

A HISTORY OF  
609 CONSTITUTION AVENUE, NORTHEAST

or,  
Lot 15 of Square 867  
in the  
City of Washington  
District of Columbia

PAUL CROMWELL

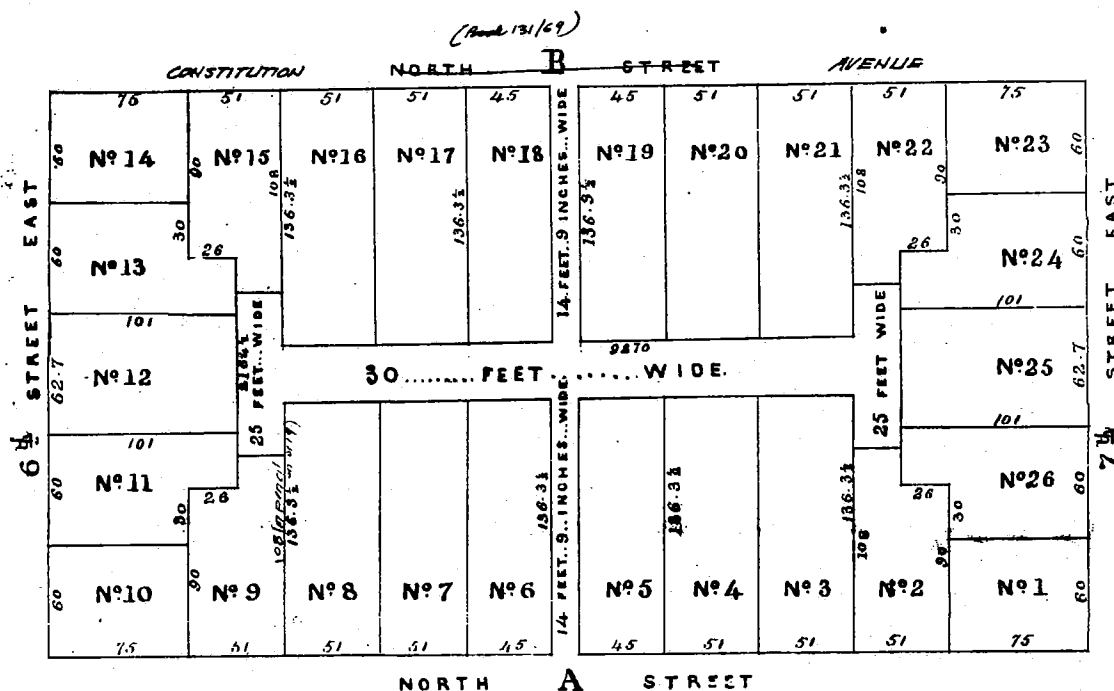
609 Constitution Ave. N.E.  
Washington, D.C.

The late Federal style brick house at 609 Constitution Avenue N.E. was constructed as a combined commercial/residential building in 1859 on the eastern portion of Lot 15 in Square 867, now listed as Lot 118 in Square 867. During the Civil War the house was used as a residence and saloon, perhaps also serving as a stagecoach stop on the route to Bladensburg along Maryland Avenue. The house is three bays in width and two rooms deep with two floors, an unfinished attic and a gable roof. This main block, as originally constructed, was approximately twenty-two feet wide and thirty feet deep. A back ell, probably part of the original construction, measured approximately seven feet in width and twenty feet in depth. A partial basement and one additional room in the rear on both floors have been added. The stables at the rear of the lot were constructed in the 1870s.

The following history, prepared by Paul Cromwell in 1987, traces the ownership of the property, the construction of the building, and its subsequent uses. When copies of related documents are provided, they are referenced in the text by citing a page number in brackets [X].

History of 609 Constitution Ave. N.E. ....	3
Description of the Improvements .....	12
Record of Land Transfers .....	15
Related Documents, beginning .....	19
Acknowledgements .....	44

At the request of the Commissioners appointed under the Act of Congress entitled "An act for establishing the temporary and permanent Seat of the Government of the United States" the following Square in the City of Washington was recorded the 10<sup>th</sup> day of October 1795—



Bounded on { The North by B Street north } five hundred and sixty feet, nine inches.  
 { The South by A Street north }  
 and on { The East by 7<sup>th</sup> Street East } three hundred and two feet seven inches.  
 { The West by 6<sup>th</sup> Street East }  
 As per return dated September 4<sup>th</sup> 1793.

The Commissioners and William Parit the original proprietor of this Square, number Eight Hundred and sixty seven in the City of Washington have agreed on the division thereof in manner following to wit. The Lots numbered six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen and eighteen are to remain to the said William Parit, and the Lots numbered one, two, three, four, five, nineteen, twenty, twenty one, twenty two, twenty three, twenty four, twenty five and twenty six are subject to be sold agreeably to the Deeds of Trust concerning the Lands in the said City - Witness our hands this eleventh day of September, (two thousand seven hundred and ninety five -

Witness

J. Johnson Jr.  
James R. Demott }

Just: Scott  
William Thomson } Commrs

William Parit

A HISTORY OF  
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WASHINGTON, D.C.

