University Railway," *The Washington Post*, 1/13/1899.

¹³ "American University Park," *The Washington Post*, April 30, 1899, p. 14.

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10, 11, 12, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 o'clock, will drive through American University Park subdivision and return without charge."¹⁴

Despite the setback in transportation, optimism over the potential success of American University continued unabated over the course of the next couple of years. In 1901-02, the suburb continued to garner much attention in real estate circles not just for its own construction, but for that of surrounding developments, including most notably American University, the construction of the Massachusetts Avenue Bridge over Rock Creek and the establishment of the nearby Washington Cathedral School for Girls and St. Albans School for Boys.¹⁵

City-wide infrastructure improvements were also progressively making their way towards AU Park, though not necessarily quickly enough to benefit Croissant's development. By 1901, electric lights had been extended down River Road to Murdock Mill Road, surrounding the subdivision in light, but not actually reaching the interior of the fledgling neighborhood. In fact, pleas made by Croissant to the city to provide lighting to AU Park went unfulfilled as the inspector of lighting reported in 1900, "it would take sixty lamps to cover the distance, while the houses benefited do not exceed fifteen." The inspector argued that other subdivisions of "more importance" would be given "first consideration."¹⁶ In 1906, an advertisement for AU Park highlighted the "streets of macadam, electric light, and telephone service, and other comforts and conveniences," indicating that electricity had, by then, reached the subdivision.

The city completed a sewer line to American University around 1911, but it is not clear when sewage mains were actually brought to the AU Park subdivision. Similarly, several of the streets in the area that connected AU Park to the city and its existing infrastructure remained unopened, such as Fessenden Street between River Road and Wisconsin Avenue and Massachusetts Avenue between Wisconsin Avenue and the District line. In 1907, local residents of AU Park took matters into their own hands and petitioned Congress to extend Fessenden Street from River Road to Wisconsin Avenue.¹⁷ Despite years of pleas, Massachusetts Avenue was not fully extended and graded until 1916 and Nebraska Avenue was not completed until 1917.

The lack of infrastructure, particularly good transportation, soon caught up with the developers. Although a streetcar line had been extended along Massachusetts Avenue past the University, the line

¹⁴ *The Washington Post*, May 6, 1900, p. 11.

¹⁵ See, "Investors Turn to Suburban Tracts of Large Size," *The Washington Post*, May 12, 1901, p. 14 and "Bills in Congress Interest Dealers and Brokers," *The Washington Post*, May 11, 1902, p. 26.

¹⁶ "Four Street Lamps to Each House," *The Washington Post*, August 22, 1900, p. 10.

¹⁷ "Urged Streets Extension, Owners of American University Park Want Improvement Made," *The Washington Post*, May 18, 1907, p. 16.

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did not traverse American University Park as proposed in the Washington and University Railway charter of 1896. In fact, even the wagonette service seemed to have been less than initially advertised. A newspaper article relates the frustration of Augustus Crittenden, a resident of AU Park who was fed up with the lack of wagon transportation through the Park to Tennallytown and the sporadic rail service from there along River Road to downtown. Angry with the developers over the poor transportation, and in an era of rising racism, Crittenden apparently threatened to sell his house and lot to a “colored” family in a deliberate effort to hurt the developers’ business effort.¹⁸

Compared to ten houses built in 1897 alone, only six more were constructed in the period between 1898 and 1903. After 1903, new house construction effectively came to a grinding halt in American University Park and its First Addition, essentially leaving one lonely house per block in the subdivided neighborhood for more than twenty years. One exception to this was the house at 4900 47th Street. This Craftsman bungalow, built in 1911, was constructed on a corner lot whose owner was listed as Galen L. Tait and DeWitt Croissant, Trustees. Perhaps in a last ditch effort to revive the residential subdivision platted by his late father, J.D. Croissant, DeWitt Croissant built the corner dwelling. Despite this attempt, and despite initial predictions that American University Park would be “one of the most popular residential sections” in the District, the original 19th-century suburban development of American University Park had failed.

