

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

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

**1. Name of Property**

Historic name: Pauline Pauline "Polly" Shackleton Residence  
 Other names/site number: 3232 Reservoir Road, NW  
 Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**2. Location**

Street & number: 3232 Reservoir Road, NW  
 City or town: Washington State: DC County: N/A  
 Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this \_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ **national**      \_\_\_ **statewide**      \_\_\_ **local**  
 Applicable National Register Criteria:

   **A**         **B**         **C**         **D**

_____ <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b>	_____ <b>Date</b>
_____ <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
_____ <b>Signature of commenting official:</b>	_____ <b>Date</b>
_____ <b>Title :</b>	
_____ <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	

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**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1 (contributing building in the Georgetown Historic District)

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Colonial Revival

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: brick, concrete, aluminum, slate

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The Pauline "Polly" Shackleton House is located at 3232 Reservoir Road, NW in Georgetown, Washington, DC. The house occupies lot 84 in Square 1280, a trapezoidal-shaped square bounded by Reservoir Road on the north, Q Street on the south, 32<sup>nd</sup> Street on the east and Wisconsin Avenue on the west with three named alleys cutting into the interior of the square from the primary streets. Sited at the corner of Reservoir Road and Caton Place (one of the alleys), the house is a two story (with basement and attic), semi-detached brick building with a generally rectangular footprint. Designed by local architect Gertrude Sawyer for owner Colonel Lester Baker and his wife, Beatrice Baker, the house was designed in a Colonial Revival Style and built in 1940 as a detached building. By 1952, Sawyer had designed and developed a row of dwellings on newly divided lots abutting the west side wall of 3232 Reservoir Road, converting it into its present-day semi-detached condition. From 1959 until 1997, the house was occupied by Pauline "Polly" Shackleton, a local politician and activist, an appointed member of the District's first City Council from 1967-70, its first woman councilmember, a member of the first elected City Council in 1974, and a lifelong advocate for the city.

The house consists of a main block facing Reservoir Road and a rear wing extending along Caton Place NW. The house sits on the property line on Reservoir Road with just a sidewalk and street tree boxes between the house and the street, while a sizeable yard on the back half of the long lot at the rear of the house is enclosed along Caton Place by a tall wooden fence. The house forms part of a collection of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, Colonial Revival-style brick dwellings in the

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vicinity and is a contributing building in the Georgetown Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This nomination recognizes the house under Criterion B for Polly Shackleton for a period of significance of 1959-1997 that is outside that of the historic district (1751-1950).

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## Narrative Description

### Site

The dwelling at 3232 Reservoir Road, NW fronts immediately on the public right-of-way of Reservoir Road and extends parallel to Caton Place, NW towards the south. The house is part of a collection of mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century Colonial Revival-style dwellings in the immediate vicinity, including this block of Reservoir Road, Caton Place and the adjacent Scott Place NW. The houses found there are generally two-story brick rowhouses that follow the domestic building form, massing and style of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century houses of Georgetown.

The house takes up the north half of its lot, while a generous, fenced-in and landscaped yard fills the southern half. The fence has one gated entrance off Caton Place, NW, which is highlighted by a short gravel walkway lined with ornamental grasses, hedges, and a large Magnolia tree.

### Exterior Description

The house consists of two distinct portions: the front (north) block which faces Reservoir Road and a rear wing which extends to the south paralleling Caton Place, NW. The house is set upon a concrete foundation and is covered with an intersecting roof with a side gable covering the main, front block and a half-hipped roof over the rear wing. The north block is two bays wide and three bays deep, and measures approximately twenty feet by forty-three feet.<sup>1</sup> The rear wing, almost square in plan and inset about four feet from the main block, measures sixteen feet four inches wide and sixteen feet eight inches long. The red brick walls are laid in an American bond with five rows of stretchers between rows of headers. The roof over the main block and wing is finished with slate shingles.

The façade, facing Reservoir Road, comprises a front entry door and garage on the first story and two single windows on the second story. The entrance door is raised above grade with a four-step brick stoop and an iron railing leading to it. The door is marked by a Colonial Revival style wooden surround with fluted pilasters supporting a segmental arched pediment. A single-leaf wood door with nine lights and a single light transom above are set within the wood surround. The garage door, immediately to the right (west) of the door, opens at grade (the site slopes slightly to the west) and features a paneled wood roll-up door, topped by an original eleven-light transom. Two six-over-six, double-hung windows with shutters are symmetrically located in the second story above the lower story openings.

The east elevation extends along Caton Place and is divided into two distinct sections: the three-bay long (or deep) north block and the three-bay-long rear wing. The north block has an

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<sup>1</sup> DC Permit #238781, November 18, 1940, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

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irregular arrangement of windows on the first story, but three single windows in the second story, topped by a central, half-round fanlight in the attic level of the gable. On the first story, a single six-over-six, double-hung wood window occupies the northern end bay, while a tripartite window with a central, six-over-six, double-hung wood window flanked by four-over-four, double-hung wood windows, occupies the southern bay. The three second-story windows have six-over-six, double-hung wood sash with shutters. The rear wing is also three bays deep (or long). At the first story, the two southern bays hold six-over-six, double-hung wood windows, while the northern bay holds a secondary entrance. Here, a single-leaf, six-paneled wood door topped by a fanlight transom is recessed into an arched opening in the brick walls, trimmed with wood. A brick path leads from Caton Place and to a brick stoop raised two-steps above grade. An iron railing and lampposts flank the door. The three bays at the second story hold six-over-six, double hung wood windows with shutters.

The west elevation, originally exposed, was obscured in 1952 by the construction of the eastern wall of the adjacent rowhouses, also designed by architect Gertrude Sawyer.<sup>2</sup>

The rear (south) elevation opens to the enclosed rear yard and features a large, wood, hexagonal bay window that projects off the rear elevation. The bay, which was added in 1952 along with a French door, has windows in each of its faces. This addition occurred the same year that the row of dwellings was built against the west wall of the house and was perhaps added to mitigate the loss of natural light from windows that may have been located along that wall. The second story above this projecting bay features a tripartite window with a central six-over-six, double-hung sash and two narrower windows to either side with four-over-four windows. A chimney stack rises above the roof at the rear wing's western wall.

### *Alterations*

Although the house has not been significantly altered, it has undergone some minor improvements over the decades. The following list of renovations is arranged chronologically by owner:

#### *Baker Ownership (1940-1949):*

- November 28, 1941: The building's built-in garage was converted into a bedroom for a live-in house maid.<sup>3</sup> The garage currently serves as a garage.

#### *Welsh Ownership (1949-1959)*

- May 10, 1949: Plumbing alterations.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> According to DC History Quest, Gertrude Sawyer owned the adjacent lots in 1951 and is thus the presumptive designer of the houses built there in 1952. Additional research needs to confirm this assumption. Sawyer also lived on the block, across Caton Place from 3232 Reservoir Road, in a 19<sup>th</sup>-century rowhouse at 3216 Reservoir Road which she renovated in 1940.

<sup>3</sup> DC Permit #249495, November 28, 1941, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC; this was reversed at some point.

<sup>4</sup> The permit for this work, although recorded in the permit index, was not located; DC Permit #41979, May 10, 1949, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

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- June 15, 1949: A bathroom was added to the building's basement.<sup>5</sup>
- 1952: Rowhouses of similar scale and massing were constructed along the building's western wall, making the once-detached house on the corner of Caton Place and Reservoir Road NW, a semi-detached one.
- 1952: The projecting bay and a French door were added to the south elevation of the house.<sup>6</sup>
- December 20, 1954: Bathroom addition at the rear of the building.<sup>7</sup>
- January 13, 1955: Plumbing alterations.<sup>8</sup>

#### *Shackleton Ownership (1959-1997)*

- December 15, 1966: A disposal, a dishwasher, 150-amp service electrical equipment and a circuit breaker were installed.<sup>9</sup>
- January 11, 1967: A sink, garbage disposal, and dishwasher were replaced.<sup>10</sup>
- January 26, 1967: A baseboard heater was installed.<sup>11</sup>
- November 15, 1973: A clothes dryer was installed.<sup>12</sup>

## **INTEGRITY**

The Polly Shackleton residence at 3232 Reservoir Road, NW retains a high degree of integrity. Although Georgetown is largely known for its 19<sup>th</sup> century building stock, much of the area's land, especially above Reservoir Road, remained open with opportunities for subdivision, re-subdivision and development. Development on these unimproved lots continued to occur into the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Predominantly residential, the new construction tended to follow predecessor buildings in form and style, giving the historic port town a unified "Colonial" character. The Georgetown Historic District National Register nomination (amended) recognizes this mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century building trend as a significant architectural event. The house at 3232 Reservoir Road was part of this trend, and thus retains integrity of **setting** from that period of growth in Georgetown. The house retains its original quality of **design** as a 20<sup>th</sup>-century Colonial Revival-style dwelling, integrity of **materials**, such as original brick, wood windows, doors, iron railings, and lampposts. The building retains integrity of **workmanship**, including decorative Colonial Revival-style detailing in the entrance surrounds, wrought iron stair railings, lampposts, transoms and fanlights. The building has not seen any significant alterations and reflects the design of architect Gertrude Sawyer. The house maintains a high degree of integrity of **feeling and association** as a mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century Colonial Revival-style dwelling. The house was occupied by Pauline "Polly" Shackleton—the longest-term owner and occupant—from 1959 until 1997.