The house now designated as 609 Constitution Avenue Northeast is located in the northwestern corner of land originally patented by Walter Houp in 1686. This 500 acre tract, combined with the 154 acres of "Houp's Addition" of 154 acres, became known in later years as "the Hopyard."

Jonathan Slater purchased portions of the Hopyard from Henry Queen in 1764, Robert Buckanon in 1765 and Walter Queen in 1778, the last containing the land at 609 Constitution. Slater's land, a total of 226 acres, roughly resembled an elongated triangle with the point at Third and G Streets Northeast and the base along the M Street Southeast between Fourth and Twelfth. Slater's house was located near Eighth and M close to the only part of his property that lay on the water. The Slater household, according to the 1790 census, contained, in addition to Slater, four females and twenty-nine slaves.

When George Washington and the proprietors of the land that was to become the City of Washington reached an agreement to establish the City in 1791, Slater had signed a bond of conveyance to sell his land to his son-in-law, William Prout, the husband of his daughter Sarah. Prout was involved in the negotiations but Slater signed the agreement because the sale had not actually taken place. The agreement stipulated that certain land in the City would be "reserved" for the government and that streets would be established. The remainder, in the form of lots, was to be divided equally between the City and the original proprietors.

The streets formed squares, which were numbered and divided into numbered lots. Square 867 between Sixth and Seventh Streets east and B and C Streets north was divided between the City and Prout, with the latter receiving lots 6 through 18 [2]. The house at 609 Constitution is located on Lot 15. This part of Prout's land, more or less his "back forty", probably did not contain any houses or other structures at that time. The closest house was the "mansion" of George Walker (measuring 53 by 32 feet) which, together with log tenement houses and a graveyard, was located between Sixth and Seventh north of Maryland Avenue.

The grand plan for the development of Washington City envisioned a rapid influx of government and commercial interests, enabling the City Commissioners and the original proprietors to profit

from the sale of lots. However, the demand fell far short of expectations. Competition to attract scarce investors soon developed between two areas of the City. One group championed the west end, the land lying between the site of the President's mansion and Rock Creek. A second group believed that the site of the new Congress building, together with the wharfage along the Eastern Branch, represented the best potential for development.

Given the transient nature of the Congress, perhaps the battle was lost before it was fairly joined. George Washington decided in 1796 that the executive offices would be built in the President's square, giving the west end an impetus that it was not to lose for almost one hundred years. Perhaps, too, the battle was between the old established landed aristocracy, who had traditionally conducted their business in Georgetown, and recent "immigrants" to the Potomac Basin, such as Robert Morris and Thomas Greenleaf.

By the turn of the century, a number of lots had been developed around the Capitol square, south along New Jersey Avenue, and east along the water to the Navy Yard. But, according to a letter from the Commissioners to the President, there were no houses in the northeast quadrant beyond Fourth Street and Maryland Avenue. (However, a map published by Latrobe in 1802 includes what may have been the Walker mansion.)

William Prout, the owner of Square 867, was a dry goods merchant who was prominent in the affairs of the City. He was a Federalist who was elected as a member of the first City Council in 1802. He lost his seat the following year but continued to participate in the affairs of the City, serving as an Alderman as late as 1820. Primarily a businessman, Prout was one of the five builders of the Eastern Branch Bridge (1817) and one of the five Commissioners for building City Hall (1822). Prout lived near Eighth and M in a house measuring 53 feet by 24 feet, perhaps the old Slater house. Prout listed his place of business in 1822 as the southwest corner of Eighth and L in Square 907. A frame house existed here in 1800 which may have been the Slater/Prout residence.

William Prout died intestate, his wife Sarah and a son Jonathan being appointed administrators of the estate (with a \$50,000 bond) on October 21, 1823. Eventually his real property was divided between his five children: Jonathan, William, Robert, Martha H. (Mrs. George B. McKnight) and Mary (Mrs. Henry Bradley). William (styled "William Prout the Younger") received approximately half of Square 867, including lot 15, which was assessed in 1826 at \$50. It had no improvements and by this time was most certainly employed for some agricultural purpose, whether for crops, grazing or a woodlot.

William Prout "the Younger" opened his own dry goods store at 9th Street and Pennsylvania Ave. N.W. while Jonathan took over his father's store and Robert became a clergyman. By 1834 William

had opened a second store: "Prout and Stetinius, Fancy Dry Goods" on Pennsylvania between 6th and 7th Streets west. While the northwest continued to grow during the 1830s, along with the area fronting the Anacostia, the Capitol Hill in general and the northeast in particular, remained largely undeveloped. Indeed, the City fathers seemed to be spending all of the improvement dollars in the west end. For example, for twenty years beginning in 1825, not one single foot of sidewalk was laid in area that had belonged to William Prout the Elder.

