

1314 F Street, N.W.
(Becker's Leather Goods Store)
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-376

HABS,
DC,
WASH,
246-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. DC-376

1314 F STREET, N.W.
(BECKER'S LEATHER GOODS STORE)

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DC,
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Location: 1314 F Street, N.W., Lot 49, Square 254, Washington, D.C.

Present Owner: The Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation, 425 13th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004

Present Occupant: Becker's Leather Goods Store

Present Use: Retail sales; to be demolished.

Significance: This building forms part of the low scale commercial area north of Pennsylvania Avenue erected in Washington in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The building is one of three similar commercial structures designed by the local architectural firm of Marsh and Peter. The street facades display the firm's versatility at manipulating traditional architectural styles of the commercial vernacular which dominates F Street between 9th and 15th Streets.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: 1924. (Permit #11342, 6/24/24).
2. Architects: Marsh and Peter, D.C.
3. Original plans and construction: There are no available original plans for the building.
4. Alterations and additions: In the early 1950's, an enclosed one-story bridge was added at the first floor level, connecting this building with the one directly behind it (no permit available - all non-permit information from Ms. Lachene, Becker's Assistant Manager).

B. Development of Site

Becker's is located on that portion of Lot 49 that was originally Lot 20. In 1924, the existing building was built. Assessed value of the lot rose from \$7900 in 1923 to \$85,000 in 1932. Between 1940 and 1943, Walter Willard Boyd (descendant of C.C. Willard) took over ownership of Lot 46 and the surrounding Lot 48 (both from the Willard Estate), forming Lot 49. (This property was assessed at \$350,000 in

1943.

C. Bibliography

1. Primary Sources

District of Columbia, Building Permits, National Archives, D.C.

2. Secondary Sources

All of the following are available at the Washingtoniana Division
of the Martin Luther King, D.C. Public Library.

Baist Real Estate Atlas Collection.
D.C. City Directories, 1865-1979.
D.C. General Assessment Records.

Prepared by: Anderson, Notter/Mariani
Historic Preservation Consultants for PADC

Wendy Hunter
Architect for PADC
December, 1979

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural Character: Taken in its immediate context, Becker's building comprises the central portion of a trio of adjacent commercial structures designed by the prominent Washington architectural firm of Marsh and Peter in the mid-1920's. All three facades show similar massing, height and fenestration, and are handled with traditional materials and chromatism. Nevertheless, each building has a distinctive individual character imparted by styles carefully used to articulate each facade, with this building standing as the strongest element of the three buildings.
2. Condition of fabric: Constant maintenance has left all elements in good condition.

B. Description of exterior

1. Overall dimensions: Becker's is a three-story rectangular building with a basement. This building measures 50' x 100', and is 50' high from street level to the top of the parapet wall. The building is three bays wide by five bays deep.
2. Foundations: Concrete footing.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: Clad in limestone, the building's three-story front facade features a wide, central bay with two narrow bays at the sides. The vertical articulation emphasizes this three-bay division through the use of piers that express the building's structural organization. In addition, the narrow lateral bays project slightly to suggest end pavilions. At the first floor, although only partially visible due to the storefront addition, piers have smooth rustication and support a full entablature at the first floor line.

At each lateral bay, the frieze on the entablature carries the store's elliptical emblem, and on the center bay panel the store's full name appears. Sitting on this entablature, composite colossal pilasters rise above each base pier to support a second entablature at roof level. The side pavilions are treated with recessed rustication forming the window jambs, similar to the ground level. The two upper floors are separated by a stone allegre with a foliage design. The second floor lateral openings have a bronze balconet railing. On the central bay the two upper levels are articulated with a wide metal allegre that repeats the foliage motif. Both floors present a tripartite subdivision established by narrow metal pilasters that act as mullions.

