Part II. Significance, Registration Requirements, and Associated Property Types

Introduction and Criteria

National Register Bulletin 16B describes an historic context as “a body of information about related properties organized by theme, place, and time.”

Themes

Construction in the Southwest quadrant occurred in three phases shaped by distinct sets of themes:

- **L’Enfant Plan, the Port, New Populations (1791-1870)** spans the period between the formulation of the L’Enfant Plan and the close of the Civil War decade.

  During this period patterns of building and settlement were shaped by the early influences of the L’Enfant Plan, efforts to construct a national capital with federal buildings, development of the Southwest waterfront and the opening of the James Creek Canal, the development of much of the quadrant as working-class housing, some of which occurred in alleys, and the growth of an African-American residential community, particularly after the Civil War.

- **Municipal Consolidation and Housing Reform (1871-1945)** saw the increasing role of municipal government, which implemented building and zoning codes.

  Development during this period reflected the growth of municipal infrastructure in the form of schools, firehouses, waterfront market houses, the city pound, and other civic buildings. After the turn of the 20th century, the City Beautiful movement, whose influence was greatly enhanced by the congressionally sponsored McMillan Plan, increasingly shaped the design of civic buildings. Congressional influence over city planning was also expressed through such

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54 National Register Bulletin 16B, 6.
legislative measures as the 1892 law restricting alley housing and the 1920 act restricting industrial development. A critical theme was housing reform, from the efforts to abolish alley housing in the 1890s through the private construction of “philanthropic housing” in the early 20th century to the initial public housing projects of the 1930s and early 1940s. The private market also constructed improved working-class housing. The period was also marked by the continuing growth of the quadrant’s African-American population and the construction of segregated facilities such as schools. Commercial development was shaped by the increasing importance of rail transportation and the development of warehouses and storage facilities serving truck and river transportation.

- The Postwar Phase (1946-73) was characterized by a federal and city-sponsored urban renewal project that demolished most of Southwest north of P Street and west of 3rd Street, displaced much of its population, and replaced the original structures with middle- and upper middle-class housing.

Themes include postwar de-urbanization in the face of suburbanization and the application of modernist architecture and urban planning principles. East of 3rd Street, important trends included the construction of modernist public housing and municipal service buildings.

**Place**

In this context study historic Southwest is the area bounded by the Potomac and Anacostia rivers to the south and west – excluding the National Register-listed Fort McNair Historic District on the bank of the Potomac between P, Canal, and 2nd streets. South Capitol Street is the eastern boundary. The northern boundary is the Southwest Freeway, with a few exceptions for properties to the south that have well-established links to the community. Properties included in historic Southwest are:

- The Washington Marina (1300 Maine Avenue), north of the freeway between the 14th Street Bridge to the northwest and the Case Bridge, which carries I-395, to Southeast. The marina has been considered a component of the Southwest waterfront since its construction during a 1939-41 harbor modernization project.
- L’Enfant Plaza/10th Street Promenade was an important component of the Zeckendorf-Pei Plan for Southwest redevelopment.
- St. Dominic’s Church, immediately north of the Freeway, has a historic connection as the only Catholic Church in the Southwest quadrant.
- The northern boundary is the Southwest Freeway, with a few exceptions for properties that have well-established links to the community south of the freeway.
The rationale for selecting the Southwest Freeway as a boundary is that, in addition to being a visual barrier, it separates areas that have evolved in ways that reflect differing contextual themes. Beginning with the expansion of the Department of Agriculture complex and construction of the Federal Warehouse in the early 1930s, the mixed industrial and residential area between the Virginia Avenue rail lines and the mall began to redevelop as a federal office district. During the 1950s and early 1960s, the Southwest redevelopment program, which extended as far north as E Street, and the construction of the freeway along the F Street corridor eliminated most of the previous district, except for the DC Inventory-listed Terminal Refrigerating and Warehousing Company Building at 300 D Street. Today the area north of the freeway is devoted mostly to office buildings, whether federally owned, leased to federal contractors, or largely occupied by tenants who transact business with the federal government. In contrast to the neighborhood on the south side of the freeway, it is virtually non-residential.