William the Younger neither sold nor developed any of the lots that he owned in Square 867 during the recession years of the 1830s. Taxes were not paid on these lots in 1841. Perhaps William had gone bankrupt. Alternately, he may have died, with his administrators failing to perform their duties. The City was patient, but when the tax bill reached a total of \$6.08 for four years, the lots were offered at auction by the City. Zachariah Hazel made a high bid of \$17.08 for the seven lots on December 13, 1845. The usual notices were posted and, when William Prout (or his heirs) failed to make payment, a Deed was awarded to Hazel on November 15, 1848. Hazel paid a total of \$21.14, including court costs and interest, an average of about \$3.00 per lot. Within a few months, Hazel bought lot 3 in square 784 (two blocks closer to the Capitol) for \$5.00. Despite these actual sales prices, Lot 15 was assessed at \$25 in 1851, having lost half its presumed value in a quarter century.

Zachariah Hazel (Hazle) was born in Maryland, possibly in St. Marys County, in 1771. Hazel ran a tavern on "2nd Street east between A and B north", being listed at this location as early as 1822. He also bought and sold a considerable number of properties on Capitol Hill, some of which were vacant and others which contained "improvements". Hazel continued to live on 2nd Street, even though by 1844 he no longer was registered in the City Directory as a tavern keeper. The houses where he lived on the east side of this block were known as "Hazel's Row" which, according to Dr. Samuel Busey, "were occupied by the most disorderly, drunken and debased group of men, women and children, white and colored, that ever afflicted any section of this city." Hazel described himself as a "laborer" in the census of 1850, but also noted that he owned land worth \$5,000. Was Hazel an early slum landlord in the City, or was he merely providing housing for some of his Maryland friends who were down on their luck?

Hazel's will was dated July 31, 1851 and was submitted for probate in the Orphan's Court on September 18 [19]. He left the west half of lot 16, square 867, and a number of household items to Harriet Ann Hazel. Harriet was ten at the time of the 1850 census and lived with Zachariah and several other people, including Zachariah's sister, but her relationship to the family is not known. He bequeathed various dollar amounts to a number of individuals to be paid out of his estate within two years of his death. Presumably, the time was to allow his executors to turn some of his real property into cash. The residue of his

estate was left to his four minor grandchildren, whose parents were Anna Maria (nee Hazel) and Horatio R. Maryman. The father was listed as executor, along with one other man (who refused to serve).

Horatio Maryman was a police official born in 1809 in Maryland and who, for many years, lived on the south side of Pennsylvania Avenue between 2nd and 3rd streets east. Maryman (Merriman, Marryman) owned four lots on Capital Hill, each with rental housing (including lot 19 in Square 867). As the sole executor of Zachariah Hazel's estate, Maryman was responsible for settling all claims against the estate, including the dispersal of funds listed in the will. When he failed to provide grandnephews John and Zachariah Hazel with \$50 each two years after Zachariah senior's death, they brought suit against Horatio and the four children (John, Richard, Almira and Zachariah) [20].

An attorney was appointed by the court to represent the children, but their involvement was effectively terminated when he submitted a document stating that they had no knowledge of the affair [21]. Horatio, however, did not respond to the suit, and the judge subsequently found for the plaintiffs [22]. When Horatio still did not provide the Hazels with their money the court ordered by decree nisi on November 30, 1855 that certain properties be sold at public auction in order to obtain funds to satisfy the claims. The decree was finalized after due public notice on December 14, 1857 [23] and William Woodard was appointed by the court as trustee in order to carry out the order.

Woodard placed an add in The National Intelligencer [24] announcing that several lots were to be sold on August 31, 1858. There were successful bidders for three lots, including lots 14 and 15, at approximately the same price per square foot [25]. However, the only successful bidder who subsequently met the terms and conditions of the sale was Caspar Wagner, who paid \$504 for lot 15 [24]. Had Maryman paid the claims of the Hazel brothers in 1853, the cost to the estate would have been \$100. Instead, the cost to the estate in 1858 was \$309, including interest and court costs [26]. However, the assessed value of lot 15 in 1851 was only \$25. Even assuming that the real value was twice the assessed value, the estate clearly benefitted by Maryman's intransigence.

(The practice of failing to act in an honorable fashion as a trustee seems to have been common: at the time of his death, Zachariah Hazel had been sued by Jane Carman for failing to honor the terms of the will of Winifred Hall who died in 1830. In addition, another suit had been brought against Maryman in 1852 for failing to comply with other parts of Zachariah's will.)

Caspar Wagner, the high bidder for lot 15, was a baker whose place of business and his residence were at 86 East Capitol (between third and fourth on the north side). Wagner apparently

retired in 1861 and moved to Philadelphia with his new wife Christianna, turning the business over to John C. Wagner. John continued to operate the bakery until 1863 when he moved his business to Centre Market where, by 1865, he had lost his business and was a mere huckster.

