

West Georgetown School  
1640 Wisconsin Ave., NW  
Washington (Georgetown)  
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-110

HABS  
DC  
GEO  
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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
1730 North Lynn Street  
Arlington, Virginia

## WEST GEORGETOWN SCHOOL

- Location: 1640 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. (Note: Prior to 1881, Wisconsin Avenue was called High Street and had different address numbers. From 1881 to 1906, Wisconsin Avenue was known as 32nd Street and had present address numbers.)
- Present Owner: Robert Kerr, Jr.
- Present Occupants: George Lincoln and Associates (Interior Designers); Chapman and Miller (Architects)
- Present Use: Studio Office Building
- Statement of Significance: Early twentieth-century school building for culinary arts erected as part of the manual training program of the District of Columbia and representative of the neo-Georgian trend in design of that period.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: The following is an incomplete chain of title to the land on which this structure was built. The references are from records of the Recorder of Deeds, District of Columbia. The site is in Square 1279 lot 208.

The property is described in a plat of computation recorded in Survey Book 167, page 175 of the Records of the Office of Surveyor, District of Columbia.

- 1802 Deed July 13, 1802 recorded August 19, 1802 in  
Liber H folio 475  
John Davidson et ux Maria  
To  
Andrew Kaldenbach  
One half of lot 208 in Beatty and Hawkins Addition  
to Georgetown.
- 1806 Deed in Trust April 1, 1806 recorded April 2, 1806 in  
Liber P folio 57  
Andrew Kaldenbach  
To  
Thomas Herty
- 1809 Deed August 25, 1809 recorded November 5, 1809 in  
Liber X folio 147  
Washington Boyd, Marshall of District of Columbia  
To  
Daniel Bussard

Conveyed by public sale June 18, 1808 as  
the result of a law suit against Andrew  
Kaldenbach.

- 1810 Deed January 6, 1810 recorded January 26, 1810  
in Liber X folio 385  
Daniel Bussard  
To  
Elizabeth Dunbough
- 1813 Deed May 27, 1813 recorded July 12, 1813 in  
Liber AF folio 28  
Elizabeth Dunbough  
To  
Abraham Landes
- 1818 Deed October 25, 1817 recorded April 7, 1818  
in Liber AQ folio 287  
Abraham Landes  
To  
Daniel Renner
- 1825 Deed in Trust July 16, 1825 recorded July 25,  
1825 in Liber WB 13 folio 436  
Daniel Bussard  
To  
William Bussard
- 1828 Mortgage December 1, 1827 recorded March 3, 1828  
in Liber WB 22 folio 280  
Elizabeth Dunbough  
To  
Richard Davis
- 1847 Deed July 28, 1847 recorded October 14, 1847  
in Liber WB 137 folio 171  
Henry Addison, Mayor of Georgetown  
To  
John Kurtz at a tax sale
- 1848 Deed April 10, 1848 recorded July 10, 1848 in  
Liber WB 144 folio 103  
Richard Davis  
Samuel Reintzell, only child and heir to Elizabeth  
Dunbough  
To  
John Kurtz
- 1860 Deed March 8, 1860 recorded October 11, 1860  
in Liber J.A.S. 205 folio 290  
John D. Kurtz et ux Jane T.  
To  
Corporation of Georgetown
- 1860 Deed October 14, 1859 recorded October 11, 1860  
in Liber J.A.S. 205 folio 293  
James A. Reilly  
John M. Reilly  
and  
William H. Reintzell et al

To  
Corporation of Georgetown  
1954 Deed November 30, 1954 recorded December 9, 1954  
in Liber 10339 folio 121  
The Board of Commissioners of the District of  
Columbia

To  
Robert C. Deigert  
David N. Yerkes

Tenants in common

Seller acting pursuant to authority under  
Act of Congress August 5, 1939 (53 STAT.  
1218) Sold for \$26,155

