Historical Research
of
812 C Street, S.E.

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The Construction of 812 C Street, S.E.

Charles Hartel applied for and was granted an Application for Permit to Build numbered 1774 on February 21, 1879 to construct the two story brick dwelling that serves as the residence at 812 C Street, S.E. today. It would be built on lot 2 of Square 923 as it was then numerated.

The home that was specified was actually built in front of an existing frame structure that had occupied the site and housed the Hartel family since at least 1872. Building permits in the District of Columbia were only required after 1878. The permit for the front portion specified a two story brick dwelling for a single family, measuring twenty feet wide by thirty-two feet deep.

The new portion of the home would reside on a foundation of brick measuring fourteen inches thick. The first and second story walls would measure nine inches thick, and the flat roof constructed of tin. The cornice was specified as being composed of brick. Charles Hartel was listed in the 1879 City Directory as a carpenter, and apparently indicated on the building permit that he designed and intended to construct the house himself. He listed his address on the application as 814 C Street, S.E., apparently moving next door in anticipation of the addition to his older home.

Hartel estimated the cost of the new addition as $1,416. With the front portion of the house completed in the spring of 1879, the house evolved into what is a large single family home today at 812 C Street, S.E.

Interestingly, Charles Hartel had earlier applied for and was granted an Application for Permit for Repairs, Alterations, and Etc numbered 83 on December 8, 1877 to “build wood and coal shed at rear of lot. 20 feet wide and 12’ deep. Height not over 11’.” He estimated the cost of the shed as $12.
The Development of Square 923

The majority of homes that exist along the 800 block of C Street, S.E. were constructed before the requirement was in place for the owner to obtain a building permit for their dwellings, making it difficult to easily ascertain their age. Some clues, however, are extant in early maps of the area, such as the 1887 Hopkins Real Estate Map, illustrated at right.

It shows that most of the early residential development in the block occurred in the southeast corner, where both 812 and 814 C Street had been built. Several homes were also located at that time along the northern side of 9th Street. Interestingly, all of the lots on the Square that face 8th Street were vacant in 1887.

The index to building permits offers some insight into the construction dates and/or repairs or additions to various buildings and dwellings in the Square. Apparently 818 C Street was constructed in 1890; 814 C Street received an addition in 1888, again in 1892, and a "warehouse" behind it in 1912.

The house at 818 C Street was constructed in 1890, and 816 C Street was apparently constructed following issuance of a permit granted March 20, 1902. The house at 810 C Street was evidently constructed in 1903, following the issuance of a permit on September 15th of that year. A stable was added to the rear yard in 1906. On October 3, 1905, the house at 820 received its permit for construction. The two houses at 806 to 808 C Street were constructed simultaneously following issuance of a permit on May 28, 1908.
While the name of the current neighborhood derives its name from the proximity to the United States Capitol, it is actually not located on a hill. The Capitol is situated on the highest point of land between the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers, hence its name Capitol Hill. However, the Capitol Hill neighborhood developed on the high plateau extending east from the crest of the hill and originally it was hoped that the deep waters of the Anacostia at the time that the city was designed in 1791 would support a significant port.

Pierre Charles L'Enfant planned East Capitol Street to be 160 feet wide, to accommodate a major commercial street deriving its existence from the series of ports that never were developed along the shoreline. Siltation from early urban development had caused the river to become marshy, and by the time the McMillan Plan of 1901-1902 was implemented, it was recommended that the shoreline be filled in for much needed parkland. By the 1920s and 1930s this new formed parkland was mostly built upon due to increased housing needs, which serves to explain the newer building stock close to the present day river edge.

L'Enfant also designed at the midway point along East Capitol Street a park (now Lincoln Park) to house a "historic column from whose station, (a mile from the Federal House), all distances of places through the Continent, are to be calculated." While the column never materialized, the park that served as the outer boundary of the neighborhood in 1876 received Thomas Ball's Emancipation Monument erected solely from the contributions of freed slaves.

