

243-245 15th Street, SE  
Square: 1060  
Razed 2008  
Building permit #: 758  
Permit issued: July 22, 1924

Architect: Preston E. Wire  
Owner: Preston E. Wire  
Builder: Preston E. Wire  
  
Original use: stores

In 1924, Preston E. Wire (c. 1903–1952) constructed a small cluster of single-story brick stores at 243-249 15th Street, SE, an otherwise residential block in Hill East. Wire was a major real estate developer who built many houses in various neighborhoods around Washington, including Capitol Hill and Brookland. Beginning in 1938, during a time when Washington was still segregated, Wire built 2,000 units of rental housing for African-Americans. His best-known project is Carver Terrace in Northeast. By comparison, the commercial buildings on 15th Street, SE appear to be one of his smaller ventures. One-story commercial buildings like these are sometimes called “taxpayers”: small buildings that made the property economically productive (and paid the property taxes) until the land was redeveloped. From 1924 until the late 2000s, a variety of tenants occupied these buildings: grocery, bakery, variety store, cleaner, tailor, beauty salon, repair shops. Holy City Mission occupied 247 15th Street circa 1991. The buildings fell into disrepair and were subsequently demolished and replaced by condominiums in 2008.

“Preston Wire, D.C. Builder, Dies in Miami,” *Washington Post*, 24 Oct. 1952, 28;  
LaBarbara Bowman, “Split Personality Housing Project,” *Washington Post*, 4 Dec. 1978, sec. C, p. 1.



Photograph of 243-249 15th Street, SE (demolished); 243 appears on the right.