1955 Deed November 4, 1955 recorded in Liber 10547  
folio 137

Robert C. Deigert and wife Joan  
David N. Yerkes and wife Catherine

To  
Robert S. Kerr and wife Grayce B.  
Tenants by entirety

2. Date of erection: Built in 1911 (Architectural drawing in office of Deigert and Yerkes, Architects, Cabin John, Maryland)
3. Architect: Snowden Ashford; born 1866, died January 26, 1927. Appointed assistant building inspector for the District of Columbia in 1885. Appointed Municipal Architect July, 1909 and resigned in 1921 to engage in private practice. Ashford was a member of the Washington Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and one of the organizers and officers of the Architectural Club of Washington. (Obituary, American Art Annual, Volume 24) T.J.D. Fuller signed the drawing of the building which was located in the Cabin John, Maryland office of Deigert and Yerkes, Architects.
4. Original plans, construction, etc.: The original drawings are said to be in the possession of Mrs. Robert S. Kerr, Jr., wife of the former U.S. Senator from Oklahoma. One drawing with the names of the architect (Snowden Ashford, Municipal Architect, District Manual Training School, L 208SQ1279) and the draftsman (T.J.D. Fuller Arch't., 806 17th St., Dec. 10, 1910) is in possession of the firm of Deigert and Yerkes, Architects, 8001 MacArthur Boulevard, Cabin John, Maryland.
5. Notes on alterations and additions: The building underwent remodeling when the school was discontinued and office space was created for the District. The firm of Deigert and

Yerkes, Architects, engaged in extensive remodeling of the interior of the building and steam cleaned the exterior. (District Building; Building permits A60820, 11/10/54 repair; A61750, 12/16/54 repair; A61999, 12/29/54 fence; A62000, 12/29/54 sign; A69608, 1/7/55 plumbing; and A62473, 1/18/55 revision).

6. Important Old Views: Photographs in the National Archives, Record Group 54; Bureau of Plant Industry: No. 12524; July 28, 1911 shows some construction along sidewalk No. 29888, dated 1926; No. H20513, dated 1917. Photographs in the files of the Commission of Fine Arts, undated, credit: The Commercial Photo Co., Inc., 1403 H Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., two photographs showing the building as a school.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

In 1858 the Corporation of Georgetown decided to provide a school building on High Street. The resolution follows: "A resolution in relation to a Town School: Whereas it is represented that a portion of the lot at the corner of High (Wisconsin Avenue) and Fourth Street [sic - Market Street was meant - Fourth Street was called Volta Street] (33rd St.) was originally donated for the purpose of erecting thereon buildings for educational purposes, Therefore:

Be it resolved by the Board of Aldermen and Board of Common Council of the Corporation of Georgetown, that the guardians of the Town School be, and they are hereby instructed to take such steps as in their judgment may be necessary to secure the above mentioned lot for the purpose of erecting thereon a suitable house for school purposes. Approved June 19, 1858"

Ordinances of the Corporation of Georgetown with a Table of Contents. From March 1858 to March 1859, printed by order of the Corporation by Ezekiel Hughes, printer, 1859, Georgetown, D.C. p. 21. This was accomplished at an expense of \$4,500.

In 1860 it was decided to erect a new school. "Recites that said property has been bought pursuant to a resolution passed by 2nd party [Corporation of Georgetown], proposed in said resolution to erect a schoolhouse on land to be purchased by them within that part of Georgetown

lying West of High and North of 1st Streets as by reference to said resolution will more fully appear."  
[Liber JAS 205 folio 290; October, 1860, Recorder of Deeds, District of Columbia]

The enacting resolution was approved in 1861.

"A Resolution in favor of the West Georgetown School - Resolved by the Board of Aldermen and Board of Common Council of the Corporation of Georgetown, that the Mayor and Clerk of the Corporation be, and they are hereby, authorized to issue a certificate of the stock of this Corporation, to the amount of one thousand dollars, in favor of and payable to the order of the 'guardians of the Georgetown School,' for the purpose of enabling said guardians to put in operation the West Georgetown Public School: Provided, that the said guardians pay interest on the said one thousand dollars, quarterly, at the rate of six percent per annum; said interest to be paid out of the school-tax fund: Provided further, that said certificate of stock be paid off as soon as said school-tax fund will admit, without interfering with the operation of the said West Georgetown School. Approved January 26, 1861."

