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ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN'S REPORT

1553 33rd St., N.W.
Square 1272, Lot 808

SUMMARY

1553 33rd St., N.W., is one of seven, two-story, brick, attached row houses. It was constructed in 1895 at a total cost for all seven houses of \$7,000. The architect and builder was D. Haggarty, who filed for the building permit, #1532, on April 16, 1895. His building plan called for 7 two-story buildings, with cellars, constructed of brick, with a concrete base, pressed brick on the front, a flat roof of tin and bay projections measuring 24' x 9' x 1'. The houses are each two bays wide, the windows at 1553 are six by six. Over each of the bay windows are arches with brick voussoirs, and there is ornamental brickwork along the cornice of all seven houses.

An easement is advised for this property. 1553 33rd Street is a modest row house, occupied for over sixty years by tenants engaged in a variety of jobs which were representative of those held by many residents of the area. These include shopkeepers, government workers, engineers, carpenters, car drivers and laborers to name a few. The row house at 1553 33rd Street is a good example of the kind of residence for people with modest incomes. An easement on this building would prevent demolition or remodelling, either of which would ruin the character of all the intact houses of which 1553 33rd Street is a part.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Name of Property: 1553 33rd St. , N.W.

Address: 1553 33rd St., N.W.

Square and Lot: Square 1272, Lot 808

Present Owner: Allyn E. Kilsheimer

Original Use: Dwelling

Present Use: Dwelling

Date of Construction: April 16, 1895

Date(s) of Major Alterations:

Builder: D. Haggarty

Historic District: Georgetown

BACKGROUND

1553 33rd Street and its Neighborhood

The first patent for land in Georgetown was granted in 1703 to Ninean Beall who received 795 acres which he named Rock of Dumbarton. In 1734, George Gordon a 'merchant' acquired 300 acres of land just to the west of Beall's property, along the Potomac River.¹ Within four years of Gordon's acquisition a ferry was established from the Virginia shores of the Potomac to his land, and in ten years he had a warehouse on his property. This became the nucleus of a settlement and port. In 1751 a petition was presented to the Maryland Assembly requesting that a town be erected "on the Potowmack River above the Mouth of Rock Creek Adjacent to the Inspection House."² It was George Gordon's warehouse that was the official Inspection House. The petition was granted and 60 acres of land were acquired, part from George Beall (son of Ninean Beall) and part from George Gordon, which were then divided into 80 lots. As the town grew new land was platted. To the east of the original area Beall's Addition was laid out in 1783, and Deakins, Lee and Casanove's Addition was laid out between 1793 and 1796. To the west, Peter, Beatty, Threlkeld and Deakin's Addition was platted in 1784. 1553 33rd Street is part of Hawkin's and Beatty's Addition of 1769 (see Map of Georgetown, Figure 1).

In Georgetown during the 18th century tobacco was king. At the end of the century the Governor of Maryland claimed that Georgetown was "the largest tobacco port in the U.S."³ Tobacco warehouses were built, wharves for ships and taverns for planters and seamen abounded. In the third quarter of the 18th century milling establishments were also appearing along the waterfront. The availability of water power from the Potomac river and Rock Creek made milling profitable.⁴ By the end of the 18th century shipment of flour and grains was nearly as great as the shipment of tobacco.

Not all the residents of Georgetown during the late 18th and early 19th century were involved in tobacco and milling, however. The government was expanding quickly at this time and some of Georgetown's early residents worked for the U. S. Treasury. Many of these people came from southern or Tidewater, Maryland, after the war of 1812, and had learned accounting skills from being raised, and working, on tobacco farms.⁵

