

David E. Finley House
3318 O Street, N.W.
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-461

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

DAVID E. FINLEY HOUSE

HABS No. DC-461

Location: 3318 O Street, NW., Washington, District of Columbia, Lot 828 of Square 1229.
Present Owner: Private.
Significance: A fully detached Second Empire style brick dwelling, built prior to 1877, located in the Georgetown Historic District.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Between 1865 and 1877.

District of Columbia building permits (required after 1877) for the block date as early as 1885. There are none for 3318 O Street, however. This could indicate that a structure was on the site prior to 1877. The earliest building permit available for lot 828 of square 1229 (3318 O Street) occurs in 1909 (small repairs to porch and side porch). Several permits were granted in the period 1929-1940, including one dated August 2, 1934 (Permit #173383) for a two-story brick addition, presumably the south portion added by the Finley's shortly after they purchased the house.

2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The David Finley's purchased the house c. 1934. No research into original owners has been undertaken for HABS.

4. Alterations and additions:

1909 Small repairs to porch and side porch.

1929-1940 Several additions made to house.

1934 Two story brick addition.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Finley house is a fully detached brick dwelling which appears to be built on the lot line on the west. The lack of windows on the west side of the house suggests an attached structure was originally anticipated. The front of the house is set close to the street (the building line is no more than ten feet from the sidewalk), however a service

passage of approximately eight feet is allowed along the length of the east side of the house. This passage provides access (through a gate) to a basement side entrance and the rear yard. A similar arrangement at the adjacent house to the east creates a fairly generous set-off between the two residences. The service passages of the two structures are separated by a painted board fence. The house on the west side of the Finley House has a large side garden which extends to the west wall of the Finley House and affords it an attractive setting as well as a measure of privacy.

The Finley House appears to be composed of an original brick section of three stories and partially exposed basement (probably built in the 1870's) with one or two brick rear (south) additions. Without further research, it is not possible to date the structure precisely. The 1870's date is based solely on exterior stylistic features, such as the Mansard "roof." This element is an aspect of the "Second Empire" style popular in the 1870's.

B. Description of exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The house is brick (painted gray with white trim), three stories (three-bay front) over a full basement story. Basement is partially exposed on the front (north) and fully above grade on the rear (south).
2. Foundations: Stone.
3. Walls: Brick.
4. Porches, stoops, etc.: Front porch and side porch.
5. Chimneys: Three exterior brick chimneys.
6. Openings: The windows, on the main (north) facade are nine-over-nine light double hung sash windows. The windows in the third floor pedimented dormers are six-over-six light double hung sash windows.

All of the windows on the main facade have louvered blinds painted black.

7. Roof: The roof of the main block is a dormered mansard covered in slate.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

A. Basement: As noted, the basement is partially below grade on north (front); entirely above grade on the south (rear). Includes the dining room, kitchen and spaces housing mechanical and utility equipment. Note: one tread of the "service" stairs running north-south on the east wall between basement and first floor shows extensive termite damage.

1. Utility Area: Unenclosed space containing sink, washer, dryer and storage space.

2. Maids Room: Window opening to a light well, closet and bathroom opening off room, no radiator.

3. Bathroom: Small bathroom opening off maid's room; contains the toilet, lavatory and metal shower stall. A half window opens to the light well.

4. Furnace Room: Entered from kitchen; contains only furnace and hot water heater (see mechanical systems).

5. Kitchen: A door to the exterior is located on the east wall. This is the only exit to the exterior from the basement floor, other than the French doors in the dining room.

Appliances: "Roper Epicure" gas stove; 6 burners, 2 ovens, probably over fifteen years old. Refrigerator; upright freezer. Neither appears to be a recent model.

Fixtures: Stainless steel double sink and counter; cabinets above and below counter.

6. Service/Butler's Pantry:

Appliances: Dishwasher, double stainless steel sink and counter, garbage disposal, all located on west wall.

Cabinets and wooden counter top and storage below located on east wall; storage cupboards with glass doors on wall above counter. High window with iron bars in west wall. Two sets of stairs (two risers each) lead to 1) kitchen and 2) front service stairs and utility area.

7. Rear Stair Hall: The entrance on the basement level is gained only through double doors opening off the dining room. Rear ("auxiliary") stairs connect only the basement and first floor.

Powder Room: A long portion of the rear stair hall has been converted to a powder room, entered only from the stair hall. It contains a lavatory and toilet only; the fixtures are of more recent vintage than those in the other bathroom. The storage space at the east exterior wall under the staircase is entered through a small door in this area.