[Ordinances of the Corporation of Georgetown from January 1861 to January 1862, printed by order of the Corporation, 1862, p. 11]

The name of the School was changed before 1887 when it was known as Public School No. 3. In 1901 the last pupila attended the school and it was abandoned and subsequently demolished in 1910 when plans for a more substnsial school building were formulated. In 1911 the new building was completed and the six-room school opened in 1912 offering vocational training. In 1918 it was described as a school for preserving and cooking in the manual training division of the Public School System. During the depression free hot lunches were served at the achool, and in 1941 it was known as the central lunch kitchen. From 1942 to 1949 canning classes were part of its culinary srts program, but in 1950 the building was converted to space for offices serving the

school system and for surplus food storage. Finally, in 1954 the Government of the District of Columbia offered the building for sale, and an architectural firm purchased it for professional offices.

Prepared by Dr. James Philip Noffsinger  
Architect  
National Park Service  
August 17, 1966

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Originally designed as a school for culinary arts, building has been remodeled for professional offices. Exterior remains substantially unaltered and is a suave example of post-1900 archeological phase of Georgian revival style.
2. Condition of fabric: Good; interior remodeled 1954-1956.

### B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Wisconsin Avenue (east) elevation 79'-1"; 33rd Street (west) elevation 81'-5"; southeast elevation, 26'-9", southwest, 34'-7"; north elevation approximately 40'. Structure is two stories in height, irregular in plan.
2. Foundations: Brick to grade, foundation capped by water table.
3. Wall construction: Red Flemish bond brick painted light grey. Brick quoins four courses high at corners and flanking slightly projecting three-bay center pavilion of east front. Swag-carved stone ornaments under second-floor windows flanking east entrance and over center window of west wall.
4. Chimneys: Red brick chimney (approximately 4'0" x 2'-0") with plain stone cap over northeast quadrant of building. Very large round metal vent located in center of roof.
5. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Wisconsin Avenue door (6'-2 1/2" masonry opening) is flanked by Ionic pilasters supporting curved dentilled pediment. 33rd Street door (6'-9" masonry opening) is flanked by 3/4 round engaged Roman Doric columns surmounted by iron-railed balcony. Plain torus moldings at bases of columns rest on incised plinths. Wooden double doors of Wisconsin Avenue entrance have

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single large glazed panels. 33rd Street double doors have two simple wooden panels below glazed areas. Both entrance sills are of granite; four granite steps lead from the landing at the east entrance, five at the west.

- b. Windows and shutters: Twelve-over-twelve-light double-hung wooden sash in very first segmental-arched openings with stone sills predominate. On five-bay east front larger windows are 4'-8" wide. Four narrower (3'-2") windows flanking east entrance and center window above are nine-over-nine. Twelve-over-twelve-light center window richly framed in carved stone frontispiece with flanking console motifs and double keystone. Pediment lunette has radial "spiderweb" muntins. Nine-bay west elevation has window openings 4'-4" wide. Double window over west entrance twelve-over-twelve-light with glazed semi-circular transom. Of four west basement windows north of entrance, two nearest entrance are twelve-light single sash, and two are ventilators.

Bay window on north elevation is not part of original construction; probably added in remodeling of 1954-1956. No shutters.

6. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Roof is hipped, with slightly projecting gable over eastern pediment.
- b. Framing: Unknown.
- c. Cornice, eaves: Cyma recta modillioned cornice with dentilled base.
- d. Dormers. None.

C. Technical Description of Interiors:

Interior has been completely altered in the remodeling of 1954-1956. Present plan is divided into several professional suites which open onto central east-west hallway connecting the two entrances.

D. Site:

- 1. General setting and orientation: The building is sited on an irregular triangular lot formed by the intersection of Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., and 33rd Street, N.W., resulting in the oddly-shaped plan. This location, near the top of the long hill cresting at R Street, N.W., is on the northern

fringe of the Georgetown commercial district and is adjacent to a totally residential neighborhood to the west.

2. Enclosures: A brick retaining wall with granite coping extends southward along Wisconsin Avenue public sidewalk and buttresses an embankment above small court on grade with 33rd Street.
3. Outbuildings: None.
4. Walks: The building abuts public sidewalks along Wisconsin Avenue and 33rd Street.
5. Landscaping. None.

Prepared by Thomas R. Martinson  
Student Assistant Architect  
National Park Service  
August 3, 1966