This is not to argue that the area north of the freeway lacks historic significance. It includes such structures as the Jamie L. Whitten Department of Agriculture Building, listed on the National Register in 1974; the Lyndon Baines Johnson Department of Education Building and the Wilbur Wright Building, deemed eligible for the National Register in 2011; and the Procurement Building, whose adaptive reuse exemplifies the area’s transition from warehouse to office district, nominated to the DC Inventory in 2014. However, its landscape most clearly reflects such themes as the evolution of the federal office building as an architectural type and the development of modernist office buildings in the District of Columbia, which are not as highly evidenced south of the freeway. Neither does it reflect the themes of residential experimentation and mass housing characteristic of the area to the south. The historical significance of the area north of the freeway should therefore be considered under a separate context study.

### Time

The Potomac River valley has been inhabited since 10,000 to 8,000 BC, and traces of early settlements thought to date to the Archaic Period (8,000-1,000 BC) have been found in Northeast and Northwest Washington.\(^5\) However, no pre-European sites have been identified in historic Southwest.

While the general location of the homestead of the early European settler Notley Young with its quarters for enslaved persons has been established, it and other contemporary sites have probably been obliterated by subsequent waves of construction. The beginning

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date of the period of significance is therefore recommended to be 1791, the year when Pierre L’Enfant produced his plan for Washington, which included the Southwest.

The ending date for the period of significance is recommended to be 1973, the year when the L’Enfant Plaza East Building was completed and the Southwest redevelopment area essentially built out. After 1973, the historic Southwest area remained relatively stable, with little new construction. Since the beginning of the 21st century, the quadrant has undergone a new wave of redevelopment, so recent that it fails to meet the DC Inventory stipulation that sufficient time has passed to allow its significance to be evaluated. Likewise, it falls within the National Register’s general prohibition on designating the works of living architects or buildings less than 50 years old which cannot be established to be of exceptional merit.

Established Preservation Criteria for Significance

36 CFR §60 specifies that, to possess the level of significance necessary for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, a building, site, or district must “possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association,” and be:

A. associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or

B. associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or

C. embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

D. have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.\(^\text{56}\)

Section 201 f Title 10-C of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (DCMR) presents similar criteria for listing in the DC Inventory of Historic Sites.

Registration Requirements

All property types must retain integrity of location, setting, feeling, association, design and workmanship, including original massing and character-defining details that evoke the period of construction. Integrity of setting and feeling is strengthened by the physical relationship of individual buildings to other buildings associated with the area’s history.

\(^{56}\) National Register Bulletin 15, 37. Edited slightly for continuity.
However, because the expression of overlying strata of residential development is an overriding theme within the Southwest cityscape, this association is not restricted to neighboring buildings from the same developmental period.

Under Criterion C, the eligible property must retain integrity; however, the removal of original details, such as windows, doors, or ornamentation, the covering of original siding with such modern materials as vinyl siding, or the addition of attached elements such as non-original door hoods or awnings would not disqualify a property from consideration. Buildings nominated under A or B do not have to retain as high a degree of integrity as those nominated under Criterion C, but they must retain their original mass and scale.

**Associated Property Types**

Southwest is associated with perhaps the most diverse property type portfolio of any of the city’s quadrants. It began as an area oriented to transportation and early industrial functions but became increasingly residential during the 19th century, especially after the Civil War. However, warehouses, workshops, and commercial structures continued to play important roles in the social and economic life of the quadrant even as schools, churches, and government buildings increased in number and enriched life in what was a predominantly working-class community. Southwest’s extensive waterfront has been a source of employment as a functioning port and railroad terminus and, in the 20th century, as a recreational area. These functions have created distinct property types such as pier head houses and marinas, including a marina that is home to the largest “live aboard” community on the East Coast.

During the redevelopment era of the 1950s and 1960s, Southwest became home to the Arena Stage, a major cultural institution which has also gained national recognition for its architecturally acclaimed theatres; and in the 1970s of Southeastern University, a private institution that offered affordable higher education. Recently, Southwest has again become a major site of construction, consisting of housing, government buildings, and a 27-acre mixed-use waterfront development.

This study provides a two-part presentation of the historic property types: 1) an architectural commentary which presents characteristic property types in conjunction with the developmental periods and 2) a typology of Southwest’s historic buildings. The components constitute classification scheme for interpretation of the built landscape. Because the landscape of the areas north and south of the current route of the Southwest Freeway began to diverge most significantly in the 1930s, the commentary discusses earlier patterns of development that transcend this study’s proposed boundaries for historic Southwest. Not intended to be a complete inventory of buildings, the typology is rather a catalog of existing examples highlighting significant building types within particular periods.
Property Types

A. Property Type: Dwellings

Southwest’s earliest dwellings were Native American settlements, presumably succeeded by settlers’ cabins and small frame houses. Its first recorded occupant was Charles Collyer, who signed a 14-year-lease for 50 acres at an annual rent of 500 pounds of tobacco and an agreement to plant 50 apple trees.57

By 1762, the plantation of Notley Young with its two-story Georgian manor house, outbuildings, and slave quarters occupied much of the land south of C Street. Daniel Carroll, whose manor house stood just southeast of the future route of South Capitol Street, had by 1770 laid out the town of Carrollsburg at the tip of Buzzard Point, though it was never built.58 Most of the quadrant was used for agriculture settlement remained scattered.