8. Dining Room: A rectangular room extending the entire width of the house. Three glazed French doors set in round arched openings with leaded fanlights provide a view and exit to the rear yard at ground level. One fireplace is located on the west wall. The chimney breast is faced with painted boards; the carved wooden mantelpiece is similar to those found in the drawing room and not original to the house. On the south (exterior) wall two carved wooden cabinets approximately 5-6 feet high with open shelves have been set into niches between the French doors. The cabinets are intricately carved with a shell motif and are not original to the house.

On the north wall, double doors lead to the rear stair hall; a single door leads to a passage way connecting the dining room and butler's pantry.

9. Passage: The passage between the dining room and butler's pantry accommodates the elevator shaft as well as a "wine closet" and a generous china closet.
- B. First (Main) Floor: This floor is the principal story of the house and at the north (front) is only slightly above street level. There are two principal rooms, and no bathrooms. The front portion of this floor has a side hall plan, with a single run staircase along the west wall between the first and second floors. An auxiliary two-run staircase connecting the first and basement floors is located on the transverse axis of the house in an area between the drawing room and library. These "auxiliary" stairs function as the main (and more formal) stairway between the basement and first floor, due to the location of the dining room and the fact that the staircase connecting the basement and first floors at the front of the house is a narrow enclosed service stair.
1. Entrance Hall: Contains the staircase to the second floor, coat closet and the opening to the service stairs between the first floor and basement. The staircase has a slender turned newel of unpainted wood and square painted balusters, and is lighted by what appears to be an electrified gas fixture--an etched glass globe suspended from the ceiling.

2. Drawing Room: This long rectangular room is located at the north (front) of the house.

It is entered from the entrance hall through two large double doors on the west wall. The room has two fireplaces on the east (exterior) wall, both of which have been embellished with unpainted carved wooden mantelpieces which are believed by the family to have been purchased in England. The surround and hearth are marble. On the south wall a niche and door are surmounted by painted scenic murals. Small scale moldings delineate areas of the wall for decorative effect. The room also has reeded chair rail and a shallow coved cornice with reeding. Two crystal chandeliers light the room and are suspended from the ceiling at points decorated with cast plaster medallions. The floors are of random width boards. There are two windows in the north (front) wall, and two on the east wall. A door in the south wall leads to the stair hall.

3. Stair Hall: This ample space houses the "auxiliary" stairs which provide dignified access to the dining room below. The stairs go no higher than the first floor. Also located here, behind doors, is a wet bar (with sink and small refrigerator) and the elevator shaft. A hanging glass fixture, possibly identical to the one in the entrance hall, lights the area.

4. Library: A rectangular room extending full width of south (rear) of house, which serves presently as a Library--Sitting room. It has one fireplace on the west wall, embellished with an unpainted carved wooden mantelpiece. As in the drawing room, the surround and hearth are marble. Three French windows in the south (rear) wall allow a view of the rear yard below and access to a narrow balcony which extends across the width of the house. The balcony has a wooden floor and wrought iron railing. The south wall has been deepened to create space between the windows for built-in book shelves. Two radiators are recessed in these area, below the shelves.

- C. Second Floor: In general, this floor could be viewed as having three suites, each composed of a bedroom with associated bathroom. The south (rear) section is on a level several feet lower than north section, beginning at the point where stair hall ends.

1. NE Bedroom: This bedroom has one fireplace on east (exterior) wall with painted "Adamesque" mantlepice. There is a cornice, but no chair rail. The architraves of the doors may be late-nineteenth century. A walk-in closet and ample full bathroom open off this room.
2. Bathroom: Full bath with access only from bedroom noted above.
3. "Mr. Finley's Dressing Room": Located on east center of second floor, the room is accessible through doors from the notheast bedroom, stair hall, rear hall and a bathroom. There is an interior fireplace on the south wall, with painted "Adamesque" mantlepice, and brick hearth. There is an "Adamesque" chair rail, but no cornice.
4. Bathroom: Full bath, two steps down; may be entered from Mr. Finley's dressing room.
5. Closet-Passage: Entered from door to bathroom noted above or door to rear hall.
6. "Rear Hall:" This area is lower than the north section of the house. It contains a large linen closet with double doors and houses the elevator shaft.
7. Southwest or Master Bedroom: (Note: There is some water damage on the west wall around the fireplace and ceiling and flaking plaster on the south wall near the window.)
8. Bath and Dressing Room: (Area divided into two distinct sections by wall and door)

The dressing room area is in the southeast corner, and opens off the master bedroom. It contains the lavatory and built-in linen storage cupboards. A door between the bath area and dressing room provides privacy for the two areas. The bath area contains a toilet and tub; it is also accessible directly from the master bedroom.