Beginning in the mid-1920s and continuing through the 1940s as an ever expanding population led to a need for housing, small and large-scale builders alike bought up undeveloped lots within existing subdivisions upon which they built large collections of houses on a speculative basis. At the same time, developers would find and subdivide still un-platted tracts of land to fill in the gaps. In 1925, for instance, following the death of Mrs. Burrows, the remaining 50-acre tract of land upon which the “old” Burrows estate stood, was sold for development and platted into residential building lots.¹⁹ American University Park reached maturity during this period as operative builders came into the area, bought up multiple lots and constructed builder-built speculative houses to appeal to the city’s growing white, middle-class residents. Architecturally, the houses from this period represent a repetitive variety of house forms and styles ranging from two-story, three-bay brick Colonials to 1-1/2-story bungalows and brick and stone Tudor Revival-style houses.

The Developers of American University Park:

¹⁸ “To Colored People Only, A. W. Crittenden Names Conditions for Sale of Suburban Home,” undated and untitled newspaper article, on file at the American University archives.

¹⁹ “Old Burrows Estate Sold to M. Friedman,” *The Washington Post*, July 26, 1925.

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John D. Croissant:

John D. Croissant and David D. Stone together purchased the land and platted the original American University Park subdivision in 1896. Born in 1846 in Cape Vincent, New York, John D. Croissant later studied at Northwestern Academy, a preparatory academy no longer in existence, where he then went on to Northwestern University in 1869. He did not graduate, but did receive a diploma from the Garrett Biblical Institute in 1877. Despite being trained for the Methodist ministry, there is no evidence that he was ordained and he did not pursue the ministry. He arrived in D.C. in 1877 and is listed in the 1880 Census as a post office clerk. In 1888, he was elected president of the Metropolitan (Methodist) Church Lyceum so it is reasonable to assume that he was well connected in Methodist circles and would be among the first to hear about plans for The American University. His obituary, which describes him as “active in every movement of public interest” supports that assumption.²⁰ By the early 1890s, Croissant was involved in real estate. In 1894, he platted American University Heights along with George Corey, and in 1896 he platted American University Park with David D. Stone. In 1897, Croissant was seeking, along with other incorporators, a Congressional charter for the Washington and University Railroad streetcar line that would provide service to his subdivided land. Croissant followed up his initial subdivisions with additions to both AU Heights and AU Park. During this time, Croissant continued to press Congress and the city to provide the necessary infrastructure to make the residential development of this part of the city successful.

John Croissant and his wife were socially active, as indicated by the fact that their names appear in the city’s society pages with some frequency. The news items were generally descriptive, noting the couple’s travel plans and, on one occasion, Mrs. Croissant’s lecture on her travel experiences. Sometimes the publicity was more controversial, such as the 1895 suit over a land transaction.

By May 1904, as the initial spurt of development in American University Park was coming to a close, Croissant’s seemingly successful life failed him. He was declared insane and his wife and son were appointed his trustees. He died just under two years later in February 1906.

David D. Stone:

David D. Stone was born in Norfolk, Virginia. He later graduated from Washington & Jefferson College in Washington, PA with a PhD. He practiced law in Mifflintown, PA and in 1886 relocated to Washington, D.C. Here, he founded the real estate firm David D. Stone & Co. “which rapidly achieved

²⁰ “Croissant Funeral Today,” *The Washington Post*, p. S4

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a leading place in the real estate business of the District.²¹ Originally, the firm occupied “two large rooms” on the ground floor of the LeDroit Building and conducted business including property development, rentals, insurance and loans. The firm was considered “pioneers in development of Columbia Heights and Bloomingdale and in those districts sold more property than any other firm.”²² David D. Stone had two sons, Charles Parker Stone and Robert H. Stone. Robert H. Stone appears to have been a junior member of the firm. At David D. Stone’s retirement, Robert H. Stone and Charles W. Fairfax became partners and the firm became Stone & Fairfax. In 1901 the firm was incorporated and continued at various addresses for several decades.²³

David D. Stone lived at 2021 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W. His son, Robert, however lived in American University Park at 4901 47th Street, one of the early houses of the neighborhood.

²¹ David D. Stone is Dead,” *The Washington Post*, March 12, 1904, p. 9.

²² John Claggett Proctor, ed. *Washington Past and Present*, Vol. IV, New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1930, pp. 539-541.

²³ “New Office Leased by Stone & Fairfax,” *The Washington Post*, April 16, 1931, R4.