<sup>5</sup> DC Permit #319354, June 15, 1949, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

<sup>6</sup> Georgetown Commission of Fine Arts, Case OG 465, *Old Georgetown Act Numbered Case Files, 1950-1990*, Records Group 66: Records of the Commission of Fine Arts, National Archives and Records Administration.

<sup>7</sup> DC Permit #A62074, December 31, 1954, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

<sup>8</sup> DC Permit #A69804, January 13, 1955, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

<sup>9</sup> DC Permit #B228607, December 15, 1966, DC Archives, Washington, DC.

<sup>10</sup> DC Permit #B138046, January 11, 1967, DC Archives, Washington, DC.

<sup>11</sup> DC Permit #B230297, January 26, 1967, DC Archives, Washington, DC.

<sup>12</sup> DC Permit #B331256, November 15, 1973, DC Archives, Washington, DC.

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### 8. Statement of Significance

#### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

#### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

#### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Politics/Government  
Social History (Women's History)

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**Period of Significance**

1959-1997  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1959 – Shackleton’s  
ownership  
1997 - Shackleton’s  
death  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Shackleton, Pauline E.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Gertrude Sawyer (architect)  
E. A. Pessagno & Co. (builder)  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Constructed in 1940 and listed as a contributing building in the Georgetown Historic District, the house at 3232 Reservoir Road, NW meets National Register Criterion B for its association with the life of prominent DC politician and Democratic Party leader Pauline “Polly” E. Shackleton with Politics/Government and Social History (Women) as the Areas of Significance. The property was included in a list of significant properties associated with women’s suffrage in the historic context study, *The Women’s Suffrage Movement in Washington, DC: 1848-1973* (DC Historic Preservation Office, 2024) and has been evaluated under the theme, “Women and the DC Suffrage Movement” developed in the context report. Polly Shackleton and her husband

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purchased the residence in 1959 as Polly Shackleton was beginning to make a name for herself in politics. She continued to live there through her long and productive career, beyond her husband's death and until her own in 1997.

As a lifelong activist and politician, Shackleton was a preeminent woman politician of her era and was a formidable advocate for DC residents. She was especially influential representing DC's political agenda on both a local and national stage. She served as Chairwoman of the National Democratic Committee for DC and as a member of the DC City Council. Between 1956 and 1960, she served as a delegate from the District of Columbia to several National Democratic Party events, such as alternate national committeeman for the District of Columbia and as a delegate to the Democratic Party Relations Conference.<sup>13</sup> She was among the first elected candidates to represent Washington, DC on a national level and was employed in several national offices, including the committee in charge of housing for John F. Kennedy's 1961 inauguration, secretary for the Pennsylvania Avenue Commission, and as a chair of Claudia "Lady Bird" Johnson's capital beautification project.<sup>14</sup>

Shackleton was also a popular voice of the community and tireless advocate for the city's most underserved and disadvantaged residents. She served as a bridge between DC's wealthiest and those in need, all the while uniting residents towards a common cause – the right to self-determination, enfranchisement, and home rule. Shackleton was revered for her work throughout her career. She resided in the house during her most active years in politics and remained there after retiring in 1987 and until her death in 1997. The house at 3232 Reservoir Road is the most appropriate representation of Shackleton's productive life, reflecting the period of time when she achieved significance and made the most important contributions to the District of Columbia.

The Period of Significance for the property extends from 1959 to 1997, representing Polly Shackleton's years of residency. Although the end date is a point in time that is less than 50 years from the present, the property is eligible under Criterion Consideration G for exceptional significance.

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<sup>13</sup> "Delegates at Democratic Party Parley," *The Washington Afro-American*, July 18, 1959, 5; Frances Lide, "Democratic Club Marks 'Hubert Humphrey Day,'" *The Evening Star*, April 8, 1960, 77; Milton Berliner, "Humphrey Triumphs," *The Washington Daily News*, May 4, 1960, 5.

<sup>14</sup> Biographical Information of Pauline "Polly" Ehrlich (Shackleton), untitled [ca. 1967], Box 1, Folder 1, Polly Shackleton Papers, Special Collections at George Washington University Library, George Washington University, Washington, DC.; Sarah B. Conroy, "World of Women: 'I'm so seldom home I rarely have a chance to enjoy a fire,'" *The Washington Daily News*, February 2, 1970, 19.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

**Areas of Significance: Politics/Government and Social History (Women)**

Historians typically date the beginning of the modern women's suffrage movement to the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848. In July of that year, approximately 300 people, mostly women, met in Seneca Falls, New York to discuss the social, civil, and religious status of women. At the time, women were unequal in many aspects of American life, including education, employment, property rights, marriage, child custody, and participation in public life, including voting. Before and after that seminal moment, women had and continued to work towards self-enfranchisement and political rights.<sup>15</sup> After decades of lobbying and fighting for voting rights by individuals and organizations, Congress passed the Nineteenth Amendment, granting white American women the right to vote, finally recognizing them as individuals and full citizens. At the time of its passage, "women's political importance," wrote political scientist Jane Gruenbaum, "was as wives and mothers to the boys and men who were leading or would be leading the nation."<sup>16</sup> In the following decades, women began entering the workforce in droves and living independently – something that was only accomplished by a minority of women throughout history. As the mid-twentieth century rolled around, feminism was manifesting itself in a variety of ways. One of these ways was that women began to seek political office in a predominantly male arena. The 1960s saw a revitalized interest in the female empowerment movement, frequently known as "Second Wave" feminism, which focused on achieving and bettering intersectional political and social equality.

While this fight for women's suffrage has roots across America, many of its most important moments have taken place in Washington, DC, the nation's capital. Women came from all over the country to DC, joining local activists, to campaign and lobby Congress for voting rights. National organizations such as the National American Woman Suffrage Association and the National Woman's Party, and later organizations like the National Council for Negro Women, established headquarters in Washington, DC to lobby the federal government and to gain resources and supporters. As in other American political movements, Washington, DC, was the center stage and launching point for women's suffrage and voting rights movements.<sup>17</sup>

Pauline "Polly" Shackleton came out of this movement of women who worked tirelessly to gain the power necessary to establish meaningful change, and to inspire others to join in improving their lives and the lives of others. Shackleton was a civic-minded woman from the Boston area. Her interests in volunteering and bettering her community, as well as supporting local political campaigns, began at an early age. After graduating from university, she moved to Washington, DC, and began working in low-level government positions as a publicist during the interwar

<sup>15</sup> Quinn Evans, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Washington, DC: 1848-1973*. DC Historic Preservation Office (2024), 1-1.

<sup>16</sup> Jane Gruenbaum, "Women in Politics," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 34, no. 2 (1981): 104-20, DOI: 10.2307/1173794.

<sup>17</sup> Quinn Evans, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Washington, DC: 1848-1973*. DC Historic Preservation Office (2024), ix.

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period. She continued her volunteer work, but this time for the national Democratic Party. She was an active participant in the party, earning her several leadership roles. In 1956 when DC citizens were finally permitted to vote for political party leaders, which had been the first election District residents had been allowed to vote in in almost a century, Shackleton was one of three women to earn a coveted spot as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention, despite running against male candidates.