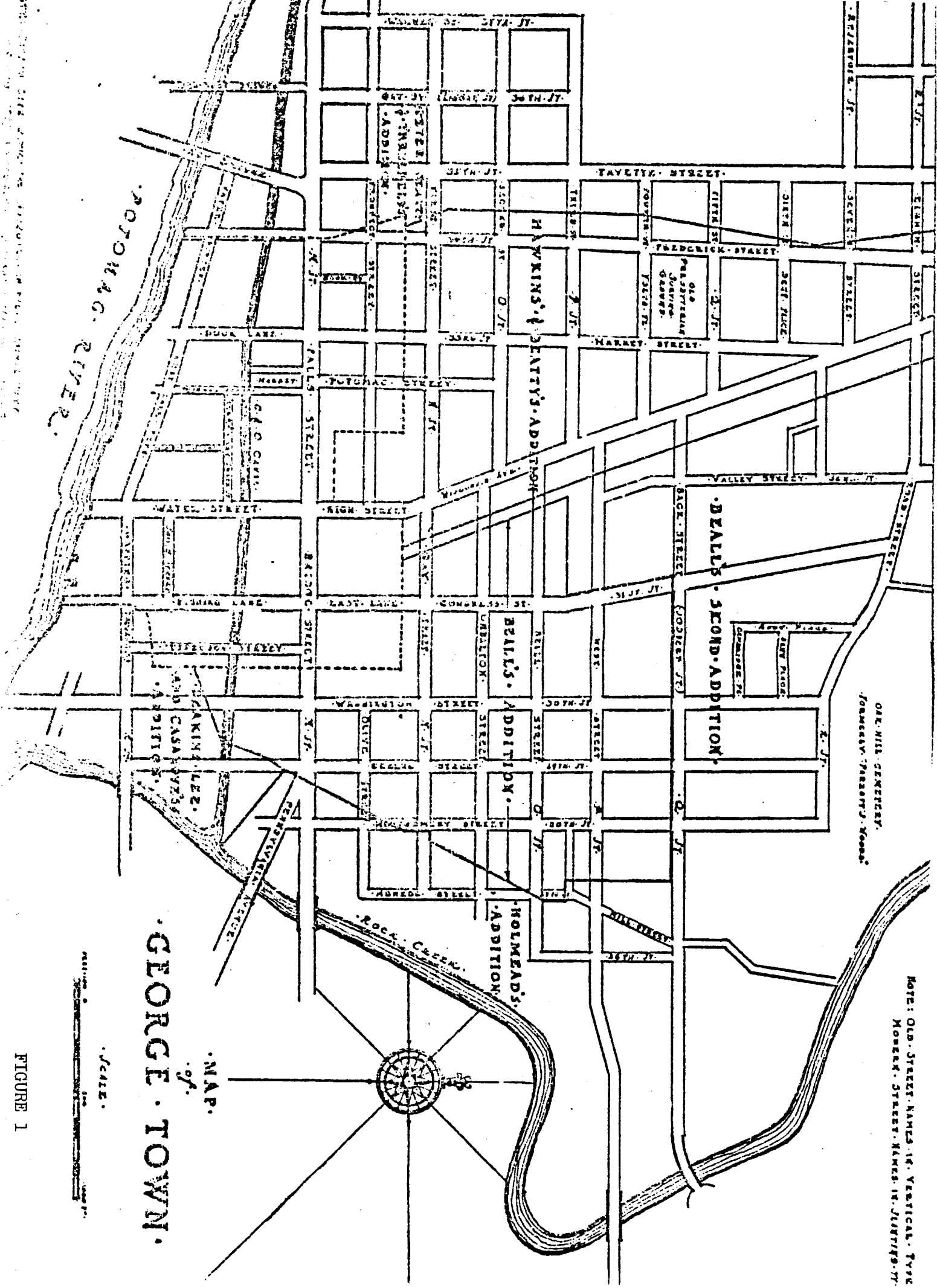


FIGURE 1

The C & O canal which opened in 1828 while never bringing Georgetown the economic prosperity the merchants had hoped for, did prevent waterfront activities from collapsing entirely when the tobacco trade died. It was the opening of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad (on the same day as the opening of the C & O Canal) that brought an end to the shipping era in Georgetown. By the end of the 19th century, the railroad had taken over all shipping to and from the outlying areas.⁶ The Civil War also brought about decline in trade on the Canal, and at the end of the war shipping never reached the same peak it had in antebellum years.

The decline in trade on the C & O Canal, technological changes which made the canal obsolete, the fact that Baltimore developed as a railroad terminus and cargo shipping harbor and that Alexandria took all foreign trade for the Potomac, were all factors that changed Georgetown. The industrial aspects of the waterfront area, and the increasing age of many of the residential structures made much of Georgetown undesirable as a place to live. The area slipped into disrepair and was considered the "old" section of the city.