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C. The Residential Development of Asbury Park/Robeyville

As noted above, the early development of the initial subdivisions forming present-day American University Park reached a hiatus in the first decade of its development. In general, building did not pick up in the larger area forming the present boundaries of American University Park until the mid-1920s. One exception, however, existed in the subdivision of Asbury Park. Asbury Park consisted of a small six-acre tract of land platted in 1898 by David D. Stone, president of the District Development Company (and partner with Croissant in the American University Park subdivision.) As platted, Asbury Park included a 2-1/2-block area south of Murdock Mill Road between 44th and 45th Streets comprising the 4400 block of Alton Place (formerly Lyles Place) and Albemarle Street.

Asbury Park, like American University Park, was part of the Addison portion of Friendship, the 3,124-acre tract patented to Addison and Stoddert in 1713. In 1865, Addison's descendant, W.D.C. Murdock subdivided a part of Friendship south of Murdock Mill Road, extending to River Road on the east and across Massachusetts Avenue on the west. One of these parcels, the Deakins farm located south of Murdock Mill Road was subdivided as Asbury Park, later referred to as Robeyville.

In 1893, James W. Robey had moved from Merrifield, Virginia to Tenleytown where he had learned from a friend that land was available, as was construction work. James immigrated to Tenleytown with his seven sons and two daughters. James Robey and his sons were skilled in the building trades, and quickly become active members in the Tenleytown community, joining Eldbrooke Church and the Singleton Masonic Lodge. Like the developers of American University Park, the Robeys clearly believed that the creation of The American University would generate a building boom in the environs and sought to be a part of it. Beginning in 1902, the Robeys (father and sons) purchased seven lots of land along the 4400 block of Alton Place in Asbury Park, and between 1902 and 1911, built seven houses as their own residences. In addition, the Robeys built two other houses on the street for two unrelated lot owners. The first house to be built, 4428 Alton Place, was purchased by son, Albert Robey, and built in 1902 by James Robey and Sons. Designed by local designer N.W. Chappell, the two-story three-bay, gable-fronted frame dwelling appears to have established a model residence on the street. Almost all of the other dwellings built along the 4400 block of Alton Place were frame dwellings that followed a similar two-story, gable-fronted dwelling form. Following construction of the first house in 1902, the Robeys built another one in 1903, two more in 1904, two in 1907, one in 1908, one in 1909 and one in 1911. One of the two houses built in 1904, 4443 Alton Place, was built for patriarch James W. Robey.

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The sons and daughters of James W. Robey married into local Tenleytown families and the Robey name became synonymous with Tenleytown. As so many Robeys lived on Alton Place, the cluster of houses along the street came to be called Robeyville.

Today, the 4400 block of Alton Place includes several later houses built from 1924 to 1951, but like those houses along the Grant Road Historic District in Tenleytown, Robeyville retains the ambience and charm of its early years. The names Robeyville and Asbury Park are rarely used now as the area is generally considered part of American University Park.

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F. ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

Name of Property Type: Residential Buildings

Description:

When American University Park went from being a large farm located on the outskirts of the rural crossroads community of Tenleytown in the pre- and post-Civil War era to a platted residential subdivision of northwest, DC in 1896, the nature of development in the area changed. Prior to its subdivision, the area was essentially owned by two families: the Murdock family and the Burrows family, both of whom farmed the land and built homesteads there. The Murdock family homestead "Friendship" was demolished in 1925 for construction of the chancellor's house at The American University (*see Figure 1*). The Burrows farmhouse survived (though it was moved from its original location to Verplanck Street), along with two other farmhouses. Although those two farmhouses are thought to remain *in situ*, their rural surroundings have disappeared.

Following the 1896 and 1897 subdivisions of land into American University Park, approximately 17 houses were built in its initial years. These houses, almost all frame Queen Anne dwelling forms, sit on lots that are surrounded by later mid-20th century single-family dwellings. One house, built in 1911, serves as an important transitional building, straddling the line between the initial development of American University Park and the inter-war period when the neighborhood reached maturity. The residential buildings in AU Park can thus be classified into two sub-types: Pre-Subdivision Farmhouse and Early Subdivision House (1897-1911).