Polly Shackleton is a significant example of similar women around the country who were at the forefront of social change in the mid-to-late-twentieth century. Public consensus regarding gender equality was changing, and gender equality was slowly becoming more of a possibility. From running for office to entering the workforce, it was women that were leading the charge towards a better society.

*A Brief History of Voting Rights in the District of Columbia*<sup>18</sup>

As detailed in the historic context study, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Washington, DC: 1848-1973*, the question of federal representation for residents in the District of Columbia has inspired debate since establishment of the District in 1790. In 1790, when land was ceded from both Maryland and Virginia to form the District of Columbia, white, male citizens of the district were initially allowed to vote in either Maryland or Virginia, depending on where they lived within the District. However, this right to vote was soon taken away via the District of Columbia Organic Act of 1801. In 1802, Congress passed an act that established a unique form of government for the District, which included a twelve-member city council and a mayor, initially appointed by the President of the United States.

Though this system of government received criticism from DC residents, it continued in place until 1871. At that time, during Reconstruction following the Civil War, Congress approved the formation of a territorial government for the District, which consisted of a governor and council, both of which were to be approved by the President. Additionally, Congress permitted the District to have an elected group of delegates and one voiceless member of Congress who was without voting power. Although this Congressional initiative was approved, a fiscal crisis in 1873 resulted in the dissolution of the territorial government in 1874. Another form of government, made permanent in 1878, replaced the territorial government with a board of three presidentially approved commissioners and eliminated both the elected legislature and Congressional representative. This system remained in place for almost a century.

One of the first major challenges to this system occurred just after the turn of the century, when the nationwide movement for women's suffrage began. Frequently, the idea of women's suffrage and DC suffrage coincided. For instance, *The Evening Star* reported in 1908 that women paid taxes on almost half of the private property owned within the District of Columbia.<sup>19</sup> This land generated property taxes, but without voting, there was no constituent oversight or input for what the money was used for. In 1912, District women founded the District of Columbia Suffrage

<sup>18</sup> This section of the report is based on the historic context study by Quinn Evans, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Washington, DC: 1848-1973*, DC Historic Preservation Office, 2024.

<sup>19</sup> "Women Ask for Vote," *The Evening Star*, November 17, 1908, 20.

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League. Made up of both men and women, the organization advocated for universal suffrage in the District. Their motto was "Federal control of federal affairs; District control of District affairs."

On the brink of the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment granting (among other things) white women the right to vote, the District of Columbia chapter of the influential League of Women Voters organized. While the group advocated for the national cause, the club also advocated for local suffrage. The organization did not technically endorse the idea of home rule itself but did support a constitutional amendment specifically allowing residents of the District the ability to vote for federal representation. It would not be until the mid-1930s that the League began to advocate for the home rule concept.

It is important to note that the opposition to home rule was rooted in racism and fear that Black residents would dominate the local government. The concern of this was so great that many of the white suffrage groups abandoned the cause for universal suffrage in favor of white female suffrage by only offering segregated chapters of various suffrage groups. According to the historic context report, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Washington, DC: 1848-1973*, the suffrage movement in the District recognized the connection among the issues of home rule, civil rights, and integration:

For Black women and men, suffrage in the District of Columbia meant being able to have a voice in local and federal affairs at a time when they faced intense discrimination. Black Washingtonians' frustrations over residential segregation that forced Black residents to pay higher rents and excluded them from buying houses in certain neighborhoods, the lack of employment opportunities for Black women beyond domestic service, and the stinginess of relief agencies toward poor Black women, among others... [was the reason behind their support of home rule, civil rights, and racial integration.]

Ever since, home rule has been strongly associated with the civil rights movement.

In the 1940s, several major organizations aligned themselves with the struggle for home rule, including *The Washington Post*, the NAACP, and the DC League of Women Voters. The movement, however, would not gain momentum until after World War II. Home rule became a liberal cause, supported by major political leaders and Presidents Dwight Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy. Despite this, between 1949 and 1965, five bills related to DC enfranchisement failed to come up for a vote in the US House of Representatives.

There were several minor advancements towards self-autonomy in the mid-twentieth century. In 1955, Congress passed an election law in DC. In May of the following year, DC residents could vote for officials within political parties, such as National Convention delegates; this was the first time DC residents could vote in eighty-two years. Polly Shackleton was among the first elected to serve the District as a Democratic National Convention delegate. In 1960, District residents won the right to vote in the presidential election when Congress passed the Twenty-Third Amendment in June of that year; this decision was supported by all presidential

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candidates. However, the timeline of state ratification delayed implementation until 1964. To celebrate, and to encourage voter registration, Shackleton organized a breakfast meeting that included a voting drive via a public parade to the District Building and a mass registration of voters.



*Figure 1: Polly Shackleton (third from left) participating in a mass voter registration drive parade. "The Women's Suffrage Movement in Washington, DC: 1848-1973."*

Following the 1955 election law and the ratification of the Twenty-Third Amendment, the focus of local voting rights groups shifted towards ensuring local autonomy. In the 1960s, local organizations that had been tied to the cause of home rule were eclipsed by new, more radical activists, such as Howard University's Nonviolent Action Group, which was a group based on the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committees (SNCC) and led by Stokely Carmichael, a fierce advocate for home rule. Passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 bolstered these initiatives. Additionally, Martin Luther King, Jr., visited the city in 1965 and spoke publicly about how lack of autonomy directly resulted in the problems plaguing the city.

Inspired by King's advocacy, local home rule activist groups began gaining traction. They also began organizing together. In 1966, the then-head of the DC chapter of SNCC, Marion Barry, announced the coalition of several activist groups that had banded together to form "Free D.C."

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On July 17, 1966, the groups hosted a rally on the grounds of the Washington Monument. Among the thirty-two speakers at the event was National Democratic Committeewoman, Polly Shackleton.

Partially because of local activism, in 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed a bill dissolving the three-member Board of Commissioners, replacing it with a mayor/commissioner and a nine-person city council, all of which would be appointed by the President. Though this meant representation was not elected by District residents, it paved the way for local government offices to control District affairs such as the city school board. President Johnson appointed Polly Shackleton to this first nine-member city council, making her one of the first city councilmembers in the District of Columbia and its first woman councilmember.

In 1970, the National League of Women Voters hosted a nationwide program for the fiftieth anniversary of the group; congressional representation for the District of Columbia was its chief mission. They aimed to secure one and a half million signatures to their petition in favor of District representation. To raise money for the initiative, the League passed out bumper stickers displaying the words "D.C. – Last Colony". Several public events, including parades and festivals, were also hosted to benefit the cause. As a result of this public pressure, Congress approved a bill that allowed DC one nonvoting delegate in September 1970.

Three years later, in 1973, Congress passed the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, providing for the election of the city's mayor and thirteen-member city council.<sup>20</sup> Polly Shackleton won a seat on the city's first elected council.

#### *Pauline "Polly" Ehrlich Shackleton<sup>21</sup>*

Pauline "Polly" Marion Ehrlich was born in Brookline, Massachusetts on June 19, 1910, to Adolph Ehrlich and Marion Ratshesky Ehrlich. She was the fourth of five children and grew up attending various private schools in Boston. From there, she went to Simmons College, a junior college in Boston, to study social work. She also took summer classes at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. For nine years following her studies, Pauline Ehrlich, as she was still known, primarily focused on community service in and around Boston. In 1938, she worked on Thomas H. Eliot's congressional campaign, before moving to Washington, DC, in 1939.

In November 1939, Ehrlich began working at the American Federation of Arts, where she held a position as an editor of the organization's reference publications. She was also a regular contributor to the organization's magazine. In 1940, Ehrlich began volunteering for the Democratic National Committee in the Women's Division on the side. In 1942, Ehrlich would leave her work due to a lack of funding for the organization's publications.

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<sup>20</sup> Although a major milestone, the "Home Rule" law still gives Congress oversight of the District. It reviews all legislation passed by Council before it can become law and retains authority over the District budget. Further, the District has no voting representation in Congress.

<sup>21</sup> The narrative on Polly Shackleton has been gleaned from many sources, but particularly from: Biographical Information of Pauline "Polly" Ehrlich (Shackleton), untitled [ca. 1942], Box 1, Folder 1, Polly Shackleton Papers, Special Collections at George Washington University Library, George Washington University, Washington, DC.