Residents of 1553 33rd Street

Throughout the 1920's Georgetown remained a low-income community with many of it's fine residences run down and derelict. With the social changes instituted by the New Deal however, the market picked up and by the early thirties the convenience of Georgetown's location along with the charm of the village and the beautiful 18th and 19th century houses was recognized. The remodelling of the area started slowly, but by the mid-thirties gained momentum. New Dealers moved into the restored houses, gardens flourished and each rejuvenated spot inspired the redemption of others.⁷

Looking at the sample assessments of the property at 1553 33rd Street, the economic trend of Georgetown can be seen. Assessments rise slowly between 1909 through 1946, at the time the area was becoming revitalized. From the '40s to 1953 there is a 60% (approximately) rise in the assessment rate. From 1958 to 1969 property value had jumped from \$1.95 to \$13.40, which was a 1,400% increase!

In the 1850's many residences were constructed around the waterfront area. There were a few single family houses but most common was the rowhouse. The architecture showed Victorian decorative detailing popular throughout the second half of the 19th century. Characteristics included brick cornices, segmental arches over windows, scroll-like modillions supporting cornices decorated with dentils and rosettes.⁸ The building at 1553 33rd Street was much more modest in design, built, most likely, for a middle-income family.

The entire row of seven houses was both designed and built by Mr. D. Haggarty, who applied for a building permit to construct seven identical dwelling units, at a cost of \$7,000. The original addresses of the buildings were 1607, 1609, 1613, 1615, 1617 and 1619 33rd (Market) Street, but this numbering system changed in 1932, to the current addresses. 1553 was originally 1617. The building permit, number 1532, was granted on April 16, 1895. The material of the house was to be of brick, it was to be two stories in height with a cellar, measuring 24' in height from the sidewalk to the highest point on the roof. The roof was to be flat, made of tin. The material used for the front of the house was to be pressed brick, and the bay windows were to be square in shape, with the entire bay projecting one foot, measuring 9' in width and running vertically 24', the entire height of the house.

The building and property was owned for over fifty years by William R. Sherwood who bought it in 1906, but it appears that he was not a resident. It was rented out, from 1900 to 1969, for very short periods of time, to a variety of people. From the 1900 and 1910 census records, the residents of 1607 - 1619 can be determined, as well as the occupations of each head of household. In 1900 the residents of 1617 33rd Street were the Soper family, consisting of Alexander, the head of household, 48 years old, employed as a furniture packer, along with his wife Laberta, 40 years old, and two daughters, Anne, 15 years and Ellen, 13 years, both of whom were in school. They were renters of the property, as were most of the occupants. In 1910, the residents were the Sparshotts, Alfred H., 30 years old, an Engineer, his wife Estelle, 27, and his three children. (See attached appendix for the entire listing of the households occupying the attached dwellings.)

The Sparshotts occupied the house until 1915, and for the following nine years there were a number of short-term renters. In 1924 the building was rented by Ira C. Smith who lived there for the next thirteen years. When he left, the short-term renting began again, until 1943 when Lester Boswell rented the house for the next thirteen (or perhaps more) years. The records at this time are not clear. In 1969, Frank M. Murphy the owner of the house became its occupant as well. The building changed ownership again in 1976 for three years, and in 1980 it was bought by its current owner and resident.

A sampling of the 1880, 1900 and 1910 census records for the area, particularly High and Market Streets (Wisconsin Avenue and 33rd Street respectively) indicates the variety of occupations the residents were engaged in: butcher, car driver, shoemaker, retail grocer, millwright, laborer, dressmaker, tugboat captain, carpenter, engineer, blacksmith, clerk in the War department, to name a few. These occupations did not change much over the 40 year period, with the exception of an increase in government workers in 1910.