Name of Property Sub-type: Pre-Subdivision Farmhouse

Description:

The property sub-type, "Pre-subdivision Farmhouse" of American University Park provides important reminders of the area's rural past. The houses no longer sit on large acreage and no longer contain agricultural outbuildings that make them recognizable as farmhouses. However, architecturally, these dwellings are representative of the rural vernacular farmhouses of their period and place. The house at 4716 48th Street is a two-story, four-bay frame dwelling covered with a side gable roof and featuring two entry doors on the façade and a two-story rear service ell. The Samuel Burrows House at 4624 Verplanck Street is a two-story, three-bay, side-passage frame dwelling also covered with a side gable roof. 4716 48th Street is typical of rural farmhouses from the mid-19th-century, while the 4624 Verplanck Street house presents more of a village model from the period.

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The farmhouse at 4308 46th Street, understood through oral histories to date from before the Civil War, does not retain its historic appearance. Although historic fabric may be encased within the existing structure, its current exterior appearance would more likely support an early 20th century date of construction. The house at 4330 Yuma Street (pre-1878) is a two-story, side-gable dwelling that sits well back from the street and at an angle to it. Its relationship to the street and surrounding fabric clearly identify it as a pre-Subdivision farmhouse.

Significance:

As a sub-type, the “Pre-subdivision Farmhouse” in American University Park is a significant property type that illustrates the rural legacy of this predominantly mid-20th-century residential neighborhood. They are important remnants of the first period of growth in the larger Tenleytown area and are a testament to the nature of development in what later became American University Park. In addition, the pre-subdivision houses provide important information on the physical and social development of what was rural Washington County, outside of the original city limits.

Registration Requirements:

The Pre-subdivision House is eligible for listing under Criteria A, B and/or C. In order to qualify for registration, the dwelling should retain integrity of design, materials and workmanship; in particular, it should retain original massing and character-defining details and materials that evoke the period of construction and associated context of the farmhouse. Integrity of setting and location is not necessary. The farmhouses generally no longer retain their historic acreage, and at least one is known to have been moved. In addition, the land around them has been profoundly altered by the development of single-family dwellings in the mid-20th century. Because these farmhouses provide valuable historical information and are significant resources, leniency should be placed on these areas of integrity. The pre-subdivision farmhouses should, though, retain integrity of feeling and association. In particular, the farmhouses should be able to evoke a palpable sense of the past.

Alterations to the original design should not make the farmhouse ineligible for listing under Criterion A. However, the building must still be a physical embodiment of its type or period of construction. Additional research and investigation will be needed to determine if the house at 4308 46th Street truly dates to this period, and, further if it retains sufficient integrity to qualify for listing under this multiple property document.

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Name of Subtype: **Early Subdivision House (1896-1911)**

Description:

As a sub-type, the “Early Subdivision House” consists of the large, late Victorian-era dwelling that was built in the first phase of construction of the American University Park subdivisions. The Early Subdivision house was built on a single or double lot within the platted American University Park subdivisions. These early houses were generally built between 1897 when the subdivision first opened for development until 1904, when construction in the subdivision came to an initial halt, save for one exception (see below). These houses are both speculatively built by the original developers, or by early lot purchasers in the subdivision, or were built by individual owners who bought the lot in order to construct their own personal residence on it. In general, these early houses are transitional suburban-type Victorian-era frame dwellings with Queen Anne-style massing defined by projecting gables, complex roofs and wrap-around porches. The houses are less grand and more regular and compact than earlier Victorian examples found in the region’s outlying railroad suburbs, such as Takoma and Garrett Park in Montgomery County.

As an exception, the Early Subdivision House may also be a post-Victorian suburban dwelling form, namely a bungalow. One known example of a bungalow, 4900 47th Street, was built in 1911 and is an important transitional dwelling.

List of Early Subdivision Houses:

<i>Address</i>	<i>Date</i>
4900 47 th Street, NW	1911
4601 47 th Street, NW	1897
4901 47 th Street, NW	1897
4619 48 th Street, NW	1897
4628 48 th Street, NW	1899
4513 49th Street, NW	1897
4612 49 th Street, NW	1897
4622 Asbury Street, NW	1900
4716 Asbury Street, NW	1897
4824 Brandywine Street, NW	1897
4941 Butterworth Place, NW	1897
4608 Davenport Street, NW	1902
4722 Davenport Street, NW	1900
4701 Fessenden Street, NW	1897

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4528 Fessenden Street, NW	1902-04
4540 Fessenden Street, NW	1900
4520 River Road, NW	1897

Significance:

The Early Subdivision House in American University Park is significant in that it is a physical manifestation of the initial phase of development in a residential neighborhood that saw its principal growth in the mid-20th-century. The Early Subdivision House tells an important story about the development in this part of the city. The date of construction for the Early Subdivision House extends from 1897 when the first houses were constructed to 1911 when the last house was constructed before the development reached a hiatus that lasted well over a decade.