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That same year, Ehrlich began working for the American Red Cross in the Public Information sector, which served a public relations and marketing role for the organization. She was chiefly involved with the management of an informational poster design contest. In the fall of that year, Ehrlich left to work in a similar role for the United States Treasury in the War Savings Department. Four years later, the Department of State absorbed the office, and she became a picture editor for the Office of International Information and Cultural Affairs. On July 1, 1942, Pauline Ehrlich married Robert Williams Shackleton and changed her name to Shackleton.<sup>22</sup> They moved to a house at 3320 Dent Place, NW, just a few short blocks from their future permanent home.<sup>23</sup>

In 1951, Shackleton joined the staff of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) at their headquarters in Washington, DC. Her work primarily consisted of public relations for the organization and administrative work for various subcommittees.<sup>24</sup> By then, Shackleton was already getting involved in local politics in the District in the early 1950s, when she joined the Washington Urban League, on which she would later serve as one of the Board of Directors, and the Georgetown Progressive Citizens Association in 1951. The following year, she joined the Georgetown Neighborhood House, a charity organization dedicated to recreation and childcare for kids in an urban setting, of which she would later become board president.<sup>25</sup> She was still active in campaigning for the Democratic Party on the national scale, especially in the District. She used her professional experience in publicity to the benefit of the party throughout the early 1950s, by working on public relations committees on the Adlai Stevenson campaign in 1952 and on a fundraising drive for party in 1954, despite maintaining a full-time position working in the AIA Professional Relations Department.<sup>26</sup>

In May 1956, District voters were granted the ability to vote for political party delegates for the first time. The Democratic Party had announced their intent to send three women delegates from DC to the Democratic Convention held in Chicago. Their mission specifically was to advocate for home rule and issues relating to civil rights. Shackleton was one of the three delegates elected.<sup>27</sup> Three years later, in 1959, the Shackletons moved to the house at 3232 Reservoir Road, NW.<sup>28</sup> It was in this house where Shackleton lived during her most active years in local politics.

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<sup>22</sup> Marriage Record from District of Columbia (July 1, 1946), Robert Williams Shackleton and Pauline "Polly" Marion Ehrlich; Clerk of the Superior Court, Records Office, Washington, District of Columbia.

<sup>23</sup> Biographical Information of Pauline "Polly" Ehrlich (Shackleton), untitled [ca. 1946], Box 1, Folder 1, Polly Shackleton Papers, Special Collections at George Washington University Library, George Washington University, Washington, DC.

<sup>24</sup> In 1962, her work for the AIA would earn her an honorary membership to the AIA Board of Directors.

<sup>25</sup> "Georgetown Garden Tour," *The Evening Star*, April 15, 1951, 81; "Georgetown Garden Tour In April," *The Evening Star*, March 8, 1953, 99.

<sup>26</sup> Biographical Information of Pauline "Polly" Ehrlich (Shackleton), untitled [ca. 1955], Box 1, Folder 1, Polly Shackleton Papers, Special Collections at George Washington University Library, George Washington University, Washington, DC.

<sup>27</sup> Quinn Evans, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Washington, DC: 1848-1973*, (Washington, DC: District of Columbia Office of Planning, 2023), 6-23.

<sup>28</sup> DC Recorder of Deeds, Elysabeth Carrere and William L. Welsh to the Robert W. and Pauline E. Shackleton, made December 10, 1959, recorded December 24, 1959, Liber 11359, Folio 442.



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She served as a delegate to her second Democratic National Convention in 1960.<sup>29</sup> By 1962, Shackleton was serving the District as the Democratic National Committeewoman, which is a role that includes performing as a liaison between the party at large and local voters, which could include activities such as voter registration or informing constituents about the latest activities of the party.

She was an avid supporter of Adlai Stevenson, Hubert Humphrey, and, finally, John F. Kennedy during the 1960 election. Initially, Shackleton had mixed feelings about Kennedy as a politician. She hosted a party for his benefit in June that year, but then was quoted as denouncing his choice of running mate during the Democratic National Convention of 1960 in *The Evening Star*.<sup>30</sup> Despite qualms about some of his campaign decisions, Shackleton showed her support for Kennedy as a candidate by serving on his inauguration committee. Her role was to serve as one of the chairs of housing for the 1961 inauguration. Though she had supported other candidates initially, Shackleton was later vocal in her support for President Kennedy's initiatives. She publicly defended measures taken by the Kennedy administration against discrimination in the District, such as a District-wide survey on employment measures and discriminatory hiring policies, which faced criticism from political opponents.<sup>31</sup>

Shackleton was also interested in urban planning and development, especially in DC. Through her work as a former staff member of the AIA, she developed a background in design and planning. In June 1962, she expressed concerns about the development of an interstate highway system through the District – focusing on the massive displacement of primarily marginalized residents that would be caused by the development. Shackleton argued that tens of thousands of people would be displaced by the new interstate system, while “40,000 people [were already] on waiting lists for public housing.”<sup>32</sup> In a letter to the editor of *The Washington Afro-American*, she wrote that taxpayers' money from highway construction could better be spent in the city's schools.<sup>33</sup> She also appeared before the House subcommittee in charge of the project and asked them to withhold funding for three development legs of the freeway development. As a result of public discourse regarding the massive freeway development through the city, only about half of the freeway was constructed. The rest of the funds allotted to the project were reallocated to the development of the Metro railway system.<sup>34</sup> Shackleton's strenuous and outspoken concern with how development would impact low-income areas and fair housing garnered her great respect with her constituents.

In July 1962, Shackleton worked with the National Capital Planning Commission on the development of Pennsylvania Avenue, a pet project of President Kennedy. Pennsylvania Avenue

<sup>29</sup> Biographical Information of Pauline "Polly" Ehrlich (Shackleton), untitled [ca. 1962], Box 1, Folder 1, Polly Shackleton Papers, Special Collections at George Washington University Library, George Washington University, Washington, DC.

<sup>30</sup> Betty Beale, "Exclusively Yours," *The Evening Star*, June 20, 1960, 28.; Grace Bassett, "Angry District Delegates Protest Johnson Choice for Party Ticket: "Terrible Betrayal"," *The Evening Star*, July 15, 1960, 8.

<sup>31</sup> "Equal Job Opportunity Pressed by Shipley," *The Evening Star*, April 17, 1962, 9.

<sup>32</sup> "Records Held Open for Highway Views," *The Evening Star*, June 7, 1962, 25.

<sup>33</sup> Polly Shackleton, "DC schools need \$\$, not freeways," *The Washington Afro-American*, August 18, 1962, 4.

<sup>34</sup> Jonathan Neeley, "Here's a map of the highways that almost ran through DC," *Greater Greater Washington*, October 27, 2015, <https://ggwash.org/view/39787/heres-a-map-of-the-highways-that-almost-ran-through-dc>.

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had symbolic importance as the "bridge between Congress and the Executive," as well as being the main ceremonial thoroughfare of the nation's capital.<sup>35</sup> Later, Shackleton served as the head of Claudia "Lady Bird" Johnson's capital beautification project and was the head of the "Committee for a More Beautiful Capital."<sup>36</sup>



Shackleton worked closely with Walter Washington on "inner city" projects like the restoration of the Capitol Hill neighborhood as well as several local playgrounds and parks. Shackleton also suggested the creation of a beautification task force known as "Operation Pride," inspired by the Great Depression era Work Projects Administration, which paid local unemployed citizens to clean up and restore areas of the city that were plagued by litter and trash. Johnson loved the idea, claiming that "[b]eautification is not only for people, it is by people too."

Figure 2: Polly Shackleton with residents during beautification efforts in Shaw (ca. 1971). *Science and Children* (magazine), Volume VIII, No. 5, 23.

Shackleton's work with Walter Washington was expanded in 1966. Together, the duo formed "Project Pride," which employed Howard University and local high-school students through a grant from the Society for a More Beautiful National Capital to help aid in the restoration efforts in the Shaw School urban renewal area, where they were to receive job training opportunities as well as assist with the neighborhood's beautification. Tasks included vermin trapping, litter and

<sup>35</sup> Robert J. Lewis, "'Simple Solution' Sought in Renewal: Pennsylvania Avenue Project Group Meets," *The Evening Star*, July 16, 1962, 19.