Caspar Wagner did not actually take possession of all of lot 15. At the time of closing on December 20, 1859 he sold the eastern portion (26 foot frontage) to Jacques Jouvenal for \$500. He retained the western portion (25 foot frontage) until February 2, 1865 when he sold it to Jouvenal for \$275. Perhaps during the intervening years he had rented the vacant land to Jouvenal.

Jacques Jouvenal described himself as a "marble carver" in 1858 when he lived on "8th east near A north". Jouvenal was born in Wurtemberg (south of Stuttgart) and listed his age in the 1860 census as 31. He had a wife, Mary, 31, from Wurtemberg, and two children, Emma, 6 and Rudolph, 2, who were born in the District. In order to acquire the property, Jacques and Mary received a loan of two thousand dollars from the Washington Savings Fund Association on July 9, 1859 [27]. We presume that Jouvenal and Wagner had reached an agreement and that Jouvenal felt sufficiently confident to begin construction of the house because Jouvenal listed his home address in the 1860 city directory as "B north 6th east". While there is no direct proof, the house must have been constructed between July of 1859 and the early months of 1860.

The two story brick house with gable roof measured approximately twenty feet by thirty feet. A rear extension containing the stairwell and, perhaps, a kitchen may have been included in the original design. The building was constructed without interior load-bearing walls and, while there were interior partitions on the second floor, the first floor may have been completely open. The second floor of the main block contained two large rooms and two small rooms which were undoubtedly used by the Jouvenals as their living quarters [12].

Jouvenal, as a journeyman marble carver during the 1850s, most probably had been employed in the construction of the Capitol. By 1859 he had established sufficient credit to borrow \$2,000, more money than he needed to buy the land and build the house. Perhaps he had intended to establish his own marble business with the extra \$500, but the Civil War soon intervened. Work on the Capitol was halted during the first year of the conflict and although it was restarted during the second year, Jouvenal had acquired a new trade.

Jouvenal's brother Peter owned the Eagle Restaurant on Fourteenth Street west between R and S north (subsequently 1809 14th Street N.W.). Jacques undoubtedly made use of his brother's experience when he opened a "lagerbeer saloon" in his residence in 1862. He advertised as being on "north B near 6th east" and "corner of B north and 6th east".

The preponderance of patrons for the saloon were undoubtedly Union troops who were bivouacked to the northeast toward the Benning Bridge, there being few other businesses or residences in the immediate area. Many of these troops may have been Pennsylvania Dutch for Jouvenal occasionally referred to himself as "Jacob" during 1863 and 1864. By 1863, perhaps at the insistence of the Union command, he had moved to improve his image by referring to his establishment as a "restaurant" rather than a "saloon". (It was illegal to serve liquor to Union troops.) The house also may have served as a stagecoach stop during this period.

In the meantime, Harriet Hazel, the heir to the western portion of lot 16, had married Anthony N. Trunnell, a pressman who lived on L Street N.W. On March 24, 1862 she sold the western twenty foot frontage of lot 16 to Luther B. Hinman for \$272, retaining a strip seven and one half feet wide in the middle of lot 16. (This strip was subsequently sold before 1869 to Almira - nee Maryman? - McDonald, who had acquired the eastern portion of lot 16). Hinman sold the western portion of lot 16 to Jouvenal on October 19, 1863 for \$238.40 [30].

However, despite the fact that, as previously noted, Jouvenal had purchased the remainder of lot 15 from Caspar Wagner in February of 1865, he did not have a clear title to the land. H.R. Maryman had not paid the taxes of \$1.13 for 1857. The Corporation of Washington had published a notice concerning the delinquent taxes in a local newspaper. When the taxes were not paid, the lot was offered at auction on May 25, 1858. Frederic Heider, a butterdealer, was the high bidder for \$4.27. After paying expenses and interest of \$2.47, Heider received a deed for lot 15 on July 10, 1860, one day after Jouvenal had received his loan but a full five months before he and Wagner had, presumably, taken title. Heider paid taxes on the property from 1861 through 1864. On March 22, 1865 Jouvenal paid Heider \$165.97 for a Quit claim deed to lot 15.

Thus, by the spring of 1865 Jouvenal had acquired all of lot 15 and the western twenty feet of lot 16. Jouvenal continued to operate his saloon until at least the early part of 1866. Perhaps the restaurant business was no longer profitable after the troops were sent home, or more likely, Jouvenal wanted to return to working with marble. By 1867 he had established a marble business in the 100 block of F Street N.W. on property rented from John R. Widmeyer. In addition, he had moved his household to another Widmeyer building nearby. Jouvenal may have continued to provide materials for the construction of Federal buildings, but his main thrust seems to have been in tombstones and other monuments. He subsequently moved his business to 941 D Street N.W., where he was photographed with his staff about 1875 [31]. Future years brought him a number of commissions, including the statue of Benjamin Franklin which was located at Tenth and Pennsylvania Northwest.