The American University-based archeological study of Southwest (1992) notes that the quadrant’s lands stretch across the Anacostia from the documented prehistoric village of Nacotchtanke and could ordinarily be expected to offer an array of prehistoric sites for investigation. However, the project report concludes: “Within just the project area, marshy areas have been filled, ridges have been leveled, and stratigraphically little is left intact. While artifacts may still be recovered in these disturbed areas, it is not likely that they will be recovered in situ. What is more likely is that artifacts recovered are either from a nearby location as dirt was moved around for grading or that they have been excavated and displaced as construction occurred throughout the project area. Given this high degree of disturbance, it is concluded here that the probability of intact prehistoric sites remaining in the project area is minimal.”59

57 Deborah Rubenstein and Stuart Speaker, with Joan C. Chase, “Historic Context,” in Archaeological Survey, 87.
58 Archaeological Survey, 78-79.
59 Archaeological Survey, 75.
1791-1870  L’Enfant Plan, the Port, New Populations

Southwest’s early residential development was oriented to the Potomac and Anacostia riverfronts. In 1801, the quadrant included 98 structures, 58 of which were situated south of M Street.\(^{60}\)

Housing built in alleys is documented to have existed in Southwest and other Washington neighborhoods by the 1850s. By the Civil War, pockets existed along on both sides of 4½ Street just north of F Street and immediately south of M Street to its west. During the Civil War years, alley dwellings expanded greatly citywide and, by 1871, had developed in clusters in every area of Southwest other than sparsely settled Buzzard Point.\(^{61}\) Such dwellings might house working-class residents as well as the extremely poor.

![Figure 15. Wheat Row. Peter Sefton](image)

Working-class dwellings, whether erected on streets or alleys, were small, one or two stories in height, and of vernacular style and frame construction, often with gable roofs and clapboard siding. They might be detached or built in rows, particularly if they were situated on alleys. Some, particularly on Buzzard Point, were described simply as shanties. None survive, but historic photos and contemporary accounts suggest their defining features.


Middle- and upper-class dwellings were constructed of brick, 2½ or 3 stories, evidently with architectural embellishments like Flemish bond brickwork and stone sills and lintels. Eight such houses, constructed by the Greenleaf Syndicate or figures associated with it, survive today (Typology Table A1.1). The Greenleaf Syndicate sought profit from the need to quickly transform wilderness and farmland into a capital city with impressive federal buildings, a cause strongly endorsed by President Washington. L’Enfant’s plan had divided the city site into numbered squares composed of individual lots. The first plan for financing government buildings required that each landowner convey title to half the lots in each of his squares to the city’s presidentially appointed commissioners. The commissioners would then sell these lots to raise construction funds, with the original owners compensated by the increased values of their adjoining lots.62

Figure 16. Thomas Law House. Peter Sefton

Wheat Row, the earliest of the Greenleaf Syndicate houses, was erected to fulfill the requirements of this contract, while the other houses were constructed later by various figures associated with the Syndicate.63 Today the Thomas Law House is a component of the Tiber Island complex, while the other seven houses are incorporated into Harbour Square.

Another significant house of the period was built ca. 1800 on a lot in the undeveloped town of Carrollsburg by Captain Joseph Johnson, an entrepreneur who is sometimes credited with operating the first steamboat on the Potomac. Located at 49 T Street, the Johnson House is notable because it survived long enough to be documented by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in 1936. The Johnson House was a two-

story, gable-roofed structure with massive twin chimneys on its east end and a front façade which featured Flemish-bond brick work. The HABS documentation rather confusingly termed the house both “typical of this period in DC” and “a mansion in its day.” The latter observation is probably more correct, especially in comparison to historic photos which depict local 19th-century frame dwellings.

Although the Johnson House, which HABS termed in “poor condition,” was soon replaced by a sand and gravel dump, the 1992 American University study terms its lot one of the two highest priority archeological sites in Southwest, as its foundations might have been buried rather than obliterated.

Figure 17. Duncanson-Cranch House. Peter Sefton

Significance.