<sup>36</sup> David Luria, "Shame on Project Pride," *Washington Free Press*, May 5, 1967, 3.

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trash removal, general cleaning and repainting, as well as planting and maintenance of landscapes areas.<sup>37</sup>



**Figure 3:** Shackleton featured in a local neighborhood newsletter regarding urban renewal efforts in December 1969. *Shaw Power*, Vol. I, No. II.

In 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed Shackleton to the city's first city council. Despite hailing from one of the more affluent suburbs in the District and serving the city's wealthiest ward, Shackleton was very involved in causes that impacted the most underprivileged members of the Washington, DC community, specifically focusing on healthcare, the elderly, and the exploitation of the city's most impoverished neighborhoods. She was an active member of the City Council, chairing several committees including Health and Welfare, Citizens

<sup>37</sup> Lewis L. Gould, "A Pattern of Quality for Washington's Neighborhoods," in *Lady Bird Johnson and the Environment* (Lawrence, Kansas, United States of America: University Press of Kansas, 2021), 115-120, DOI: 10.2307/j.ctv1p2gjzg.11.

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Information and Complaints, and Consumer Affairs. Additionally, she was a member of several other committees, including Recreation and Youth Programs, Public Safety, Highways and Transportation, and assisted in the creation of the DC Office on Aging and the Commission on Aging, which she founded by "flooding" federal and local money into senior care programs.<sup>38</sup> In 1969, she proposed a \$1,372,617 increase in funding to the DC General Hospital that was unanimously approved by her fellow City Council members.<sup>39</sup> That same year, Shackleton led the City Council's efforts to compel the city health department to implement Medicare, accusing the department of "foot-dragging" over the program's realization.<sup>40</sup> When her term on City Council was coming to an end in 1970, Shackleton maintained strong support among her constituents. In an interview in her house at 3232 Reservoir Road, NW, in February of that year, Shackleton showed journalist Sarah Booth Conroy a stack of letters from constituents that urged her reappointment to the City Council.<sup>41</sup> Conroy quoted Shackleton as saying:

I like people. I want to listen to them and find out what their problems are. I don't like to make speeches. I'm not very good at speaking. I like to sit down with people and let them tell me what their needs are.<sup>42</sup>

At the time, council members were not elected, but were appointed by the President; most likely because of that, when the government changed hands from the Democrats to the Republicans, Shackleton lost her seat in 1970 under President Richard Nixon.

Her work on the City Council between 1967 and 1970 led to appointments in several other organizations. The mayor of DC appointed her to serve the DC Reconstruction and Development Corporation, as well a seat on the board of DC's Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. She advocated for the transfer of control of St. Elizabeths' Hospital to the District government, working behind the scenes to secure District ownership of the hospital campus from the federal government – which earned her praise from Mayor Marion Barry.<sup>43</sup> She wanted to adapt the defunct, unaccredited hospital into a site for better mental health services for DC residents and the unhoused.<sup>44</sup> She was also actively involved with the Board of Trustees of United Planning Organization, perhaps because of her work in city beautification and her work at the AIA. She was a member of the Council of Government (COG)'s Community Resources Policy Committee, its Ad Hoc Committee on Narcotics, and represented the COG in the

<sup>38</sup> Bart Barnes, "Crusader for DC Home Rule Dies: Polly Shackleton Served on Appointed, Elected Councils," *The Washington Post*, July 14, 1997, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1997/07/15/crusader-for-dc-home-rule-dies/5e5296a4-da65-484a-ba93-55b2dc211adb/>; "Not Enough of a Good Thing; Gaps, Shortages Mar City's Well-Regarded Program for Seniors," *The Washington Post*, August 19, 1990, sec. DISTRICT AT WORK: Challenges For The Next Mayor, A1.

<sup>39</sup> "DC General gets budget boost," *The Washington Daily News*, November 5, 1969, 25.

<sup>40</sup> Judy Flander, "The District's Three Dynamic Councilwomen," *The Washington Star-News*, February 2, 1975, C2.

<sup>41</sup> Sarah B. Conroy, "World of Women: 'I'm so seldom home I rarely have a chance to enjoy a fire,'" *The Washington Daily News*, February 2, 1970, 19.

<sup>42</sup> Sarah B. Conroy, "World of Women: 'I'm so seldom home I rarely have a chance to enjoy a fire,'" *The Washington Daily News*, February 2, 1970, 19.

<sup>43</sup> Karlyn Barker, "St. E's Patients Share the Dream; 132-Year-Old Hospital Transferred to District," *The Washington Post*, October 2, 1987, B1.

<sup>44</sup> "Plan for St. Elizabeths," *The Washington Post*, March 22, 1987, C6.

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Community Coordinated Child Care Program.<sup>45</sup> The COG is a nonprofit organization that unites community members serving in District, nearby state, and national government to address regional issues, which was particularly necessary before home rule when District residents could not vote to represent local issues. In 1970, Shackleton was on *The Washington Daily News*' shortlist of candidates expected to run for the newly established non-voting District representative in Congress. She was the only woman on the list but did not ultimately run.<sup>46</sup>

In the 1970s, she maintained an active role as a community leader, frequently advocating for the elderly, healthcare access, and exploitation of low-income areas. On December 13, 1971, she testified against the construction of freeways throughout the District. Even though she was no longer a council member, she still advocated for her constituents and formally lobbied against the construction of downtown freeways which would have resulted in the mass displacement of people, nearly all of whom were from predominantly low-income neighborhoods with few resources and little political currency.<sup>47</sup>



**Figure 4:** Shackleton in her house at 3232 Reservoir Road in February 1970. "World of Women: The Washington Daily News, February 2, 1970.

In February of that same year, she authored a letter to the editor of *The Washington Daily News* criticizing an insensitive report that dehumanized District food stamp recipients, implying they were committing fraud by joining the program. She maintained that fraud was not to blame for issues within the program, but that the program itself lacked funds necessary for improving the

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<sup>45</sup> Biographical Information of Pauline "Polly" Ehrlich (Shackleton), untitled [ca. 1970], Box 1, Folder 1, Polly Shackleton Papers, Special Collections at George Washington University Library, George Washington University, Washington, DC.

<sup>46</sup> Arthur Rotstein, "Is there a delegate in the House?" *The Washington Daily News*, September 1, 1970, 16.

<sup>47</sup> Eric Siegel, "300 walk out on DC freeway hearing: inadequate notice charged," *The Washington Daily News*, December 14, 1971, 16.

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reliability of the system and administering aid to more people in need.<sup>48</sup> In May 1971, she publicly denounced how the DC Department of Human Resources, hospitals, and Medical Care Administration were handling access to public healthcare for DC residents, citing that they were using citizen advocacy groups to advance their mission rather than receiving feedback from those most affected.<sup>49</sup> In that same year, she was instrumental in enacting the legislation that established the District of Columbia's Office on Aging and Commission on Aging. Throughout this period, Shackleton continued to use her political clout to better her community. In her free time, Shackleton was involved with several boards and committees. These include the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum Advisory Committee, the Washington Urban League, and a board member of Family and Child Services of Washington.<sup>50</sup>

In 1974, the District held its first ever public election for City Council. Shackleton won a seat and was an active member from 1975 until 1987. She enjoyed widespread support as a candidate due to her tireless activism and rapport among her constituents. One of her first successes as a councilmember was the passage of her bill to amend the city's code to remove and neutralize discriminatory, male-focused language through the "Act to Remove Sexist Language from the DC Code."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Polly Shackleton, "Letters to the Editor: Food stamp report criticized," *The Washington Daily News*, February 24, 1971, 21.

<sup>49</sup> "Doctors grope for right road to public health," *The Washington Daily News*, May 26, 1971, 63.

<sup>50</sup> Biographical Information of Pauline "Polly" Ehrlich (Shackleton), untitled [ca. 1970], Box 1, Folder 1, Polly Shackleton Papers, Special Collections at George Washington University Library, George Washington University, Washington, DC.

<sup>51</sup> Robert Buchanan, "Sexist Words Attacked," *The Evening Star*, January 22, 1975, 34.