Jouvenal sold his property on B Street to John Widmeyer for \$3,000 on May 4, 1868, at least a year after moving his family from Capitol Hill to northwest. In actuality, Jouvenal and Widmeyer probably agreed to the sale in 1866, with Widmeyer advancing at least part of the money that Jouvenal needed to establish his marble business.

Widmeyer was a butcher who had been born in Germany, probably, as Jouvenal, in Wurtemberg. He had shops in both the Centre Market and the Northern Liberties Market. Butchers with sufficient capital could do well during the War years. Widmeyer not only made loans with his money (once to Peter and Susan Jouvenal), but also bought property. During the war years the Widmeyers lived on 25th street near K west but by 1870 they had accumulated sufficient funds to purchase a sizeable estate on the "Seventh Street Road just beyond the first tollgate" (on the east side of Georgia Avenue facing Fairmont Street, now part of Howard University).

The property in Square 867 did not have a street number until the new numbering system went into effect in 1870 when it became 609 B Northeast. The house was used as rental property for the next 45 years. However, it was not used as a restaurant following Jouvenal's departure and may not have been used for any other commercial purpose. Perhaps Widmeyer remodeled the house, making the first floor into a typical side hall plan with "shotgun" stairs. The value of the property increased from \$1,200 in 1870 to \$1,300 in 1871. By 1874 the value of the house had dropped to \$1,200 but by 1878 it had increased to \$1,800, of which \$300 represented the value of the stables. The outline of both the house and the stables are shown in the Hopkins map of 1887 [32].

Widmeyer's life came to a very sudden end on September 4, 1872. According to articles in the Washington Star, the City Council had authorized the Board of Public Works to remove the Northern Liberties Market from its location at New York and Massachusetts Avenues. Opposition was instantaneous and a petition to halt demolition was quickly circulated on Saturday and Monday, September 2. The Vice President of the Board, Alexander (later known as "Boss") Shepherd ordered the Market destroyed immediately. Two hundred men commenced the work at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday without notifying the merchants. On Wednesday several of these merchants, including Widmeyer, attempted to remove their equipment in the midst of the demolition activities. Between one and two o'clock in the afternoon workmen, in bringing down a brick wall, allowed it to fall backward rather than forward as planned. The bricks completely crushed Widmeyer and also killed a fifteen year old boy who had been hunting rats with his dog. A Court of Inquiry found the City to have been derelict in its precipitous actions. At least one vendor subsequently brought suit against the City in order to recover the cost of private property destroyed during the demolition. Widmeyer did not leave a will, but his wife, Rosina, took over the management of his real estate property.

Anna Rosina Widmeyer was born in 1830, moved to the District in 1852 and married John in November, 1856. At the time of the 1870 census, the Widmeyers had six children: John, the oldest at thirteen, William, Catharine, Mary, Charles and Rosa. Mrs. Widmeyer was able to retain all of the property. Perhaps the City provided compensation in addition to the income that she derived from the various rental properties. By the end of the century, Mrs. Widmeyer and several of her children occupied at least three of the properties. However, the estate on the Seventh Street Road and the brick house at 609 B were both rental properties.

Unfortunately, John Widmeyer's legacy came apart in 1900. Ellen Widmeyer, the wife of son John, sued Anna and the other children for her share of the properties, then worth an estimated value of \$125,000, and her share of the income derived during the years since the death of her father-in-law. She was "joined in the suit by her husband" who must have been mentally incompetent or very reluctant to sue his relatives. The result of Equity Cause 21410 was that John Widmeyer's real property was to be sold at auction and the proceeds divided between the six children (Rosa, having died, being represented in the suit by her three children). However, none of the income was awarded to Ellen, the argument being made that she had neither shared in the expenses of managing the properties nor made any previous claim for the income.

Michael J. Colburt and Leon Tobriner were appointed as trustees to conduct the sales and they inserted an auction notice in the Evening Star on November 3, 1900. The children were successful in their bids for the houses at 101, 103 and 105 F Street N.W. However, the sale of the western portion of lot 16 collapsed when the title company discovered that the deed was based on a tax sale in 1848 [33]. In order to perfect the title to lot 16, and also to lot 15, the Widmeyers sued the "unknown heirs of William Prout the Younger" in Equity Cause 24213. Several of the heirs subsequently were discovered: Daniel F. Prout in Demopolis, Alabama, William D. and Mary C. Prout, both of Rockville, Maryland and Julia P. Vinson, "exact descent unknown". When the Prout heirs failed to respond to the suit, the title, a following due public notice [35] was judged perfected by order of the court in 1904.