Registration Requirements:

The sub-type "Early Subdivision House" is eligible for listing under Criteria A, B and/or C. In order to qualify for registration, the dwelling sub-type should retain integrity of design and workmanship, but does not necessarily have to retain integrity of materials. For instance, the dwelling should retain its original massing and its character-defining details that evoke the individual building's period of construction and associated context. However, the dwelling need not retain all of its original materials. For instance, many of the houses have replacement roof coverings and wall cladding, as well as windows, yet still retain the Queen Anne massing and character.

The properties must also retain integrity of setting, feeling and association; however, leniency should be applied to this area of integrity since the general setting of the subdivision has been affected by the surrounding mid-20th century residential development. The existence of the Early Subdivision House, must however, through feeling and association, be able to evoke a palpable sense of the past.

Unlike the Pre-subdivision Houses that are known to have been moved, it is not thought that any of the Early Subdivision Houses has been moved from its original lot. However, integrity of location is not necessary, since the building's exact lot location is not required for it to embody the physical expression of the sub-type.

Name of Property Type: **Building Clusters**

Description:

The late-19th-century-early 20th-century development of the platted subdivisions making up the present neighborhood of American University Park was essentially a failed venture. Construction of houses ceased within the first decade of development, only to resume in the inter-war years when

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builders erected large collections of single-family dwellings to attract the city's growing middle-class population.

However, a cluster of dwellings from the early years of development exists along the 4400 block of Alton Place that sets it apart from the later mid-20th-century development in the neighborhood. Along with the Early Subdivision Houses, this cluster of dwellings gives the American University Park neighborhood great character.

The group of dwellings along the street is primarily the result of one builder, Robey & Sons, who was trying to capitalize on development of American University Park and thus inspired others to follow suit. The houses in this cluster are village-type houses, generally two-story frame and stucco-clad buildings with front-facing gable roofs and often with wrap-around or full-width front porches.

Significance/Registration Requirements:

The cluster of early 20th-century houses along the 4400 block of Alton Place is significant as a physical manifestation of the early development of the American University Park neighborhood. This cluster of houses, though more modest than the individual Queen Anne houses built in the neighborhood, provides an expression of what the original developers intended for the entire neighborhood.

The creation of building clusters as a property subtype under this Multiple Property document allows for the inclusion of resources that are united historically and architecturally, but that individually may lack distinguishing characteristics of building type, style or method of construction. Historic Building Clusters may qualify for listing under Criterion A and/or C. Eligible districts should possess an intact concentration of resources that are associated with one or more of the developed historic contexts.

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G. Geographical Data

The geographical boundaries for this Multiple Property document consist of the residential neighborhood known today as American University Park. This wide area is bounded by River Road on the north, Western Avenue on the west, Massachusetts Avenue on the south and Nebraska Avenue on the east.

The original American University Park subdivision (1896) and the First Addition to American University Park (1897) were located within the current area, and were roughly bounded by River Road on the north, Western (Boundary) Avenue on the west. From River Road, the boundaries jogged southwest at Fessenden (Flint) Street to 46th Street and continued to Brandywine Street and the old Murdock Mill Road to Butterworth Street (Armes Place), where they then converged with Western Avenue.

The Asbury Park subdivision (1898), which came to be known as Robeyville and is also part of present-day American University Park was a separate subdivision from American University Park and its first addition. Asbury Park was located across Murdock Mill Road to the east and north. Its outlines were those of the 1865 Deakins farm, now the 4400 blocks of Alton (Lyles) Place and Albemarle Street.

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H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

In 2003, the Tenleytown Historical Society completed a Historic Resources Survey, funded by a grant from the D.C. Historic Preservation Office that included research on the general history of Tenleytown, as well as more specific research on certain identified and important historic resources within the area. The size of the grant limited the scope of the survey to the area thought of today as Tenleytown. Historically, the “greater” Tenleytown area included largely agricultural land that was later developed and came to be known by other names, such as American University Park and Friendship Heights. To complement this survey, the following year (2004), the Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3E awarded the Tenleytown Historical Society a grant for a photographic survey of American University Park, Friendship Heights and Tenleytown. This survey included the early American University Park homes, the “village” homes of Robeyville, and representative houses throughout the greater Tenleytown area, especially in Friendship Heights and American University Park.