The 1887 Hopkins map for the area surrounding 1553 33rd Street shows the various conveniences such as shops, churches, schools, available to the residents. Two public schools, the Addison Public

School and the Curtis Public School were located back-to-back on P and O Streets. Across the street from 1553 was a Presbyterian Church and "Presbyterian Burial Ground". Around the corner on High Street and Volta Place was, and still is, a Lutheran church. The first Georgetown church was built in 1770 by German Lutherans at this same intersection. In 1769, when the Beatty and Hawkins land was added to Georgetown it was specified that four of the lots were to be set aside for public use - one of which was to be a Lutheran Church.⁹ The area was quite populated with both brick and frame residences lining the side streets. High Street had primarily residential quarters on the streets above O Street, while the shops were concentrated below O Street, towards the canal.

Today in Georgetown many of the old residences remain, while the shops on Wisconsin Avenue consist of both the old and the new. Antique stores survive next to trendy clothing stores, and old eating establishments compete with fast food chains. However, the residential quiet still prevails on the side streets, along with the atmosphere of a small town. In this sense, the dwelling at 1553 33rd Street is typical of this characteristic of Georgetown which has prevailed since the 19th century. 1553 33rd Street is also characteristic of those houses occupied by residents of modest income, in an area where representatives of all socio-economic backgrounds resided in the past, and reside today.

FOOTNOTES

¹Georgetown Historic Waterfront. U. S. Commission of Fine Arts and Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation. National Park Service, Dept. of the Interior. 1968.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Mitchell, Mary: A Walk in Georgetown. Barre Publications, Barre, Massachusetts, 1966.

⁶Georgetown Historic Waterfront. U. S. Commission of Fine Arts and Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation. National Park Service, Dept. of the Interior. 1968.

⁷Green, Constance McLaughlin: Washington, Capital City 1879 - 1950. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1963.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Junior League of Washington: The City of Washington. Alfred A Knopf, 1977.

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APPENDIX

OWNERS

April, 1895 - '96	Julia Harrington
1896 - 1904	Catherine T. Nolan
1904 - 1906	Andrew A. Blackman
1906 - 1961	William R. Sherwood
1961 - 1976	Frank and L. E. Murphy
1977 - 1979	Lawrence C. Nussdorf
1980 - Present	Allyn E. Kilsheimer

TENANTS

OCCUPATION

1900 -	Alexander Soper	Furniture Packer
1910 - 1915	Alfred H. Sparshott	Engineer
1915 - 1916	George F. Berkheimer	Barber
1916 - 1920	Charles E. Saul	Engineer
1920 - 1921	Ruth Horne	Widow - No occupation given
1922 - 1923	Fred C. Wrenn	Manager
1924 - 1937	Ira C. Smith	Conductor/Trainman
1938 - 1940	John W. Dickerson	Gardner
1941 - 1942	Mattie Robinson	Widow of Russell, No occupation given
1943 - 1956	Lester Boswell	General Contractor, Painter & Decorator
(Or longer)		
1960	Vacant	
1964 - 1965	Murray Belman	Attorney, Adviser, Dept. of State
(or longer)		
1969 - 1976	Frank M. Murphy (also Owner as of 1961)	U. S. Navy
1977 - 1979	Lawrence C. Nussdorf	
1980 - Present	Allyn E. Kilsheimer	

SAMPLE ASSESSMENTS

<u>Year</u>	<u>Owner</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Improvement Assessment</u>	<u>Total Assessment</u>
1980	Allyn E. Kilsheimer	\$73.61	\$146,806	\$219,459
1977	Lawrence C. Nussdorf	37.59	71,899	109,000
1972	Frank & LE Murphy	13.40	18,500	31,726
1969	Frank & LE Murphy	13.40	18,500	31,726
1958	William R. Sherwood	1.95	2,520	4,444
1953	William R. Sherwood	1.50	2,520	4,000
1946	William R. Sherwood	.90	1,300	2,188
1943	William R. Sherwood	.90	1,300	2,188
1925	William R. Sherwood	.60	1,200	1,792
1909	William R. Sherwood	.40	700	1,094