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Many of her initiatives, for which she is frequently credited in newspapers, related to the health and safety of DC residents. In 1975, she introduced the first firearms control bills in Washington, DC, with fellow Councilman John A. Wilson, which included measures such as banning all handguns not registered by the end of 1976 and mandatory sentencing, following a study instituted by President Gerald Ford which reported a District-wide rise in illegal gun trafficking and violent crime.<sup>52</sup> In 1976, amidst reports of patient abuse, Shackleton assisted with launching an investigation into the District of Columbia's mental health institution, Forest Haven.<sup>53</sup> In that same year, she advocated for the rights of children in group homes by trying to ensure funding for the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, which was in charge of children found "in need of supervision" by DC courts.<sup>54</sup> In 1980, Shackleton attempted to increase funding for Social Services to protect children from abusive situations.<sup>55</sup> In 1981, she sponsored a "death with dignity" bill, which allowed adults to choose whether to partake in costly, painful procedures that would prolong the moment of death.<sup>56</sup> Towards the end of her term, she played a crucial role in establishing Healthcare for the Homeless, which has since become a federally supported project serving more than 40,000 people.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Diane Brockett, "Barry Gun Control Plan Angers DC Councilman," *The Evening Star*, December 20, 1980, 7; Harriet Griffiths, "District Among 11 Cities Getting US Gun Sleuths," *The Evening Star*, July 29, 1975, 1.

<sup>53</sup> Diane Brockett, "A Victim Bares Forest Haven's Horrors," *The Evening Star*, April 27, 1976, 4.

<sup>54</sup> Diane Brockett, "DC Wonders Where to Put 100 Juveniles," *The Evening Star*, October 23, 1976, 19.

<sup>55</sup> Diane Brockett, "DC Aid Asked on Child Abuse Project," *The Evening Star*, October 24, 1980, 71.

<sup>56</sup> Michael C. Davis, "Bills on Guns Top Agenda for D.C. Council Session," *The Evening Star*, February 9, 1981, 62.

<sup>57</sup> Bart Barnes, "Crusader for DC Home Rule Dies: Polly Shackleton Served on Appointed, Elected Councils," *The Washington Post*, July 14, 1997, 1; "POLLY SHACKLETON: '... you have the best understanding of the special problems facing the elderly... we need your experience and your compassion.'" [July 30, 1974], Box 1, Folder 2,

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For several years leading up to her retirement in 1986, there had been calls for Shackleton, whom *The Washington Post* called the "grand dame of DC politics," to retire. In the election of 1982, she faced significant opposition for the first time in her political career with claims that she had become "too old" and had "lost her enthusiasm for the job." Although she won the 1982 election, it would be her last. In 1986, she officially retired at the age of 75.<sup>58</sup> In her retirement speech in 1985, she noted that she was proudest of legislation regarding "[anti-]drunk driving, death with dignity, mental health confidentiality, gun control, [and] consumer protection," amongst other issues.<sup>59</sup> Polly Shackleton is often remembered as a "bridge" between competing interests in Washington politics. Though she was a representative of Washington's wealthiest ward, her political interests and involvement reflect an investment in serving Washington's most underprivileged and under-resourced residents, through access to healthcare, aid for the city's elderly, and advocacy against the exploitation and demolition of the city's low-income neighborhoods.

For the next eleven years, Shackleton led a relatively subdued life. She was still involved with care for the District's elderly residents by working for the IONA Senior Services building campaign, which advocated for the construction of care centers for the city's elderly, and served on the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, for which she was appointed by her close friend Washington Mayor Marion Barry, until her death.<sup>60</sup> Shackleton died July 13, 1997 at the age of 87 in her residence at 3232 Reservoir Road, NW.<sup>61</sup>

### Building History

The Polly Shackleton House is located at 3232 Reservoir Road NW in Georgetown in Washington, DC. Georgetown was established in 1751 as an independent port town on the Potomac River, intended to service inland tobacco farmers who were distant from more prominent existing port cities like Baltimore and Philadelphia. Georgetown was a successful port before the federal city was established in 1790, but it would eventually lose its significance as the City of Washington grew and the port of Alexandria rose in prominence. The construction of the C&O Canal in 1828 afforded Georgetown opportunities to diversify and grow more industrial as a manufacturing city. Georgetown remained an independent and active town until it was ultimately absorbed into Washington as part of the District of Columbia in 1871.

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Polly Shackleton Papers, Special Collections at George Washington University Library, George Washington University, Washington, DC.

<sup>58</sup> Bart Barnes, "Crusader for DC Home Rule Dies: Polly Shackleton Served on Appointed, Elected Councils," *The Washington Post*, July 14, 1997, 1, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1997/07/15/crusader-for-dc-home-rule-dies/5e5296a4-da65-484a-ba93-55b2dc211adb/>.

<sup>59</sup> Arthur S. Brisbane, "Shackleton: Retirement Is Official; Three-Term City Council Member Endorses Nathanson for Post," *The Washington Post*, October 16, 1985.

<sup>60</sup> The Associated Press, "AIRPORT PANEL LACKS JUST 2 APPOINTMENTS," *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 26, 1986, B2; "Polly Ehrlich Shackleton," *The Washington Post*, July 17, 1997, A19.

<sup>61</sup> Bart Barnes, "Crusader for DC Home Rule Dies: Polly Shackleton Served on Appointed, Elected Councils," *The Washington Post*, July 14, 1997, 1, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1997/07/15/crusader-for-dc-home-rule-dies/5e5296a4-da65-484a-ba93-55b2dc211adb/>.



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*Georgetown Neighborhood*

At the turn of the century Georgetown grew heavily industrial. Its proximity to the C&O Canal was attractive to factories and manufacturers who could benefit from the inland shipping opportunities. In this period, mills and foundries thrived, which attracted a large immigrant population and a significant labor class to settle in the area. This resulted in a decline in the neighborhood's desirability amongst those seeking a residential area outside the city of Washington, leading Georgetown to grow somewhat rundown in the period leading up to World War I.<sup>62</sup>

That all changed during the interwar period when the federal government expanded its workforce significantly. Between World War I and World War II, Georgetown was a popular and affordable choice for government employees.<sup>63</sup> This house at 3232 Reservoir Road, NW, was one of many attached rowhouses constructed during this period of growth in Georgetown to cater to the newfound housing market.

*Development of 3232 Reservoir Road, NW*

The house at 3232 Reservoir Road NW, built in 1940, is located on what was, in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, a sparsely developed tract of land. The tract was platted as Block 110 of Georgetown, but after Georgetown was absorbed into the District of Columbia in 1871 and its blocks and streets were re-numbered and re-named according to the District's system, Block 110 became Square 1280 of the District of Columbia. Through a series of land transactions during the early 1870s, the square was then divided into lots that would eventually be developed with houses. One of these subdivisions, from 1874, shows a plat with nine lots located center-east of the trapezoidal-shaped square. Lot 9, upon which 3232 Reservoir Road would later be built, was located towards the interior of the square, bounded by Caton [Street] on the east (see Figure 6). In 1927, Reservoir Road was extended through the square, giving the unimproved and Lot 9 direct frontage on Reservoir Road.

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<sup>62</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Georgetown Historic District (amended), Washington, District of Columbia, National Register #67000025.

<sup>63</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Georgetown Historic District (amended), Washington, District of Columbia, National Register #67000025.

