

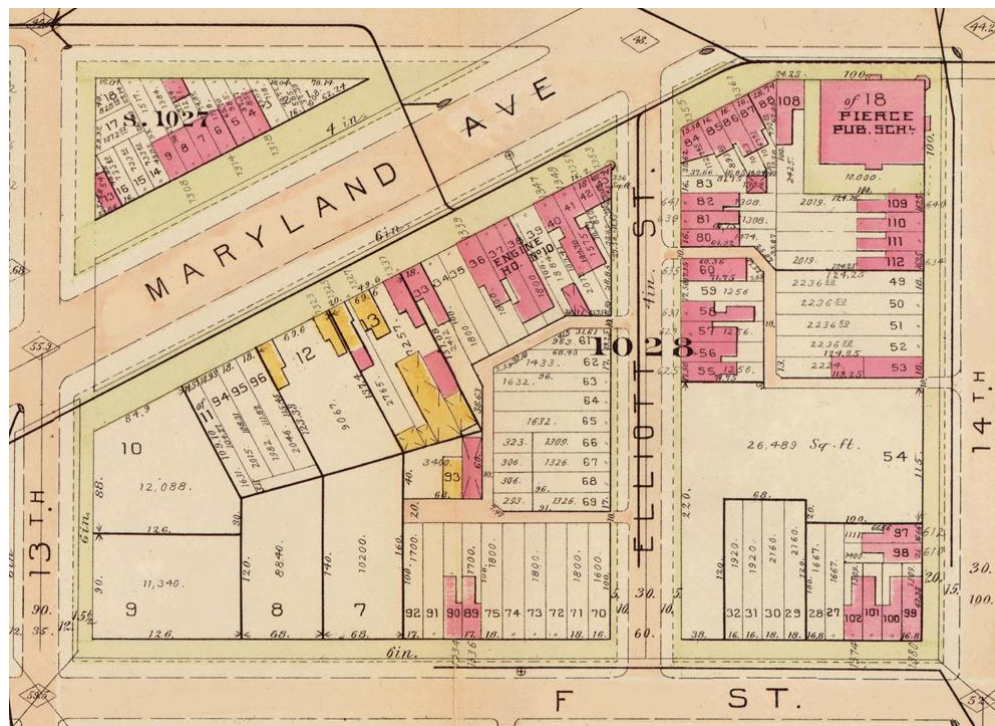
Elliott Street, NE: An Early History in Three Parts

by Donna Hanousek

CHRS is pleased to present a three-part profile of Elliott Street, NE as part of our [Beyond the Boundaries](#) initiative. CHRS featured three houses on Elliott Street in its [2008 House & Garden Tour](#) and conducted a mini-walking tour of the street.

- [Part One: buildings and the architecture of Elliott Street](#)
- [Part Two: builders and architects](#)
- [Part Three: demographics — ethnicity, occupations and some early residents](#)

Elliott Street was platted in 1889, following the tremendous growth that occurred in the northeast area of Capitol Hill during the 1880s. The east side of the street was fully subdivided in 1889, with the earliest buildings constructed in 1892 (637 and 639) and the rest of that side of the street completely built out by 1910. The west side was initially only partially subdivided, with what appeared to be one side-by-side duplex erected in 1908 on the northern end of the block (640) and two small apartment buildings constructed on the southern end of the block (608-610), with the bulk of the initial build-out consisting of two apartment buildings that were constructed in the 1920s mid-block on the east side of the street.



The 1903 Baist Real Estate Atlas (above) shows the north east side of Elliott Street developed first. (Library of Congress)



The oldest buildings on Elliott Street – 637 and 639 – date to 1892.

Part One: The Buildings/Architecture of Elliott St.

This one-block long street is a microcosm of Capitol Hill residential architecture, offering nineteenth and twentieth century rowhouses and a variety of stylistic details, as well as a range of apartment building types.

The Washington Rowhouse, 1880s-1915

The most popular house type in the 1880s and 1890s was the asymmetrical rowhouse with a full height projecting bay and typically built on a raised basement with a cast iron staircase. The bays could be round or polygonal, but most often were square or canted. The buildings were constructed of sharp-edged machine-made red brick set with very fine mortar joints and often had brick decoration.

Style: Victorian (Queen Anne*), 1880s-1890s

Highly decorative with a vertical orientation: multiple textures and materials, brick belt courses, varied window patterns, lively roof lines (including gables and bay caps), large corbelled cornices, segmental arches, chamfered corners on the bays, patterns in wood window surrounds and trims, and towers and turrets. Examples: 637 and 641 Elliott Street exhibit several Queen Anne details. [*There are several styles of architecture considered part of the Victorian, such as Italian (bracketed), Eastlake (stick style), Richardsonian Romanesque (rusticated stone), and Second Empire (mansard roofs).]