The sale of the Widmeyer property on the was delayed for unknown reasons but eventually brought \$34,000 in 1909. The Widmeyers (Anna dying in 1910) continued to collect rent on the B Street property: in 1914 it had been rented to William J. Toy, an ironworker, for \$20.40 per month [36]. Toy took in borders in order to partially defray the costs.

Colbert and Tobriner finally advertised lot 15 for auction on July 28, 1915 [37]. A neighbor, Filippo di Bella, and his partner, Letterio Ciatto, were the high bidders at \$3,700. This represented the final dispersal of John Widmeyer's estate [38].

The house was vacant in 1916 and may have been undergoing restoration or remodeling. Perhaps one of the partners used it as a residence. Eventually, however, Di Bella and Ciatto asked the surveyor's office to create a subdivision. The eastern 21.75 feet of lot 15, with the house and sixty percent of the garage, was separated from the western portion [39] and redesignated as lot 118 [40]. This was sold to another neighbor, Francis (Katie) Boss, on January 21, 1920. Many of the original lots belonging to Zachariah Hazel had now been built upon and subdivided, although not all had received new lot designations [41].

Katie Boss and her husband, Charles F., a clerk with the post office department, lived in the house until Katie (presumably) died in the mid-1930s. Charles F. Boss, Jr. inherited the property but immediately sold it to his father, who lived there until about 1940. He then moved to his son's house in northwest and the house was rented to Buford Jones, a carpenter, and his wife Lettie in 1941. Anna Pararas inherited the property in 1944 but immediately sold it to Annie Boss Smith. She, in turn, sold it to Earl J. Watkins on January 22, 1947.

Ciatto and DiBella constructed two houses of equal value on the western 29.26 feet of lot 15 [42], subdividing the property, including the remaining ten feet of the stable, on November 1, 1922 [43]. The house at 607 B Street was sold to Vera Comorow on November 23, 1922. The Di Bella family apparently retained the house at 605 because it was not resold until December 12, 1947 when Frances Di Bella "life tenant devisee under the will of Filippo Di Bella", sold 607 B to Paul Mandolia.

The houses at 605 and 607 were assessed, together, at \$2,300 in 1921 and \$1,700 each in 1923, the increase being attributable to a change in the valuation procedure rather than any improvements. Comparable figures for 609 were \$1,700 and \$2,500. The three houses on lot 15 acquired their current addresses when B Street Northeast was changed to Constitution Avenue in 1950s.

Additional material concerning the house and its occupants may be found in the future. Perhaps a brief biography has been prepared about Jacques Jouvenal that would shed some light on his life during the Civil War. There may have been articles published by the local newspapers of the day concerning activities at the restaurant. If problems occurred, there may be mention of Jouvenal's establishment in the records of the military district of Washington. And what of the house during the last quarter of the nineteenth century? Limited research in city directories produced no evidence of commercial use of the property following its acquisition by the Widmeyers. These are but a few of the possibilities for further research on the history of 609 Constitution Avenue Northeast.

## IMPROVEMENTS TO LOT 15 SQUARE 867

The house at 609 Constitution Avenue N.E. was built with its front facade on the north line of lot 15 and one of its sides on the east line of lot 15. At the time of construction, Jouvenal owned only the eastern 26 feet of lot 15. The house occupies 21.75 feet of the 26 foot frontage, leaving, originally, a five and one half foot passage on the west side of the house.

There is no direct proof yet discovered that the house was constructed by Jouvenal in the fall and winter of 1859-60. However, that seems to be the only logical period for construction. The tax assessment in 1851 to Hazel and in 1854 to Maryman in trust show no improvements on lot 15. The tax books containing the Ms are missing for 1855 through 1858. The adds placed in the National Intelligencer in the summer of 1858 [X] do not mention any improvements (but this may not be conclusive since improvements are not identified for any of the properties listed).

It is conceivable that an improvement was begun between 1852 and 1855 but this does not seem logical since one would assume that Maryman would have responded to the suit of the Hazel brothers if he had invested in improvements. From 1855 until August 31, 1858 the lot was under the total jurisdiction of William Woodard, acting on behalf of the court. It seems highly unlikely that the trustee would have authorized improvements.

Caspar Wagner was the successful bidder on August 31, 1858. Even though Wagner did not receive actual title to the property until December, 1859, he may have undertaken the construction of the house, perhaps partially completing it before selling it to Jouvenal. Indeed, there is some indication that this is the case: Wagner paid \$504 for all of lot 15 and then sold half of the lot to Jouvenal for \$500, more or less at the same time.

Jouvenal had taken out a loan of \$2,000 on July 9, 1859 using lot 15 as security. The loan required that he carry \$1,000 worth of fire insurance, indicating that an improvement had been made or would be made. Perhaps Wagner started construction in the Spring of 1859 and then decided to sell the unfinished building to Jouvenal, who finished the work in the fall of 1859.

