

John Davidson House
1220 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.
Georgetown
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-102

HABS
DC
GEO
62-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Washington Planning and Service Center
1730 North Lynn Street
Arlington, Virginia

JOHN DAVIDSON HOUSE

HABS
DC
GEO
62-

Location: 1220 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: Moses Hower and wife, Annie

Present Occupant: Quizzicum Book Shop

Present Use: Used book shop

Statement of Significance: One of the few substantially unaltered eighteenth-century buildings remaining in the Georgetown commercial district.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners; the building is located in Square 1207, part of lot 91 in Beatty and Hawkins addition to Georgetown, now taxed as lot 859. The following is an incomplete chain of title:

1807 General John Davidson "of the City of Annapolis, Maryland" died, leaving the property to his widow, Ann Maria Davidson. Will Book 1, page 261, July 1, 1806, probated April 3, 1807.

1809 Ann Maria Davidson
To
Ninian Magruder
Deed, July 17, 1809 recorded August 25, 1809 in Liber W folio 359

1823 Ninian Magruder died, leaving the property to his daughter, Eliza Mary Mosher and her heirs. Will Book 3, page 230, June 19, 1821, probated March 7, 1823.

1873 Eliza Mary Mosher
Hugh Caperton et ux Eliza J. (daughter of Eliza M.)
To
Jared C. Nichols
Deed, March 19, 1873 recorded March 25, 1873 in Liber 711 folio 90

- 1875 William Stickney
George H. Plank
Trustees for Jared C. Nichols et ux Sarah E.
To
Eliza Mary Mosher
Deed, October 25, 1875 recorded November 4, 1875 in
Liber 803 folio 225
- 1877 Eliza Mary Mosher died, leaving the property to
William H. Clagett in trust for her son, Theodore
Mosher, and his family. Will Book 16, page 350,
January 15, 1875, codicil March 31, 1876, probated
November 6, 1877.
- 1885 William J. Miller
Howard C. Clagett
Trustees by Decree of Equity dated October 31,
1884, ratified July 1885.
To
William H. Clagett
Deed, August 22, 1885 recorded August 22, 1885 in
Liber 1136 folio 455
- 1892 William H. Clagett died leaving the property to
his wife, Adele Clagett, and her heirs. Will Book
32, page 355, November 15, 1890, probated October 27,
1892.
- 1899 Adele Clagett
To
Mary C. Perin
National Safe Deposit Savings & Trust Co.
Deed in Trust, January 23, 1899 recorded January 24,
1899 in Liber 2376 folio 105
- 1902 Mary C. Perin
National Safe Deposit Savings & Trust Co.
Trustees for Adele Clagett
To
James Gallagher
- 1911 James Gallagher died, leaving the property to
his wife, Ann Sophia Gallagher, and his daughter
Catherine L. Gallagher. Will Book 77, page 424,
June 4, 1910, probated December 11, 1911.
- 1918 Ann S. Gallagher
Catherine L. Gallagher Hurney
To
Moses Hower and wife, Annie
Deed, May 9, 1918 recorded May 13, 1918 in
Liber 4078 folio 11.

2. Date of erection: c. 1790.
(Note: Federal Assessment for Baltimore and D. C. 1798
shows one dwelling house and one out house on this lot

in Georgetown owned by John Davidson and occupied by William Cranch. [Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland. Microfilm M 862]. It seems plausible that the house was built in the latter half of the eighteenth century, as there is an Assignment of Mortgage on the property dated April 4, 1789, recorded in Liber E folio 176 [Courthouse, Rockville, Maryland]).

Records of the City of Georgetown, D. C., National Archives Record Group 351, Microcopy M 605, Assessment of Real & Personal Property, list the following:

Roll #7 - 1800-1807 - John Davidson - lot on High Street (now Wisconsin) with brick house and store - \$4500

Roll #8 - 1808-1812 - Ninian Magruder - Part of lot 91, on High Street - improved - \$4000

Roll # 9 - 1813-1818 - Ninian Magruder - same - large brick house - \$6500

Roll #10 - 1815- Ninian Magruder - same - 3-story brick house - \$6500

3. Architect: Not known.
4. Original plans, construction, etc.: None known.
5. Notes on alterations and additions:

The following permits were listed in the Building Permits Department, District Building, District of Columbia:

April 30, 1937	201968 (sign)
April 18, 1943	260044 (sign)
June 28, 1946	286680 (sign)
March 3, 1948	303594 (repair)
March 11, 1948	303870 (fence)

6. Important old views: None known.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

Washington directories provide the following tenant information:

1914	Vacant
1915-1918	Mary M. Burke, boarding
1919-1936	Moses Hower, shoe repair, with various tenants
1937	Mrs. Annie Hower, shoe repair

1938-1939 Irving Garfinkle
1938-1942 Leonard Garfinkle, shoe repair
1954 Emma W. Stephens, real estate and insurance,
and other tenants.

Prepared by Dr. James Philip Noffainger
Architect
National Park Service
September 2, 1966

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Davidson House is a very early Georgetown commercial building which combines a ground floor shop area with living quarters above; it is extremely utilitarian in design with little architectural embellishment.
2. Condition of fabric: Deteriorating.

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 23' [3 bay front] x approximately 100' [including eave]; four stories in height.
2. Foundations: Brick to grade.
3. Wall construction: White painted red-orange brick laid in Flemish bond on east [street] elevation; common bond, side elevations; common bond with headers every four courses, rear walls. Walls have undergone much repair work, notably over window openings.
4. Chimneys: Brick chimney, 4'-4" square, on west gable of roof; three-course projecting brick cap.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Old but not original storefront, some plywood repairs at base, beveled wood enframements; main wooden door within is of plain design. Side door [to the south, on east front elevation] -- encased in heavy beveled wooden enframement is composed of five-paneled insets. Molding over doors consists of [top to bottom]: ovolo, astragal, cyma reversa, corona, fillet. Paneled reveals, transoms are old: no elements of doorway show signs of recent alteration.

- b. Windows and shutters: Not original - one-over-one-light double-hung wooden sash, stone sills. Shutter pintles remain although shutters have been removed. Small openings in gable ends on north and south walls. Every window lintel on original building has been reworked.

6. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Gabled roof is tin-covered.
- b. Framing: Wooden.
- c. Cornice, eaves: Projecting tin cornice is of plain design. Metal gutter appears to be old.
- d. Dormers: None.

- C. Technical Description of Interiors: Interiors have been gutted and not restored in any manner. Walls on street floor are of brick with plaster finish. Upper floors were not otherwise recorded.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Faces east on Wisconsin Avenue, just north of M Street in a busy and, for the most part, well maintained section of the Georgetown commercial district.
2. Enclosures: None.
3. Outbuildings: None. Two brick ells have been added to the elevation west of the original building. The first appears as a "saltbox," its roof joining the main roof at the eaves and continuing with a lesser pitch. The second extends directly westward from the first, its roof pitching gently from south to north. Brickwork has been greatly altered and many alterations to masonry construction are evident.
4. Walks: Front on modern concrete public sidewalk to the east.
5. Landscaping: None.

Prepared by Thomas R. Martinson
Student Assistant Architect
National Park Service
August 10, 1966