Pre-Civil War working-class dwellings, many of which remained in use until they were demolished during the redevelopment program of the 1950s, represented the major portion of the quadrant’s early structures. They evidenced the patterns of settlement and social life of the community and were an architectural catalog of pre-Civil War residential building forms in the city. The Greenleaf Syndicate houses, the only early upper-middle and upper-class dwellings to survive in Southwest, represent the efforts to construct a federal city, early visions of Southwest as a prosperous commercial district with homes for prosperous merchants and entrepreneurs, as well as being aesthetically outstanding. They avoided demolition during Southwest’s redevelopment as the result of one of the District’s earliest historic preservation campaigns, which was orchestrated by the Columbia Historical Society and the American

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65 *Archaeological Survey*, 283-85.
Institute of Architects during the 1950s. The Lewis House was added to the group of buildings to be preserved in 1960 after a publicity campaign initiated by its tenant.

These were among the original Category II Landmarks identified by the District of Columbia Joint Committee on Landmarks in 1964-65 as “contributing significantly to the cultural heritage and visual beauty of the District of Columbia.” They were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1973.

Figure 18. Edward Simon Lewis House. Peter Sefton

Registration Requirements.
Although no alley houses and few other dwellings of the period are known to survive in historic Southwest, remnants or archaeological evidence of such a property type could qualify under Criterion D. Such significant architectural remnants could provide information about construction techniques or important information about the lives of residents, including their material possessions and dietary practices. The American University archeological study (1992) proposes that the alleys on either side of Carrollsburg Place in Squares 650 and 651 be investigated as a high priority because, although they “have been greatly disturbed by grading and paving … any archaeological resources which remain could lead to a better understanding of alley life in Washington, D.C.”

69 Archaeological Survey 285.
The study also proposed that four other sites be investigated for similar evidence of early
development, although as a somewhat lesser priority. They include the William Syphax
School grounds (Square 653), the Jefferson Junior High School grounds (Squares 415
and 439), the Greenleaf Recreation Center playground between M and N streets, and the
area east of Fort McNair adjacent to 2nd Street between S and P streets. The last two sites
were believed likely to contain 19th-century artifacts in the material used to fill in the
James Creek Canal as well as remnants of the canal’s fabric.  

1871-1945  Municipal Consolidation and Housing Reform

   •  Sub-period: Improving the city and its housing, 1871-1918

The Organic Act of 1871 combined the City of Washington, Georgetown, and
unincorporated Washington County into a single municipal entity under a territorial
government that included a Board of Public Works charged with modernizing the city’s
physical infrastructure. During a brief period of local self-government, under Alexander
R Shepherd in 1873-74, the city council passed the city’s first building regulations, which
mandated building permits, set standards for materials and construction, and banned
wooden buildings in the “densely-populated sections and principal streets of
Washington.” These fire rules were suspended for the sparsely settled areas south of I
Street Southeast and Southwest, after the chief inspector of buildings announced that
“shanty builders [are] the pioneers of the city [who perform the] legitimate function of
colonizing and preparing the way for more pretentious buildings.”

Alley housing continued to increase after the Civil War, until 1892, when complaints by
early reformers led Congress to ban housing construction on alleys less than 30 feet wide
that lacked sewers, water, and gaslight or were “blind” alleys in the interior of a block.
In Southwest, many brick alley houses were built just before the congressional ban,
including the city’s most prominent postwar symbol of housing “blight,” Dixon Court.

Residential construction became mostly brick as the 19th century progressed, although
permits for frame dwellings were very common into the 1890s and were issued as late as

70 Archaeological Survey, 289.
72 “The Building of Houses: What Has Been Done during the Past Week – Improvements Contemplated,”
Washington Post, June 22, 1884, 8.
73 Borchert, 279.
74 Borchert, 277.
1916 in some Southwest neighborhoods. Dwellings were frequently built in short rows of detached units or in three to six adjoining units, typically two stories tall and 12 to 18 feet wide. Many of these developments were constructed as speculative ventures by designer-builders, some of whom lived in Southwest.

Historical photographs suggest that most working-class dwellings were vernacular, although they might incorporate elements of Italianate, Romanesque Revival, Queen Anne, Gothic Revival or other popular styles. Typical examples had flat facades, flat roofs, and ornamental cornices of dentilled wood, fretted sheet metal, or decorative courses of brick. Frame houses typically had rectangular window apertures, while brick houses often had arched window openings decorated with hoods or “eyebrow courses” of patterned brick.