It does seem rather unlikely that Wagner intended to build a bakery outlet at this location because of the total lack of development to the north and east. On the other hand, perhaps he intended to do his baking here, but sell his product at Centre Market.

The earliest historic description of the house yet found is the Hopkins Map of 1887 [32]. At that time the improvements consisted of the main block, an ell on the rear on the west line of the house, and stables at the rear of the property. This map

identify necessities and other small outbuildings.

The main block of the house, 21.75 feet wide by 30 feet deep, was constructed as a unit. Massive "summer beams", connected to the side brick walls with wrought iron hangers, are used to support each of the floors. Two are under the first floor, one (reportedly) under the second across the middle of the house, one under the attic floor and two under the roof. The placement of two of these beams under the first floor indicates that the original plan envisioned a completely open first floor to be used for commercial purposes. It seems reasonable to assume that Jouvenal had planned to conduct a marble business here since the population of the area would not have supported a saloon in 1859.

The second floor appears to have been a typical side hall plan with two major rooms and at least one minor room, based on the original risers for the second floor walls which protrude above the attic floor joists. Each major room contained its own fireplace. There are six interior doors remaining in the house that date from the time of construction and may be original to the house.

The location of the original staircase is problematic. The current staircase is a typical shotgun stairway leading from the front doorway. The newel post and banister appear to date from the 1870s although they may have been added during the 1918 remodeling. However, if the first floor was designed for commercial use, the stairway probably was located in the rear. The rear ell, measuring twenty feet deep and about seven feet wide, may have contained a stairway ascending from south to north with a small kitchen on the first floor and a servant's room above.

A basement currently exists under the rear portion of the house with crawl space under the front portion. The summer beam under the front portion is now supported by stone posts which conceivably were carved by Jouvenal during his ownership. Could they have been placed there during the Civil War, or are they the efforts of later renovations to turn the first floor into its current side hall plan? The basement probably was excavated during one of the periods of renovation in order to provide the house with a central heating system. While early hot air furnaces did exist by 1870, the basement appears to have been constructed by Di Bella and Ciatto in 1918.

The house as originally constructed may have had a covered front stoop but the one floor porch now extends the width of the front of the house most likely was added at least a decade after construction. Some evidence remains of wood trim around the front door which may or may not have been original. There also is the possibility that the front door of the house originally was located in the west rather than north facade, but the brickwork around the door opening gives no indication that it was a later addition.

The stables are listed in the 1878 tax assessment but not in the 1873/74 tax assessment. One might reasonably conclude that the stables were constructed about 1875. However, John Widmeyer died in 1872 and it is doubtful that his widow would have embarked upon a significant capital improvement. Therefore, it is possible that the stables were constructed between 1868, when Widmeyer acquired the property, and his death in 1872.

A house constructed in this area of the City in 1859 would have had a separate necessary (out-house) since sewage connections were not available for another twenty to thirty years. Kitchens by this time generally were attached to the rear of the house rather than being a separate building. If the kitchen was not located in the ell, it may have been attached to the southeast corner of the ell. However, no evidence of a necessary or a kitchen was found during a 1985 remodelling that added a second room on the rear of the house and included the installation of a patio and pool in the backyard.

Building permits were not required by the District of Columbia until 1877. A further search of the permit files may produce additional evidence concerning remodeling efforts. (The microfilm records pertaining to permits contain a number of misfiled entries. For example, a permit issued for the construction of a porch in 1892 for 619 B is listed as 609 B.)

Records of Land Transfers  
for  
Parts of Square 867

The following list traces the changes in ownership of of the land occupied by 609 Constitution Avenue Northeast from the establishment of the City of Washington in 1791 until 1947. The citations, where provided, are from the Office of the Recorder of Deeds in the District of Columbia. Most of the older deeds were copied under the direction of the Works Progress Administration. The Liber and original Folio (page number) is provided. If the Liber was recopied the new page number is provided in parentheses ( ).

\* \* \* \* \* Square 867

3/11/1791: James Slater to (son-in-law) William Prout, part of the Hopyard - a bond of conveyance.

9/ 4/1793: District Commissioners divide land, Lots 6 through 18 in Square 867 to William Prout.

9/11/1799: Joesph and David Slater to William Prout.

\* \* \* \* \* Square 867, lots 12-18

/ /1823: Death of William Prout. William Prout the Younger receives lots 12 - 18 in Square 867.

11/15/1848: Corporation Council to Zachariah Hazel - lots 12 - 18 (land seized for unpaid taxes, 1841, 1842, 1843, 1844 total \$6.08). Auctioned 12/13/1845 for \$17.08 plus expenses amounting to \$13.32. Liber JAS 4 at Folio 28.

1/ 2/1852: Note examined and delievered to H.R. Maryman, acting as trustee for estate of Zachariah Hazel (will probated 9/18/1851).