Based upon the findings of the above surveys, the Tenleytown Historical Society prepared a National Register Multiple Property Nomination on Tenleytown, entitled *Tenleytown, Washington, D.C.: Architectural and Historic Resources: 1770-1941*. The document was prepared and adopted by the D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board and listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2008. This document responded to the recommendation in the 2003 Survey for thematic nominations and included expanded resources of 19th-century Tenleytown. Among those resources identified are the early residences of American University Park and Asbury Park (Robeyville.).

While the geographic boundaries of the Multiple Property Document on Tenleytown extended out to include the former farmland, the context was focused more on the village of Tenleytown *per se* and its growth as a residential neighborhood of the city during the mid-20th century. The multiple property document on American University Park more specifically highlights the development of that residential neighborhood that was borne out of rural Tenleytown. This multiple property document, *American University in Washington, DC, Its Early Houses: Pre-Civil War to 1911* was funded by a Community Heritage Grant from the Humanities Council of DC. It provides a detailed context on American University Park, including the influence of the establishment of The American University, and its development, including the residential subdivision of Asbury Park. The Multiple Property document discusses the influence of The American University in the creation of the subdivisions. A National Register nomination for The Hilleary T. Burrows House, listed in the DC Inventory of Historic Sites in 2001 accompanies this nomination.

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Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

HISTORIC IMAGE



Figure 1: Friendship (present site of the Chancellor's Residence at The American University), Courtesy of The American University Archives

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American University Park, Its Early Houses