- D. Third Floor: The area of this floor is less than that of the floors below, suggesting that the southeast (rear) room may have been built on the floors below at a later date.
 1. Hall: Two large closets. Access to the attic is gained through a trap door in the ceiling by way of stairs which pull down from attic.
 2. Bathroom: Full bath, entered from hall. Serviceable but old fixtures.

3. NE Room ("Storage Room"): Has closet and door through to "Office." Presently used as storage area. Note: Extensive water staining on wall and ceiling probably indicates roof problem. No indication whether or not leak has been fixed.
4. "Office:" Small room east center of third floor; has closets.
5. Rear "Landing:" (Six steps down; accommodates elevator shaft)
6. SW Room: Room with lower ceilings, one small closet.
7. Half Bathroom: Opens off southwest room; contains toilet and lavatory.
- E. Attic: Attic space is approximately 15' x 15' (over hall and office). Floored. Contains 3-door cedar lined closets. Opening at north side gives access to crawl space beneath roof. Dormer-type window faces south; contains attic fans.

Note: For sketches of floor plans see data page 9 .

2. Mechanical Systems: No central air conditioning; gas fired hot water heat (radiators throughout house). The furnace (See Basement) is of undetermined manufacture and age; and seems in poor condition. It uses an American Standard gas valve No. 566v. Operating voltage max 23AC; DC 10 Watts. The hot water heater is a "Day and Night," Model 75-300-J1B-2, gas fired, 360,000 BTU/hr; 302.5 gal pr. hr; there is an elevator which serves the floors from basement to the third floor (no data available).

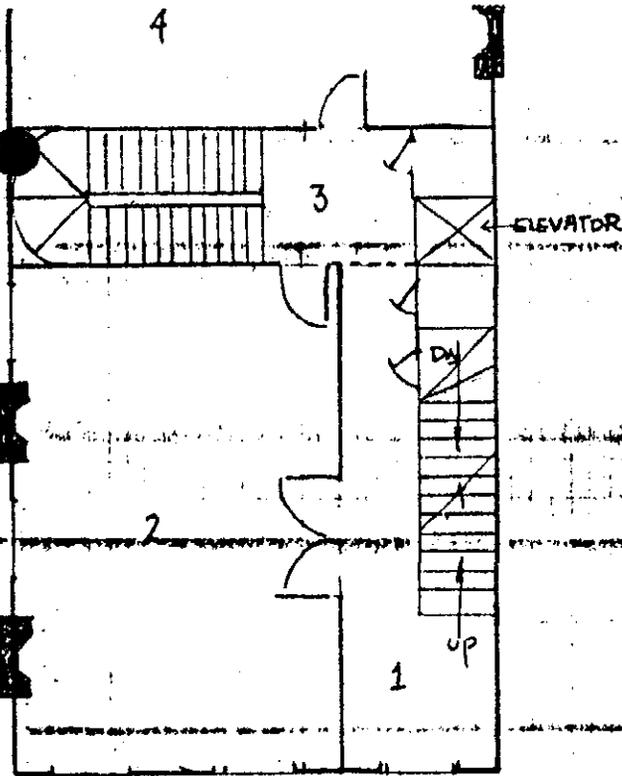
D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The David E. Finley House (purchased by Finley about 1934) is located between 33rd and 34th Streets on the south side of O Street and is within Georgetown's Historic District. At that point O Street is a one-way Street (eastbound). It is paved with bricks and streetcar tracks still remain. The surrounding neighborhood is residential, with some late-eighteenth as well as nineteenth century structures. There are some detached dwellings, but the area is composed primarily of row-houses.

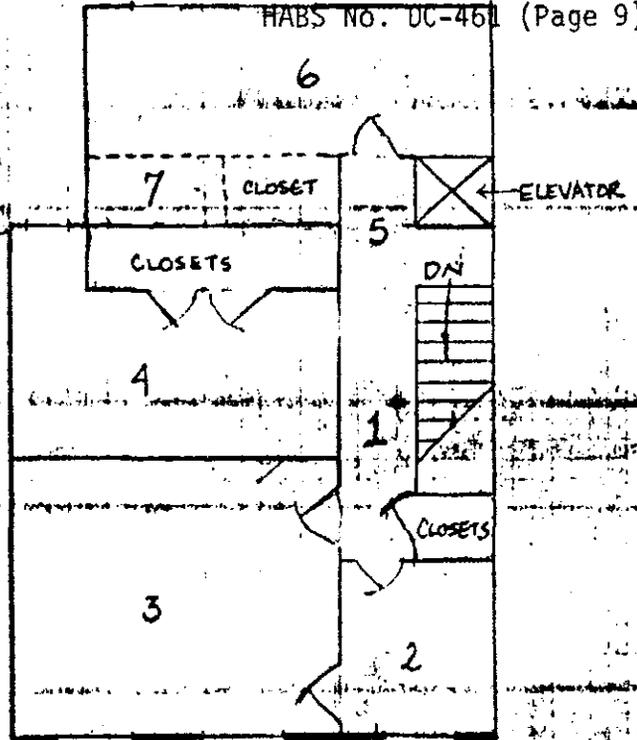
2. Outbuilding: A substantial two-car garage (each unit completely separated by a permanent wall) is located at the rear of the lot and forms the south boundary of the rear yard which is otherwise enclosed by a brick wall. Access is gained through an alley. The east section of the garage is open to the rafters and has a fireplace and quarry tile floor; the west section is devoted to attic storage space.