\* \* \* \* \* Square 867, lot 15

11/30/1855: Court ordered lot 15 sold to cover undelivered monetary inheirittance.

12/14/1857: Final decree issued by court.

8/31/1858: Public auction.

9/ 7/1859: Jacques and Mary Jouvenal borrow \$2,000 from Washington Savings Fund Corporation. Deed of trust requires improvements to be insured for "ten hundred dollars". Liber JAS 184 at Folio 475 (365). Presumably, Jouvenal had made an agreement with Wagner.

12/20/1859: William R. Woodard, trustee, to Caspar Wagner for \$504. Liber JAS 193 at Folio 35 (27 new) (delivered 6/3/1864).

12/20/1859: Caspar and Jane Wagner to Jacques Jouvenal, including "buildings and improvements" for \$500. Liber JAS 193 at Folio 57 (47).

7/10/1860: Corporation of Washington to Frederick Heider. Liber JAS 202 at Folio 50 (51-53). Sold for unpaid taxes, 1857.

2/23/1865: Caspar and Christianna Wagner (of Philadelphia) to Jacques Jouvenal west portion of lot 15 for \$275. Liber NCT 55 at Folio 16.

3/22/1865: Fred and Mary Heider to Jacques Jouvenal. Quit-claim deed for \$165.97. Liber NCT 55 at Folio (212).

\* \* \* \* \* Square 867, western 20 feet of lot 16

9/18/1851: Zachariah Hazel will probated in Orphan's Court. This portion to Harriet Ann Hazel, relationship not stated.

4/24/1862: Anthony N. Trunnell and wife (nee Harriet Ann Hazel) to Luther B. Hinman for \$272. Liber NCT 1 at Folio 394.

10/19/1863: Luther Hinman to Jacob Jouvenal for \$238.40. Iber NCT 18 at Folio 463 (261).

\* \* \* \* \* Square 867, lot 15 and western 20 feet of lot 16:

5/ 4/1868: Jacob Jouvenal and wife Mary to John Widmeyer for \$3,000. Liber 558 at Folio 178.

5/25/1904: Anna R. Widmeyer et al v. William D. Prout et al, Equity Cause 24213 Supreme Court (of D.C.). Liber

2823 at Folio 25.

9/13/1915: Colbert and Tobriner, trustees, to Filippo Di Bella.  
(lot 15). Liber 3823 at Folio 88

\* \* \* \* \* Square 867, eastern 26 feet of lot 15:

1/21/1920: Fillippo Di Bello to Katie Boss. Liber 4318 at Folio  
188.

/ /19 : Death of Katie Boss? Son inheirits?

8/ 4/1936: Charles F. Boss Jr. to Charles F. Boss Sr. Liber  
7018 at Folio 165 (?).

5/20/1943: Charles F. Boss to Willard J. Smith et ux. Liber  
7857 at Folio 592

3/30/1944: Willard J. Smith et ux. to Anna Pararas. Liber 7954  
at Folio 74.

3/30/1944: Anna Pararas to Annie Boss Smith. Liber 7954 at  
Folio 75.

1/22/1947: Annie Boss Smith to Earl J. Watkins (Lot 118 in  
Ciatto and Di Bella's subdivision). Liber 8408 at  
Folio 278.

## RELATED DOCUMENTS

	page
Will of Zacharia Hazel.....	19
Complaint of John Hazel.....	20
Request for Guardian.....	21
Court decree - Hazel v. Maryman.....	22
Court Order - Hazel v. Maryman.....	23
Advertisements, lot 15.....	24
Interim Report of Trustee.....	25
Final Report of Trustee.....	26
Indenture, Jouvenals.....	27
Lot 16, Square 867.....	30
Photograph, Jouvenal.....	31
Map, Hopkins, 1887 - Squares 865, 866, 867.....	32
Widmeyer v. Widmeyer.....	33
Widmeyers v. Prouts.....	35
Rental Income.....	36
Sale of Lot 15.....	37
Final Report of Trustees.....	38
Working Drawing, First division of Lot 15.....	39
Establishment of Lot 118.....	40
Working Drawing, Square 867, North Part.....	41
Working Drawing, Second Division of Lot 15.....	42
Establishment of Lots 119 and 120.....	43

### Acknowledgements

This history was prepared from material found in the National Archives, the Library of Congress, the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, the Surveyor's Office, the Registrar of Deeds, the Martin Luther King Library and the Columbia Historical Society. The sizes and locations of the Slater and Walker residences are taken from Dr. Samuel C. Busey's Pictures of the City of Washington in the Past (W. Ballantyne and Sons, 1898), while the quotation from Busey is from his Personal Reminiscences, as cited in Mrs. Mapheus Smith's Places and Persons on Capitol Hill, 1960. The photograph of Jouvenal belongs to the Columbia Historical Society but a copy is reproduced in Robert Reed's Old Washington in Early Photographs, 1846-1932 (Dover Publications, 1980).