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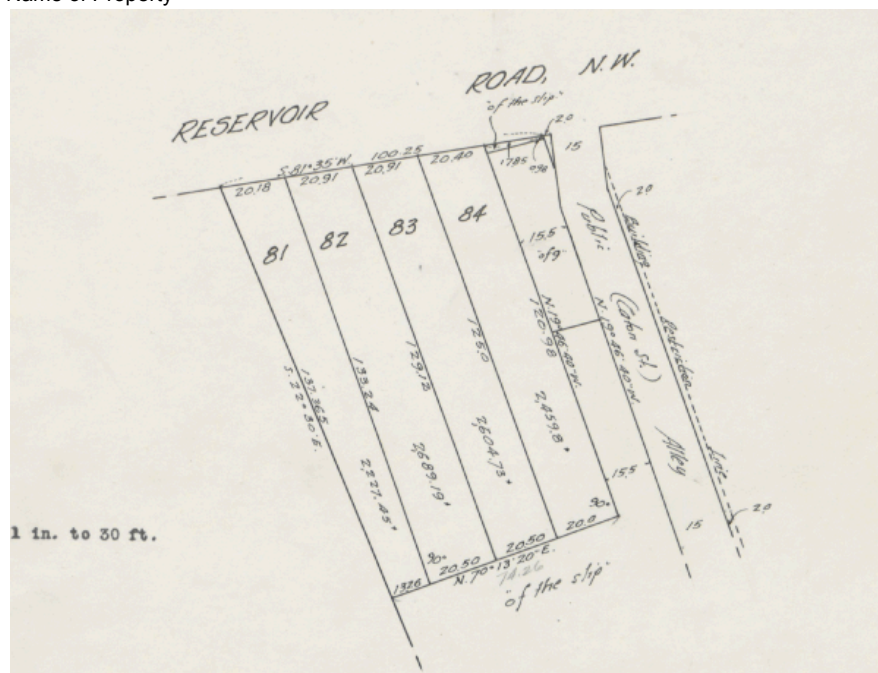
**Figure 6:** The original lot on which 3232 Reservoir Road, NW, now stands. Approximate location outlined in red. *Georgetown Subdivision Book ARS, Square 110, Plate 11, 1874.*

In 1940, Lot 9 was subdivided into four narrower lots numbered Lots 81-84 (see Figure 7). That same year, Lester C. Baker purchased the easternmost of the four lots (Lot 84) and commissioned local female architect Gertrude Sawyer to design a house on the lot. According to the building permit, the house was to be a two-story brick building with seven rooms, a pitched slate roof, a projecting porch, and a driveway.<sup>64</sup> It is not known why the Bakers hired Gertrude Sawyer to design their house; however, they likely knew her since Sawyer lived across Caton Place in a 19<sup>th</sup>-century rowhouse which she was in the process of renovating and improving for herself. Not inconsequentially, Sawyer would, ten years later, purchase the adjacent lots, Lots 81-83.

<sup>64</sup> DC Permit #238781, November 18, 1940, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

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#### *Baker Ownership (1940-1949)*

Colonel Lester D. Baker and his wife, Beatrice, moved into the new house after Colonel Baker received a post in DC in the military reserve sometime between 1940 and 1941. Baker, a 1908 West Point graduate served in numerous military attaché roles in South America. Shortly after moving to DC and for a short stint in 1941, Col. Baker served as a military attaché to the American Embassy in Chile and the Bakers put the house up for rent. Advertisements for the residence included details such as “three bedrooms, two baths, maid’s room and bath, garden, [and] garage” and prohibited pets or children as tenants. Shortly thereafter, Col. Baker earned another post at Fort Jackson in South Carolina between 1942 and 1943. He served one year of duty in New York before retiring to 3232 Reservoir Road, NW, in 1944.<sup>65</sup> In 1949, *The Evening Star* reported that Colonel Lester D. Baker had passed away at the age of sixty-five. He was buried at Arlington Cemetery.<sup>66</sup> Following his death, Beatrice Baker sold the house.

#### *Welsh Ownership (1949-1959)*

The Bakers sold the house to Elysabeth and William Welsh. Elysabeth Corcoran Carrère was born on October 12, 1902, in New York City. She was the niece of architect John Carrère of Carrère & Hastings, who among other notable buildings, famously designed the Russell Senate Office Building, the Carnegie Institute of Washington, the Cannon House Office Building, and the Hotel Washington.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> "Col. Lester D. Baker, Assigned to Reserves Here in 1940-41, Dies," *The Evening Star*, January 7, 1949, 5.

<sup>66</sup> "Col. Lester D. Baker, Assigned to Reserves Here in 1940-41, Dies," *The Evening Star*, January 7, 1949, 5.

<sup>67</sup> "Elysabeth Cochran Barbour Higgins," *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, February 22, 2009, 21.

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In 1947, following the 1943 death of her first husband, Willaim Warren Barbour, a US Senator, Elysabeth married Sir William Welsh, a divorced Royal Air Force (RAF) Air Marshal who commanded the RAF and other Allied Forces in Northwest Africa during World War II. The Welshes purchased 3232 Reservoir in 1949. About three years after the sale of their Georgetown residence, Sir Welsh died in Farmington, Connecticut, on January 2, 1962.<sup>68</sup>

Polly Shackleton and her husband purchased the house in 1949 and would become the house's longest-term occupant.

### The Architect and Builder of 3232 Reservoir Road

#### *Gertrude Sawyer*

Gertrude Sawyer was a prominent early female architect who worked primarily in the metropolitan area of Washington, DC. Recognized as one of the earliest licensed female architects in the country, Sawyer was a trailblazer in her field. Serving in both private practice and as a Civil Engineer Corps officer in the American Navy during World War II, Sawyer was a prolific master architect.<sup>69</sup> She had a personal interest in designing the residence on Lot 84, as it was just across Caton Place Alley from her own residence at 3216 Reservoir Road, NW.<sup>70</sup>



*Figure 9: Image of Gertrude Sawyer, AIA, in her house at 3216 Reservoir Road, NW. The Evening Star, "For the Seabees: Woman Architect Came to Their Aid," March 25, 1956*

Sawyer was born on April 2, 1895, in Tuscola, Illinois, and raised in Kansas City, Missouri. She received a Bachelor of Science in Landscape Architecture from the University of Illinois before earning a Master's Degree in Architecture from Smith College in 1922.<sup>71</sup> Her first job in architecture was at a Kansas City firm, working under Edward Delk, before moving to Washington, DC in 1923 to work for Horace W. Peaslee, where she earned licensure in 1926. She also taught summer classes in architecture at Vassar College for several years before opening her own firm in Washington, DC, in 1934.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>68</sup> "Obituary: SIR WILLIAM WELSH," *The Daily Telegraph*, January 3, 1962, 10.

<sup>69</sup> "Navy Nurse at Bethesda Has First Point Release," *The Evening Star*, October 3, 1945, 22.

<sup>70</sup> "Two-Day Tour of Old Georgetown Houses To Open Tomorrow," *The Evening Star*, April 16, 1942, 25.

<sup>71</sup> "D.C. Women in Uniform," *The Evening Star*, June 6, 1943, 10.

<sup>72</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Women in Maryland Architecture, 1920-1945, Maryland.

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Sawyer is considered a significant architect due both to her accomplishments in her professional practice and to her advancement of female architects in the United States.<sup>73</sup> She was known particularly for her work in the Colonial Revival style. She also frequently worked as a preservation architect for restoration projects, such as alterations to the Jubilee Farm (c. 1850s), Cremona (1819), and the conversion of the historic house at Tudor Hall (1798) into the St. Mary's County Library.<sup>74</sup> Her expertise with historic buildings and their preservation was well-known, as she was once asked to conduct a public lecture on how to preserve eighteenth-century architecture in Georgetown at the invitation of the Georgetown Progressive Citizens' Association.<sup>75</sup> In 1939, she was awarded a membership with the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and was one of the first women to do so.<sup>76</sup> In 1948, she gained national recognition when she was included in an article in *Architectural Record* titled "A Thousand Women in Architecture, Part II: Gertrude Sawyer, A.I.A." During the course of her practice, she was registered as an architect in five states: the District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Florida.<sup>77</sup>

Among her best-known works are the Jefferson Patterson family compound on the Patuxent River, known as Point Farm (1932), and the former Junior League Headquarters (1936) in the Dupont Circle neighborhood of Washington, DC.<sup>78</sup> Some of her private works in the area around the District of Columbia include the Nathan Scott II residence (1936) and the J. Edgar Murdock house (1937).

Sawyer's masterpiece was the master plan for Point Farm, the country house and estate of Jefferson Patterson, diplomat and ambassador to Uruguay under Dwight D Eisenhower. Located on 512 acres in Calvert County, Maryland, the farm consists of several buildings and outbuildings designed by Sawyer. Sawyer also enlisted the help of Rose Greely, an early female architect who is best known for her work as a landscape architect and who had been a fellow student of Sawyer's at Smith College, to aid in the design of the overall landscape and another female landscape architect Cary Milholland Parker to help address the property changes over time. The main residence on the site was a large brick Colonial Revival style residence, built initially between 1932 and 1934, with farm outbuildings such as a pump house, bath house, farm manager's house, barns, granaries, gardener's cottage, greenhouse, garage, and other quarters.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Women in Maryland Architecture, 1920-1945, Maryland.