RESIDENTS OF 1607 - 1619 33rd Street, 1900 - 1910

1900

<u>Address</u>	<u>Name of Occupant</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Renter/ Owner</u>
1607 33rd St.	Parker, Francis	44	Furnace Worker	R
	Sibernus	43		
	Blanche	18	Saleswoman	
	Marie	16		
	Ann	14		
	Frances	13		
	Harry	12		
	William	8		
	Lillian	5		
	James	3		
1611 33rd St.	Bolar, Arthur	24	Electrician	R
	Mary	25		
	Esther	4		
	Grace	2		
	Sevious, Mary - Mother-in-Law			
	George - Father-in-Law			
	Marion - Sister-in-Law			
1613 33rd St.	Becker, Thomas	36	Printer	R
	Amelia	30		
	John	6		
1615 33rd St.	Bechtel, Charles	34	Clerk, Gov't.	O
	Julia	26		
1619 33rd. St.	Ward, Frank	29	Clerk, Gov't.	R
	Ellen	27		

(no information available on 1609)

1910

1607 33rd St.	Welsh, Albert	51	Officer, Dist. Jail	R
	Marian	51		
	Donaldson, William (nephew)	20	Bookkeeper, Coal Yard	
1615 33rd St.	Carrico, William	39	Tinsmith, Sheet Metal	R
	Amanda	33		
	William H.	12		
	Loretta	7		
	Charles	5		
1619 33rd St.	Fey, William	39	Bricklayer, Bldgs.	O
	Lillie	38		
	Mary	10		

(no information on 1609, 11, and 13)

Deeds

Square 1272

Lots 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, and 809 of 187.

Address 1543, 1545, 1547, 1549, 1551, 1553 and 1555 33rd St.

Previous Address: 1607, 1609, 1611, 1613, 1615, 1617, 1619.

Deed

M44 John Davidson To Beatty Brothers
1804 Lot #187

0180
Jan. 1806 John M. Beatty, et al to John Ott
Lot 187, Beatty and Hawkins' Addition

WB50, 11
Mzy 1834 John W. Ott to Mary C. Beatty (Mary Beatty is member of Ott family)
Lot 187.

~~WB 92~~ WB 92, 7 John W. Ott to Peter Von Essen
May, 1842 Lot 187.

WB 101,386 Peter Von Essen to George A. Bohrer
June 1843 Lot 187

WB144, 442 George A. Bohrer to Murray Barker, Jr.
Part of lot 187, fronting 100' on Market Street (now 33rd St),
beginning at a point on Market Street 50' from intersection of Market
and 4th St. (Volta Place), 70' in depth.

1865 Tax Murray Barker, Jr. heirs
Assess. Lot 187

1871 Tax Barker heirs
Assess. Lot 187

1995, 183 Henry S. Matthews, Simon Lyon, trustees & John J. Harrington
1896 to
April 7, 1895 Julia Harrington

2097, 183 Julia Harrington to Catherine Nolan
1896 She conveyed two of the houses to Catherine Nolan as separate estate
Feb. 3, 1896 from control of her husband.

Feb. 10, 1896

In Sept. 1904 Julia Harrington died intestate. The portion of her lot
#187 upon which 1613, 1615, 1617 and 1619 (old addresses) were erected
went to Julia's two surviving sisters and two brothers:
Catherine T. Nolan; John J. Harrington; Jeremiah Harrington; Mary E. Sutcliffe.
House #1615 went to Jeremiah Harrington.

2781, 344 Catherine Nolan, eta l. to Andrew A. Blackman
Jan. 1904 Feb. 6, 1904

This is 1617 or 1553 33rd St."Beginning at a point on the east sid
of 33rd st. in west line of said square, distant 135.28 ft. North from
SW corner of square said point being center of party wall between

*Deed 2770, 487
Jan. 1904*

1617 and 1619 33rd Street then running south with east line of 33rd St. and west line of said square 14.10' to center of party wall between dwellings 1617 and 1615 33rd St. then east through center of last mentioned wall and parallel with Q St. 70' to the east line of said lot #187 then North on said East line of said lot 14.10' then in a straight line through center of first mentioned party wall to the beginning.

This is the same property deeded by Mary E. Sutliff, et al. to Catherine Nolan, deed dated Nov. 24, 1903

3043, 49
Nov. 1906

Andrew A. Blackman, et ux. to William R. Sherwood. (See above for description of land).

The earlier deed research, until 1896, was provided by the Peabody Room of the Georgetown Public Library.