The first neighborhood called "Capitol Hill" was a small cluster of homes located at first and Second Streets along New Jersey Avenue, S.E. around 1800. Few Congressmen preferred to establish permanent residence in the city during the early years of the Republic, and choose instead to rent rooms in one of the numerous boarding houses located within walking distance of the Capitol. This cluster remained the major residential area of the neighborhood for the next several decades. Two houses remain from this period, at 20 and 22 Third Street, S.E., dating from around 1820.
Other areas began to witness development shortly thereafter, including the Navy Yard and the nearby Marine Barracks. The illustration above, from an 1834 drawing by George Cooke, shows the Navy Yard and sparse development beyond. In addition to the formal military architecture, many low quality homes were constructed in the surrounding areas to house skilled and unskilled construction labor. Construction in southeast Washington remained slow during the first half of the nineteenth century, however. The boarding house area close to the Capitol began expanding somewhat by 1850, and several merchants had begun to construct stores to serve the growing residential population around the Marine Barracks.

A few of the homes from the mid nineteenth century remain on Capitol Hill, perhaps the best known at 326 A Street, S.E. It was built around 1850, and was the home of Constantino Brumidi, an Italian artist who was responsible for most of the decoration of the U.S. Capitol, including the large rotunda frescoes.

Many homes on Capitol Hill served as hospitals and boarding houses during the Civil War, when new construction was rare. An attempt was made by speculative builder Captain Alfred Grant to develop an area of the Hill into a lavish and desired residential neighborhood in 1871 when he constructed a row of sixteen mansions along A Street and fourteen mansions on East Capitol Street. They were designed to sell for an impressive $75,000 each, and were leveraged as was much of the speculative development at that time. The project failed, and they were eventually demolished and replaced by the Folger Shakespeare Library beginning in 1928.
Following the War, however, Capitol Hill and the rest of Washington experienced a tremendous growth period, as new workers and freed slaves poured into Washington to work for the newly expanded Federal Government. Notorious vice president of the Board of Public Works Alexander “Boss” Shepard, proposed a civic improvement scheme for Washington in 1871 that had a budget of $6 million dollars that stimulated new construction all over the city before it ultimately failed under numerous allegations of scandals and kick-backs. The housing market could not keep up with this new influx of workers, however, and many Capitol Hill homeowners built additions or rented rooms throughout the 1880’s.

Local building associations advertised the need for masons to gather and construct new housing as quickly as possible. The new wave of employment in the Federal government was prompted by the Pendleton Act in 1883, which eliminated the previous method of hiring by appointments, and inaugurated one based upon competitive merit. Thus, the quality and social stature of the employees increased sharply, and the top salary for the government that year increased to $4,000, a substantial sum for the time.

The area that is now known as the Capitol Hill Historic District was primarily built up in the 1880’s and 1890s for speculative housing on a more modest scale. Several developers and architects collaborated to construct homes often one entire block at a time. These included such men as Diller B. Groff, Nicholas T. Haller, Nicholas Grimm, J.T. Walker, T. Franklin Schneider and countless others.
Residents of
812 C Street, S.E.

The first known resident of 812 C Street, S.E. is Charles Hartel, who lived with his family in a frame house at the rear of the current brick house from at least 1872 to 1879. A carpenter by trade, he constructed a small wood and coal shed at the rear of the property in 1877, and the front brick portion in 1879. He also owned the house next door at 814 C Street, S.E.

Before moving to 812 C Street in 1872, Hartel lived at 463 3rd Street, S.E., as early as 1867. His 1872 City Directory listing is illustrated below.

At the time they moved into the rear portion of 812 C Street in 1872, Charles was 39 years of age. His wife Emily was age 37 at the time, according to 1880 census information. They resided there along with their four children; Mary, age 12, Josephina age 11, Charles Jr., age 6, and Dora, age 4. During their tenure in the house, they had two additional children; Adelaide, born in 1877, and Harriet, born in 1878.

At the time he applied for the construction permit for 812 C Street in 1879, Charles and his family moved to the house next door at 814 C Street, which he had just purchased. He apparently enlarged 812 C Street in order to rent it for investment income. His widow Emily would eventually sell the property in 1900.