Other than the “philanthropic housing” (or “limited-return”) projects to be discussed, only 18 surviving examples of working-class dwellings have been identified in Southwest. Constructed between 1892 and 1916, they include the Samuel Howison House at 69 Q, the Joseph Newton House at 1542 1st Street, the six Coleman & Richards houses at 1307 through 1317 South Capitol, the three William Schlorb houses from 1400 through 1404 1st, and the seven houses built by Joseph Banes from 4 through 10 N streets. The Banes houses are Southwest’s oldest

Many permits were issued for frame dwellings in the area east of 3rd Street in the 1880s and 1890s. William Mooney-constructed houses at 69 Q and 1542 1st streets from 1906, and the permits for the Barnes houses in the unit block of N Street in 1916 are later examples.
surviving dwellings constructed for African-American tenants. (Typology Table A2.1 through A2.5)

The “Philanthropic Housing” movement sought to improve the lot of the working poor by constructing “sanitary housing” that provided running water, indoor plumbing, adequate ventilation, and relief from the crowded living conditions endemic to lower-income housing. The interrelated Washington Sanitary Improvement Company (WSIC) and

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Washington Sanitary Housing Company constructed more than 1,000 such units designed by distinguished Washington architect Appleton Clark before passing out of existence just before World War II. Built on city streets rather than in alleys, Washington’s sanitary housing consisted of standardized duplexes of concrete block with brick veneer and contained apartments ranging from three to five rooms, including baths. By 1914, Sanitary Housing duplexes filled the 1200 block and most of the 1400 blocks of Carrollsburg Place, Half Street, and South Capitol Street, as well as the unit blocks of M and N streets. A final wave of construction in 1931 fully built out these southernmost blocks. (Typology Table A3.1)

Middle- and upper-class dwellings of the period were of larger scale, often three stories in height, and of greater width. Typically brick, they had enough architectural embellishments to be recognizably representative of a popular style, such as Italianate, Romanesque Revival, Eastlake, Queen Anne, or Gothic Revival, often combined with vernacular elements. Historical photographs reveal that Southwest once had numerous architecturally sophisticated detached brick houses with protruding bays, turrets, and mansard roofs. The James Dent House at 156 Q Street is the only identified surviving example of such dwellings from this period. (Typology Table A4.1)

Although early dwellings may have been shared by multiple households, apartment buildings came later to Southwest than to the more populous quadrants. The Portland Flats on Thomas Circle NW, considered the city’s first true apartment building, was built in 1880. The earliest permit for apartments in Southwest was issued to Appleton Clark in 1897 for a three-flat building on Maryland Avenue near the foot of Capitol Hill. Most of Southwest’s older apartment buildings were small structures, typified by the two-story, four-flat building at 922 4½ Street, designed by pioneering African-American architect

77 Hannold, 30-31.
William Sidney Pittman in 1910. Until the urban renewal era after World War II, Southwest’s apartment buildings remained small, even as numerous buildings of five to six stories and as many as a hundred units appeared in fashionable areas of Northwest. No multi-unit buildings from this period exist.

Figure 24. James Dent House. Peter Sefton

Significance.

The dwellings of this sub-period represent a significant property type in historic Southwest’s residential evolution. Their architectural forms and patterns of development reflect many of period themes, including the rapid development of alley housing, the post-Civil War growth of the African-American population, and the effects of increasing municipal and congressional regulation regarding the implementation of building codes and restrictions on alley housing after 1892. Although fire codes were enforced on a delayed basis in much of historic Southwest, brick construction increasingly supplanted first-generation frame structures, lending an air of permanence to the developing neighborhood.

Dwellings followed common building forms and styles of the period found elsewhere in the city. However, unlike other residential neighborhoods that supported long rows of residential construction, in Southwest dwellings tended to be built singly, or as pairs, or small groups of three. This trend, which characterizes all of the surviving non-philanthropic units from the period, is attributable to the neighborhood’s density, as, by the late 19th century only infill lots remained in many areas of the quadrant, and also because dwellings were constructed by local entrepreneurs and builders whose resources limited them to working on a small scale. The Sanitary Housing developments of this period are an important exception to these trends, both in scale and as an early instance of social reform through housing in Washington.

Registration Requirements.