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

HISTORIC IMAGE

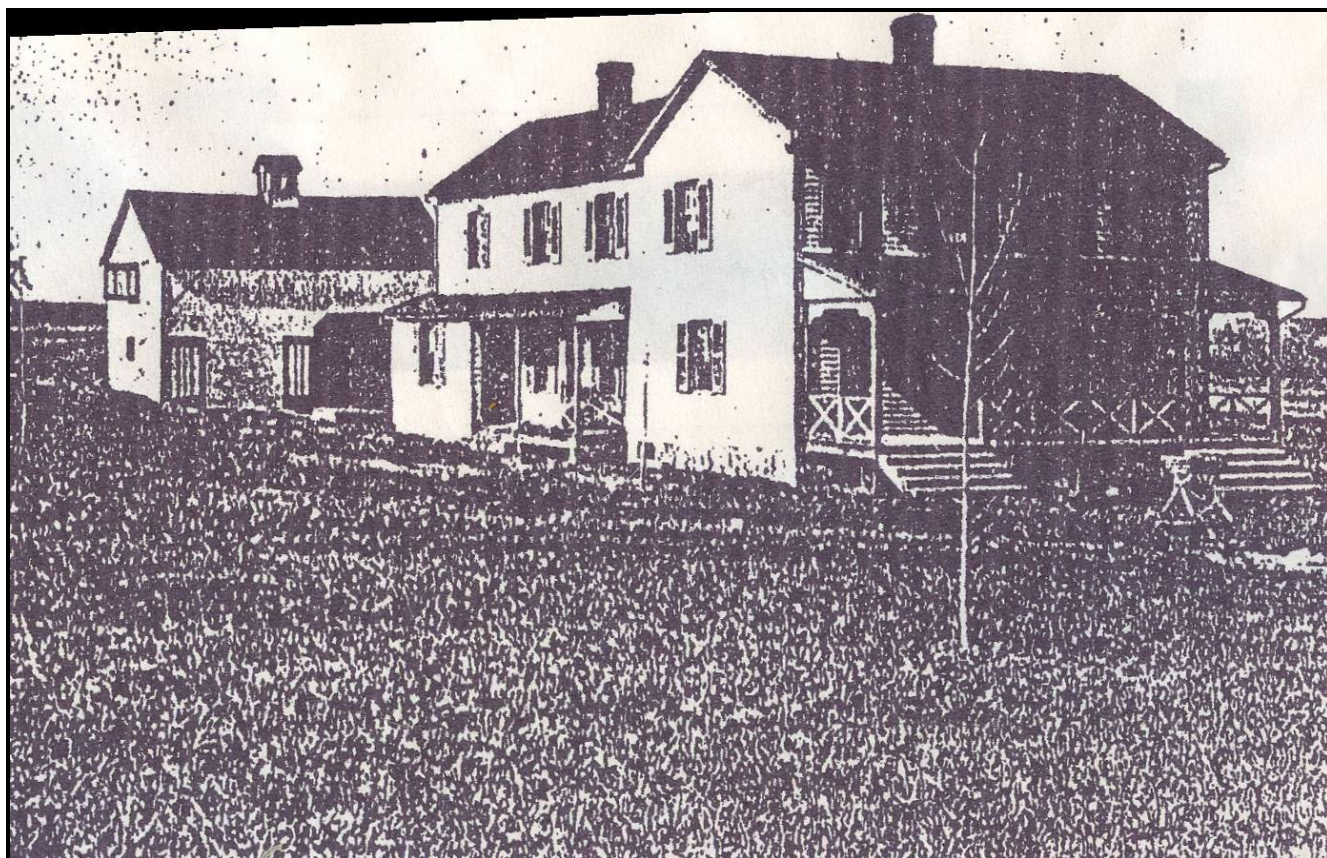


Figure 2: 4716 48th Street
(from 1897 brochure "The American University Park, Washington, DC")

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American University Park, Its Early Houses