The first family that became neighbors to and renters of the Hartel family was that of George H. Gaddis in 1880. He was 42 at the time the census information was gathered that year, and listed his occupation as a butcher. He had been born in the District in 1838. He lived in the newly completed house along with his wife, whose name and age are obscured in the census information, and an adopted son named Eugene Mark, age 24, who had been born in Ireland. They also had a servant living with them named Benjamin Campbell.
George Gaddis had a butcher stall known as “George H. Gaddis & Co.” located at stall numbered 74 in the Eastern Market in 1880. His partner in the business at the time was Charles Miller. By 1885, the City Directory indicated that Gaddis has a “provisions” business at 596 8th Street, S.E. Earlier, in 1875, Gaddis indicated in the City Directory that he was a grocer at 1101 10th Street, S.E., at which time he lived at 921 Georgia Avenue. The 1879 City Directory however lists their residence as 920 South Carolina Avenue, S.E.

George Gaddis and his family continued to reside at 812 C Street from 1880 until 1890. The following year, their entry in the City Directory records them as living at 712 A Street, S.E. Since City Directories were not indexed by name before 1914, it is nearly impossible to determine who the Hartel's rented to until the next census was taken in 1900.

Albert Lusby and his large extended family rented 812 C Street, S.E., from 1900 to 1902. They had resided at 1011 B Street, N.E. the previous year. Albert Lusby was then age 28, having been born in Maryland in 1872. He was employed as a fireman for the District of Columbia. His wife, Mamie E., was age 26 at the time, having been born in Pennsylvania in 1876. They had an infant son less than a year old at the time named Albert G., Jr.

Albert Lusby also opened up his home to his mother, Ann M., age 58, having been born in Maryland in 1841. The census reveals that she gave birth to 13 children, eight of which were alive in 1900, and four of which lived with them in the house at 812 C Street, S.E. The included Darion I., a saleswoman aged 20, Nettie, a saleswoman aged 15, Ewing L., a salesman age 18, and Guy M., in school and age 13.

Interestingly, the census reveals that the Lusby sisters were apparently selling "house ferns," a popular Victorian decorating item at the time. Albert Lusby moved his immediate family to 1107 South Carolina Avenue, S.E. by 1902, although his mother
Ann remained at 812 C Street for the remainder of that year. The City directory recorded that she was the widow of James T. Lusby in the 1902 edition.

Emily Hartel had sold 812 C Street on March 8, 1900 to Fritz Eberle. At the time, he was living at 16 E Street, S.W., but moved into his new home at 812 C Street along with his wife by 1903. The 1910 census reveals that he was age 46 at the time, having been born in Germany in 1864. Apparently Fritz was a nickname, as the census taker recorded his name as Frederick. He had been married to his wife Madaline for 16 years, and at the time the information was gathered, she was 45 years of age. He had emigrated to the United States in 1888, and she in 1886. Frederick listed his occupation as a bottler at a “bottling establishment,” most likely one of the German brewery’s that were located throughout the district at the time.

The Eberle’s had one daughter living with them in the house that year named Katheryn, aged 13, who had been born in the city. They also had two lodgers in the house with them that year; Frank H. Dudley and his wife Rita A, both aged 24 at the time. They were both born in the city, and had been married for three years. Rita Dudley had given birth to one child, but at the time the census information was gathered in 1910, it was recorded as no longer living. Dudley listed his occupation as an Insurance Agent without a business address.

The Eberle family would remain at 812 C Street until 1941. Their daughter Katheryn (Eberle) Miller would rent the house from 1942 to December 15, 1952, when she sold the house to Julius N. Press. Frederick Malloy, a painter for the Public Buildings Administration, had rented the house for ten years, beginning in 1942.

Press sold 812 C Street, S.E., on April 21, 1961 to William H. Meyers. Press had rented the property to James Glover from at least 1954 to 1956, and to Cora Hill from 1960 to at least 1962. Meyers continued to rent the house to Hill until he sold the house on June 9, 1964. Daniel T. Goggin and his wife Mary were the new owners, and they resided at the house until 1995. They were employees of the federal government, according to city directories at the time.

Since September 11, 1995, the distinguished residence at 812 C Street, S.E. has been the home of Charles Grayson and Gary Jankowski.


*District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Sites*. Historic Preservation Division, DC Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, 1990, with supplements.


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Maps


Boschke, A., *Map of Washington City, District of Columbia, 1857*

Columbia College Subdivision Map, 1873-1874


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