4. Structural System: Steel frame.
5. Openings
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main access to Becker's is gained through a bronze and glass revolving door at the F Street elevation.
 - b. Windows: The first floor facade includes: show windows with curved glass panes at the entrance; and, a grouping of seven (six over six pane, double hung sash) windows which are separated by Tuscan Colunettes, directly above the show windows. Flanking this grouping are similar openings recessed from the South rustriated piers. The central bay openings of the second and third floor consists of a tripartite grouping of case-ment windows. These openings are flanked by single, (six over six pane, double hung sash) windows which are recessed and surrounded by window jambs.
6. Roof:
 - a. Shape: The roof is flat.
 - b. Cornice: At the roof the entablature is again broken by projection of the side pavilions beyond the central bay. On the recessed central bay it carries a denticulated cornice, while at the sides the freizes are treated as decorative panels. The building terminates in a stone roof parapet.

C. Description of interior

1. Floor plans

- a. Basement: The northwest portion of the basement is finish with wood paneling and served as a gift-wrap and engraving area for many years. The remainder of the basement acts as storage space and mechanical equipment placement.
 - b. First floor: The first floor, entirely open, is used as a sales area, interrupted only by the freestanding column grid. The main stair and elevators are located along the west party wall. A mezzanine at the rear of the sales area contains offices and waiting areas, and is reached by an open staircase. Large windows in the rear wall light this area. In the early 1950's an enclosed one-story bridge was added at the first floor level, connecting this building with the one directly behind it.
 - c. Second floor: The open second floor with windows at either end, is presently unused.
 - d. Third floor: The third floor, similar to the lower level, is used by the adjoining Raleigh's with access through the party wall. In addition to a sales area, dressing rooms and mechanical rooms occupy this level.
2. Stairways: The half-turn mezzanine stairs are of wood with paneled stringers and newels, and balusters which support a wood rail.
3. Flooring: Carpeting covers the main sales area.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: On the first floor the original wood paneling remains on the walls and columns. Numerous display cases along the walls, as well as several of the freestanding display units, have a consistent design. Low wooden partitions on the mezzanine incorporate the same design motif. Walls above the twelve foot high paneling are plastered with coved ceiling intersections; soffits on the dropped beams between columns display decorative recessed panels.
5. Openings: The interior of the turn-style door on the F Street facade is of wood in a simple design.
6. Hardware: Original hardware is evident throughout the building; windows, doors and fixtures appear to be intact. The freight elevator, also original, features wooden quillotine doors.

D. Site:

This building is located on the south side of F Street, facing north. Due to its proximity to Pennsylvania Avenue and the White House, F Street (between 9th Street and 15th Street) has been the center of Washington's commercial activity throughout its history. Today the street is composed of buildings in a variety of architectural styles dating from the 19th and early 20th centuries. F Street contains predominantly four to five story buildings with one or two ten to fourteen story buildings occurring on each block. In the 1300 block, three tall structures exist; the National Press Building, Bond's, and the American Building. The strong architectural cohesion of this block reflects the fact that most buildings were constructed within a ten-year period (1922-1932) and that the three buildings located at 1310-1322 F Street were designed by the same architectural firm, Marsh and Peter. All buildings on the block exhibit great care in architectural detailing and ornamentation, particularly at the street level. Such care and deliberation of design in this block of F Street has enhanced the pedestrian path and reduced the image of the grand scale to that of human proportion.

Prepared by: Anderson, Notter/Mariani
Historic Preservation Consultants for PADC.

Wendy Hunter
Architect for PADC
December, 1979

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation (PADC) in compliance with Executive Order 11593 and a Memorandum of Agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as a mitigative effort in the completion of the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Plan. John A. Burns, and Emily J. Harris were the HABS project coordinators. The records were prepared under the general supervision of Jeffrey S. Wolf, Architect with PADC. Historic data was compiled by PADC consultants in historic preservation, Anderson, Notter/Mariani, and expanded by Wendy Hunter, Architect with PADC. Documentary photographs were taken by Jeffrey S. Wolf in December 1979. The data was edited and prepared for transmittal to the Library of Congress by Robert S. Lange, and architectural historian in the HABS office, in June 1980.