<sup>74</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Women in Maryland Architecture, 1920-1945, Maryland.

<sup>75</sup> "Georgetown Citizens to Hear Architect," *Times-Herald*, November 28, 1940, 25; Ellen P. Berkeley and Matilda McQuaid, eds., *Architecture: A Place for Women* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989).

<sup>76</sup> American Institute of Architects membership file "Gertrude Sawyer," American Institute of Architects Archives, Washington, District of Columbia; National Register of Historic Places, Women in Maryland Architecture, 1920-1945, Maryland.

<sup>77</sup> "A Thousand Women in Architecture, Part II: Gertrude Sawyer, A.I.A," *Architectural Record* 103, no. 6 (June 1948): 110.

<sup>78</sup> Ellen P. Berkeley and Matilda McQuaid, eds., *Architecture: A Place for Women* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), 96.

<sup>79</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Women in Maryland Architecture, 1920-1945, Maryland.

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In 1969, she retired and closed her firm, though she would later review plans for additional buildings at the Point Farm site in 1995 to ensure they conformed with her original designs. In her later years, she lived in California, where she died in 1996 at the age of 100.<sup>80</sup>

### *E. A. Pessagno & Company*

E. A. Pessagno & Company was a construction firm founded by Emile A. Pessagno around 1927. Pessagno was born in Washington, DC, and graduated from Central High School. He then went on to earn a degree in engineering from Princeton University in 1921. For several years, Pessagno lived in California while working for the Santa Fe Railroad, building bridges, trestles, and embankments for the rail line. He then moved to Florida where he became involved in construction engineering and management.<sup>81</sup>

He moved back to the District of Columbia to marry his wife, Elise Hottel, in 1927. It was then that he decided to open a firm of his own. He engaged in the construction of everything from gas stations to residences and was particularly well known for his restoration of Georgetown residences for thirty years.<sup>82</sup> In the last ten years of his career, he focused primarily on churches and school buildings. Pessagno collaborated with Gertrude Sawyer on several local projects as well.<sup>83</sup>

Pessagno died suddenly of a heart attack on March 23, 1960, at his house in Chevy Chase, Maryland, at the age of sixty-three.<sup>84</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The house at 3232 Reservoir Road, NW, has had a long history as the residence of one of Washington, DC's most impactful 20<sup>th</sup> century activists and politicians, Pauline "Polly" Ehrlich Shackleton. Shackleton was a popular voice of the community and tireless advocate for the city's most underserved residents. She resided in the house during most of her adult life, including most of her active years in politics, retiring to the house before dying there in 1997. It is this association for which the house holds the most local significance. Polly Shackleton's work for the city has been identified and documented in the historic context study "The Women's Suffrage Movement in Washington, DC: 1848-1973," published by the DC Historic Preservation Office. Shackleton was the preeminent women politician and advocate for DC residents during her tenure on the City Council and through her other activist roles. In an era in which women were struggling to make a path for themselves in the workforce, women like Polly Shackleton were engaging in politics in the interest of significant, institutional change. This house is the appropriate representation of her productive life, reflecting the time period when she achieved significance and made the most important contributions to the District of Columbia.

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<sup>80</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Women in Maryland Architecture, 1920-1945, Maryland.

<sup>81</sup> "Emile A. Pessagno, 63, Builder and Civic Worker," *The Evening Star*, March 26, 1960, 34.

<sup>82</sup> "Emile A. Pessagno, 63, Builder and Civic Worker," *The Evening Star*, March 26, 1960, 34.

<sup>83</sup> DC Permit #1256662, October 19, 1942, DC Archives, Washington, DC; DC Permit #187072, December 10, 1935, DC Archives, Washington, DC.

<sup>84</sup> "Emile A. Pessagno, 63, Builder and Civic Worker," *The Evening Star*, March 26, 1960, 34.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** ~0.06 acres \_\_\_\_\_

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 38°55'32" Longitude: 77°1'37"

2. Latitude: Longitude:

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3. Latitude: \_\_\_\_\_ Longitude: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Latitude: \_\_\_\_\_ Longitude: \_\_\_\_\_

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

1. Zone: \_\_\_\_\_ Easting: \_\_\_\_\_ Northing: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Zone: \_\_\_\_\_ Easting: \_\_\_\_\_ Northing: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Zone: \_\_\_\_\_ Easting: \_\_\_\_\_ Northing: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Zone: \_\_\_\_\_ Easting : \_\_\_\_\_ Northing: \_\_\_\_\_

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary corresponds to the boundaries of Assessment and Taxation Lot 84 within Square 1280. The lot encompasses the historic residence and the surrounding landscape representing about 0.06 acres.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes the house and fenced-in backyard which are the most historic and original aspects of the property and best represent the site's period of significance.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Kim Daileader (Architectural Historian) and Neale Grisham  
(Researcher)

organization: EHT Traceries

street & number: 440 Massachusetts Avenue, NW

city or town: Washington state: DC zip code: 20001

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Pauline "Polly" Shackleton House  
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County and State

telephone: (202)393-1199  
date: April 2024

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

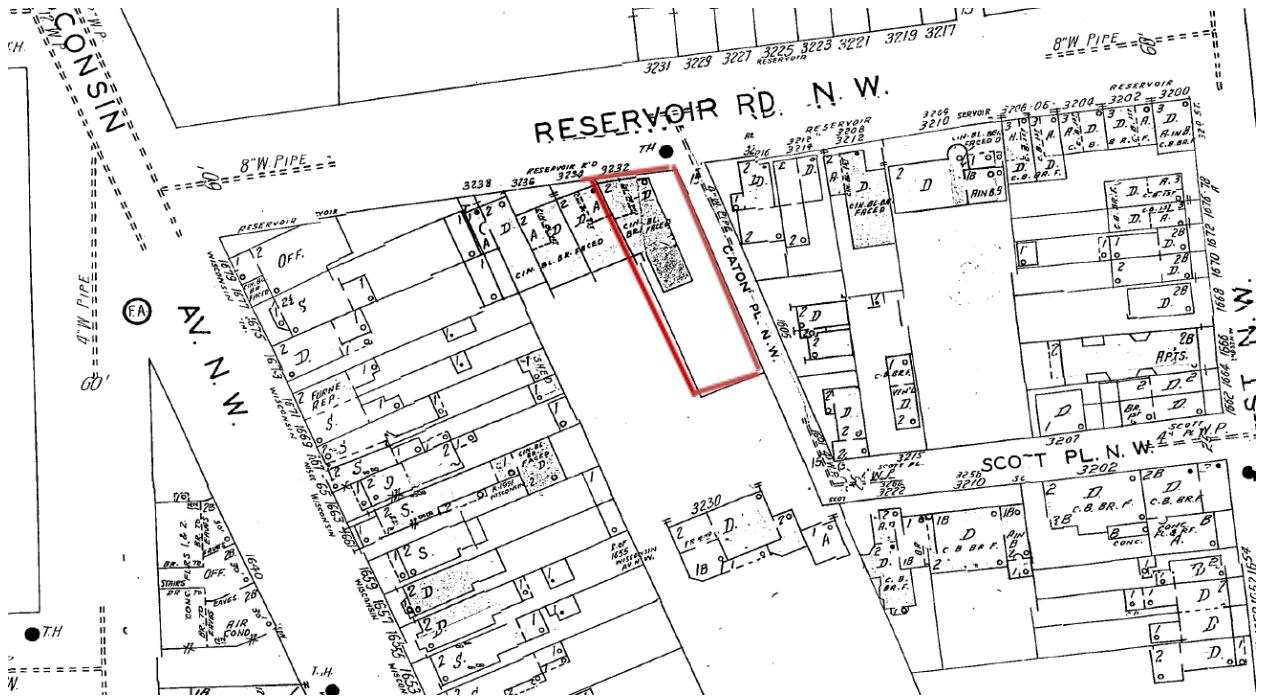
- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)



2023 Map of Washington, DC. Red star depicting approximate location of the property. US Topographic Maps.

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1959 Sanborn Map, Volume V, Plate 516.

**Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

**Photo Log**

Name of Property:

City or Vicinity:

County:

State:

Photographer:

Date Photographed:

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

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1 of \_\_\_\_.

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