Style: Early 20th Century (Renaissance Revival and very late Italian), 1895-1915

Minimally decorative, with classically-derived details: massive but simple wood cornices with dentils, rather than elaborate corbelled brick cornices (Queen Anne) at the roofline; smooth wall surfaces without

decorative brick patterns; rusticated or plain lintels; and rounded or canted bays with rounded corners. Examples: 607-611, 619-623, and 630 Elliott are prime examples of this popular Capitol Hill style. It was common to mix up style elements, and there was often a transitioning between styles, so you might have Queen Anne molded brick and corbelled cornice along with Renaissance Revival rusticated or plain lintels. There was often transitioning between styles. Examples: 625, 627, and 633 Elliott Street exhibit a mix of style elements.

Apartment Buildings, early 1900s-post WWI Apartment buildings did not appear in the northeast until the turn of the 20th century. Early apartments were designed to look like houses to overcome negative images of crowded tenements. The one at 635 Elliott Street is a good example. Built in 1902 as an apartment building, this three-story, bay front rowhouse reads as a stately single-family residence. Another example of an apartment that reads like a house is 630 Elliott, which contained four apartments but reads as side-by-side row houses. Apartment buildings gradually got larger and became styled so as to be identified as apartments, but still remained small enough to fit comfortably within the streetscape. The apartments at 614 and 624 Elliott illustrate this very well. They are larger buildings, larger than a side-by-side duplex would be and, in the case of 614, there is only one entrance door. Yet they are both only two stories tall and contain some modest decoration, making them compatible with the rowhouses across the street.

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Take Your Own Elliott Street Walking Tour

Use the notes below to enhance your stroll down the street.

Not in DC? You can still take a stroll down Elliott Street thanks to the wonders of Google. Simply go to <http://maps.google.com/> then type "Elliott Street DC" in the search box. Click on "Street View" under the thumbnail image in the pop-up window. You will see a photo similar to the one above. Now for the amazing part: you can "stroll" down the street and look around 360 degrees. A handy window pops up telling you which house number you are in front of. Wow!

641 (1895): While not the oldest house, specific Queen Anne details: belt course, corbelled cornice, and segmental arch with molded brick decorative knobs. The square bay and raised first floor with cast iron stairs are Victorian features, as is the molded mullion between the windows, which has an Italianate appearance.

637 and 639 (1892): The oldest houses on the street (1892). Owned and developed by the Carr family. Flat fronts, unusual on this street, with Queen Anne details. Note the elaborate, corbelled cornice at the roofline, string (sill) course, the molded brick decorative knobs along the segmental arch over the windows, and the scrollwork in the wood above the door transom, which is something more common in the older buildings.

635 (1902): Constructed as a three-story apartment building by the Carr family, and typifies how the earliest apartment buildings were designed to appear as single-family housing. This exhibits Queen Anne cornice, Italian Renaissance lintels, and almost a Romanesque curved building mass with belt and sill course.



630 (1908, shown in foreground above): Another Carr building; although listed simply as a dwelling, contained four apartment units for many years. This too is an example of how an apartment was made to look like a house, only this time, as a side-by-side duplex. This handsome building, with its smooth surface and simple classical ornamentation, like the ornamented metal brackets at either end of the cornice and the substantial dentilated cornice, are indicators of Renaissance Revival/late Italian.

631 (1895): Three-story dwellings with Queen Anne features: massive corbelled brick cornice, segmental arches with decorative knobs, canted bay, and belt and string courses. 631 and its neighbor 633 are the only buildings on Elliott to display decorative arches over the doorways, which is Victorian, whether that means Queen Anne or Richardsonian Romanesque. The steps are masonry, which gives a more modern look to the entrance when compared to most of the other houses with their Victorian cast iron stairs.



629 (1895, above): Displays the Queen Anne corbelled cornice and a string course (continuous sill under the windows), like the earlier more decorative styles, and has a square bay. However, the square bay has a rounded brick trim on both sides of the bay, running the full length. It also has rusticated lintels, more Renaissance Revival, but with a twist, they are metal rather than stone. On the second story, there is a lintel course, one continuous course of ornamentation rather than individual lintels. This house has some unique decoration.

625 and 627 (1893): The next oldest houses on the block, after 637 and 639. Also Carr properties, these also exhibit Queen Anne details like the corbelled cornice and the decorated segmented arches over the upstairs windows, along with the rusticated lintels of the Renaissance Revival. They both have belt courses and string courses. Number 627 appears to have its original windows; you can see the scrollwork in the wood above the window and the decorative molded mullion between the windows. These buildings also have square bays, which is very nineteenth century.



623, 621, 619 (611, 609, 607) (1910 – Beers, 619 is shown above) These follow the Washington rowhouse typical pattern of Renaissance Revival, including canted bays with rounded corners, smooth surfaces with little decoration, heavy but simple dentilated cornice, and flat lintels. These are the quintessential twentieth century Washington rowhouse.

614 and 624: both 1920s apartment buildings of a scale that fits into the neighborhood. Number 624 has a smooth surface with subtle arched decorations above the windows and a simple metal cornice. Number 614 has arches over the door and the windows and subtle brick decorative patterning over the windows, below the cornice, and has a medallion in the center of the building.