Dwellings of the sub-period in historic Southwest may be eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and C. The James Dent House, for example, has been listed on the DC Inventory under Criterion C for its association with the theme of community
improvement organizations. Dwellings could potentially be eligible for listing under Criterion B, although there are no known examples of “persons significant to our past” among the residents of the surviving houses. The Sanitary Houses may also be eligible under Criterion C as important works by Appleton Clark, a master architect with buildings listed on the DC Inventory and National Register. Buildings nominated under A or B need not retain as high a degree of integrity as those nominated under Criterion C, although they must retain their original mass and scale.

- **Sub-period: Boom, Bust, and Re-boom, 1919-45**

Washington’s population grew slowly during the 1920s and more rapidly during the 1930s, as expanding government spending under the New Deal and the pre-World War II buildup insulated the region from the worst effects of the Great Depression. However, building activity still declined during the early 1930s. When it revived before the war, the newer moderne and international, as well as the enduring Colonial Revival styles predominated for row houses and apartment buildings, which became more common. A new form of multi-unit structure that appeared near the end of the period was the government-constructed public housing project.

All known surviving dwellings in Southwest from this period are working-class housing, and there is little evidence to suggest that much middle- or upper middle-class housing was built in the quadrant during the period.

Figure 25. Duplex row houses, 110-18 P Street, by George Santmyers. Peter Sefton

During the 1930s and early 40s Southwest experienced a rapid wave of duplex-dwelling and small apartment-house construction that centered in the area between P and Q streets, east of the Army War College, which would be renamed Fort McNair after World War II. Much of this housing seems to have been created in response to the demand for housing at the nearby Navy facilities on either side of the Anacostia which accompanied the buildup to World War II. These buildings
represent the work of such prominent Washington architects as Alvin Aubinoe, Joseph Abel, and J. Warren Wilson. Most were the work of one of Washington’s most prolific and protean designers, George Santmyers, who designed everything from theatres to major apartment commissions to high-end residences.

Santmyers designed numerous residential buildings in all areas of the city, but between 1938 and 1941 developers including C.H. Marshall and the Potomac Land Company erected dozens of his duplex houses and small apartment buildings south of M Street. The duplex row houses designed by Santmyers and erected at 110-118 P Street represent the architectural elements of this phase of the quadrant’s development. (Typology Table A5.1)

From 1937 to 1939, the Washington Sanitary Housing Company built its final projects in Southwest: five 2-story apartment buildings in Square
655 and three 3-story buildings on the opposite side of O Street. Constructed for white tenants, this complex was joined by a development of four 3-story buildings for African-American tenants in the unit blocks of O and P streets. (Typology Table A5.2 through A5.4)

Figure 2. James Creek Dwellings. Peter Sefton

Public housing first appeared in Southwest in 1937, when the Alley Dwelling Authority erected a 16-unit apartment building at 423 K Street. Designed by Homer Smith, it was demolished 20 years later during urban renewal. The quadrant’s first large-scale public housing construction came five years later, when the Alley Dwelling Authority erected the 278-unit James Creek Dwellings in Squares 650 and 652. (Typology Table A5.5) The Alley Dwelling Authority also built 146 temporary units as the Syphax Homes, which were demolished in the late 1950s to clear the site for the Syphax Gardens public housing project.

Significance.

Dwellings of this sub-period represent a significant property type in historic Southwest’s residential evolution. Their architectural forms and patterns of development reflect many period themes, including improved working class housing, the growth of industry along the South Capitol Street corridor and Anacostia River, and increasing activity at the nearby Washington Navy Yard and Army War College during the pre-World War II buildup.
Figure 29. Sanitary housing apartments: Tel Court. Peter Sefton

Dwellings of the sub-period followed building forms and styles found elsewhere in the city. However, they represent an evolution from the pattern of the earlier sub-period in that they frequently were constructed in longer rows, some of which mingle small-scale garden-style apartment buildings with duplex and single row houses. This change represents the involvement of larger-scale builders and developers, many of whom had a citywide base of operations.

The Sanitary housing apartment developments of this period represent an important transition in the scope of housing reform from individual to multi-unit buildings. The James Creek Dwellings are an early example of public housing which also reflects its growth in scale toward multi-unit buildings.

Registration Requirements.

Dwellings in historic Southwest of the sub-period may be eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and C. They could potentially be eligible for listing under Criterion B, although there are no known examples of “persons significant to our past” among their residents. Although the examples in historic Southwest do not appear dissimilar to those in other areas of the city, Criterion C may additionally apply to the buildings which are exceptional examples of designs by such notable Washington architects as Abel, Aubinoe, or Santmyers. Buildings nominated under A or B need not retain as high a degree of integrity as those nominated under Criterion C, although they must retain their original mass and scale.