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

HISTORIC IMAGE

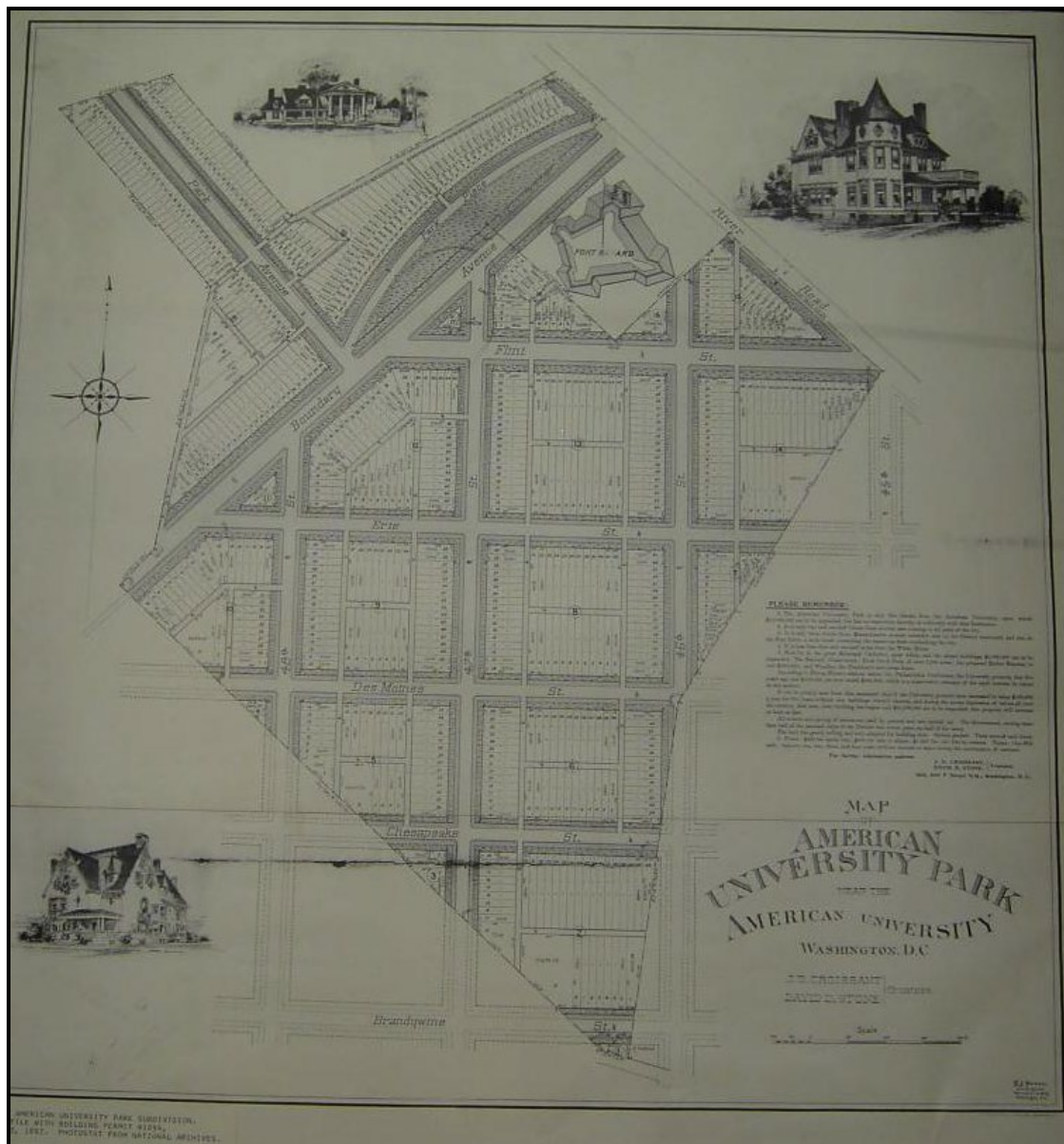


Figure 3: Decorative Plat of American University Park (1896)
Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

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American University Park, Its Early Houses

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

HISTORIC IMAGE

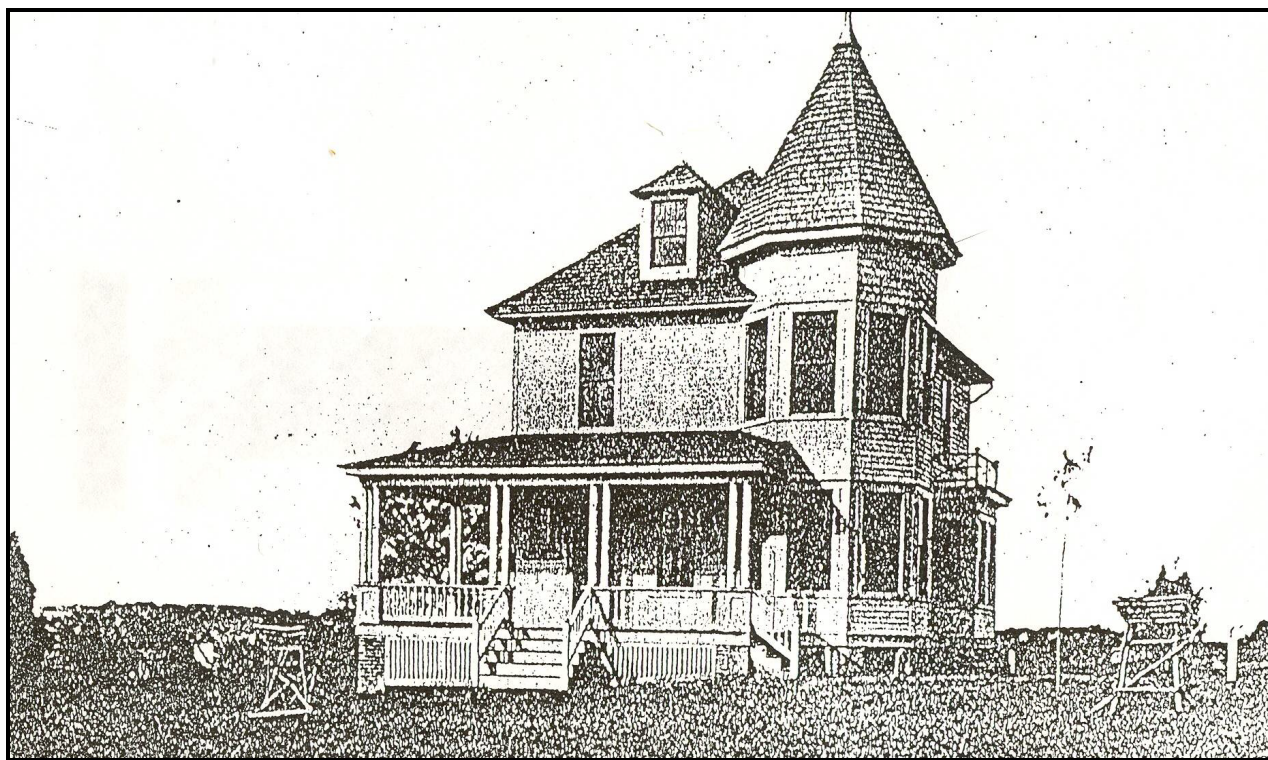


Figure 4: Photograph of 4701 Fessenden Street, NW
(from 1897 brochure "The American University Park, Washington, DC")