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

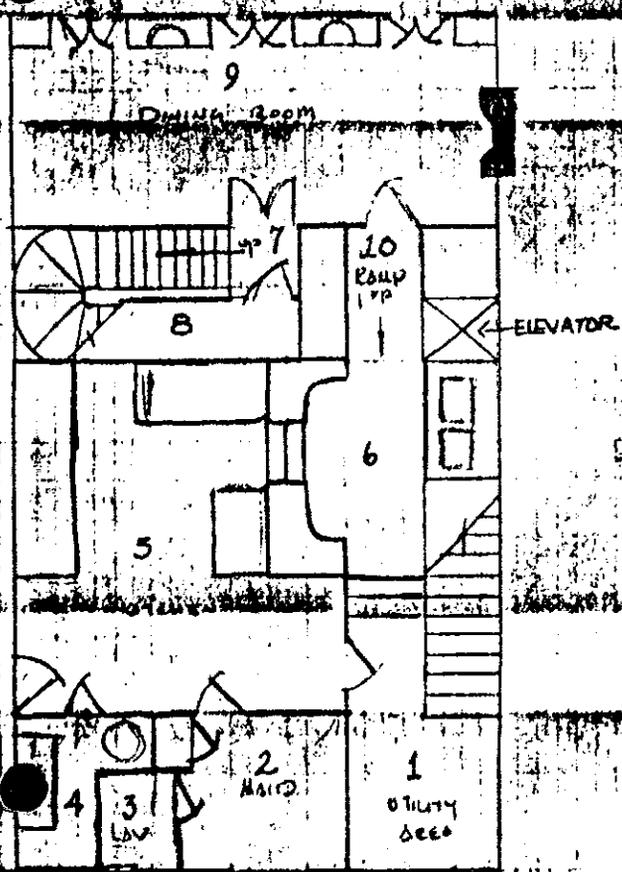
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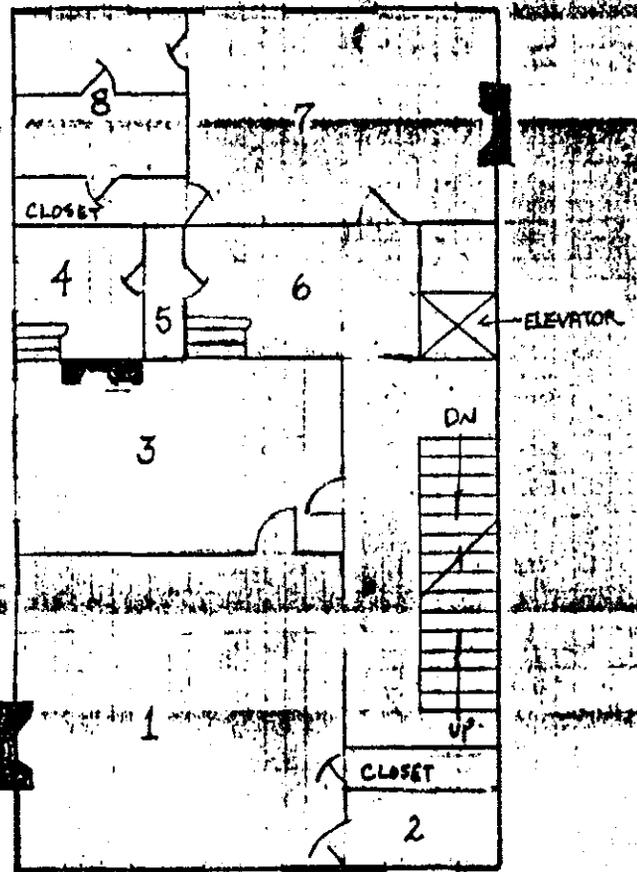
FIRST FLOOR



THIRD FLOOR
(APPROXIMATE)



BASEMENT



SECOND FLOOR