

BUCKINGHAM APARTMENT COMPLEX; BUILDING 12
4007, 4009, and 4011 5th Street North
Arlington
Arlington County
Virginia

HABS No. VA-1339-A

HABS
VA
7-ARL,
13A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

National Park Service
Northeast Region
Philadelphia Support Office
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, P.A. 19106

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Location: 4007, 4009, and 4011 5th Street North
Arlington
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Virginia

USGS Washington West, DC, MD & VA.
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates
18.317500.4304098

Present Owner: Aetna Life Insurance Company
Paradigm Management Company (Agent for Aetna)
3333 K Street, N.W. Suite 100
Washington, D.C. 20005

Present Use: Rental Garden Apartments

Significance: Constructed between 1937 and 1953 the Buckingham Apartment Complex is an important innovative example of garden apartment planning of a large, self-contained, full-service, residential community. Developer, Allie Freed, provided the innovative guidance for the entire development. His ideas regarding prefabrication and mass-production techniques as applied on the Buckingham construction site were revolutionary -- producing economies of time and money. Sponsored by the Committee for Economic and Social Progress, under the direction of Freed, Buckingham is an important component of the influential movement to provide affordable, well-planned housing for the majority of Americans, solely financed through the private sector.

Planner Henry Wright's idealistic scheme integrated affordable housing, industrial technology, the environment, pedestrian movement, and automobile traffic to form a prototype in this area. This development represents and espouses the doctrines of a more humane urban design philosophy. These principles included low-density superblocks, curving streets, separation of automobiles and pedestrians, shallow building plans allowing improved light and ventilation, and large landscaped common spaces. A commercial strip containing a post office, theatre, and drug store provided convenient well-planned services within walking distance of all apartments. Pathways throughout the complex connect each building forming a continuous interconnected park system.

As a result of the spirited direction of Allie S. Freed, and the superior planning and design by Henry Wright, the Buckingham complex stands apart from other garden apartment developments and remains significant today.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. **Date of erection:** The Buckingham Apartment Complex, was constructed between 1937 and 1953. Building 12 is located within the first construction phase of the Buckingham Apartment Complex, consequently, construction began on Building 12 in March 1937, and the building was complete and ready for occupancy by December. Phases 1 and 2 occupy the portion of Buckingham east of Glebe Road and incorporates the area designed and built as originally planned by Henry Wright. The building density is greater and the streets narrower in Phases 1 and 2, compared to subsequent phases of the complex. There are 622 apartment units within Phases 1 and 2.

With the 3rd Phase of construction, which commenced in 1938, the designers, now under the direction of Frances Freed (Allie's widow), began to alter the conceptual plan in response to tenant preferences and the economics of the time. They eliminated the garages, as tenants expressed a preference for street parking. Streets were made wider, also in response to recommendations from the tenants. After working on the first sections, the builders realized that larger buildings, arranged around U-shaped courtyards, and covering less ground were more cost-efficient. The larger footprint of these buildings substantially altered the buildings' relationship to the street. Additionally, the buildings no longer opened onto rear landscaped areas. Consequently, all activity focused on the interior of the courtyards. Architecturally, the buildings became more simply ornamented, and landscaping followed a less elaborate plan. The majority of Buckingham stood complete in 1941; a section of five buildings was added to the southwest portion of the tract in 1953.

2. **Architect:** The site planning and architectural design for the Buckingham complex was executed by Henry Wright. Although Henry Wright was closely associated with Clarence Stein it appears that his work on Buckingham was an individual project. Henry Wright and Clarence Stein were considered the premier designers of large, garden apartment complexes. Wright and Stein collaborations included the acclaimed Radburn, New Jersey project and Chatham Village in Pittsburgh, where they adopted the concepts of efficiency, land conservation and beauty in the development of the new greenbelt communities. Wright was assisted initially on the planning and design on the project by long-time associates Allan Kamstra and Albert Leuders, both noted architects. Kamstra had worked with Wright and Stein on Radburn and Chatham Village, as well as other projects such as Greenbelt. Leuders worked with Wright and Stein for seventeen years.¹ The death of Henry Wright in 1936, and the untimely death of Allie Freed in 1938, setback the project at the end of the 1930s. Fortunately, Frances Freed, took over the management of Paramount Communities, continuing the vision of both men. Kamstra and Leuders remained the project architects and

¹ Fisher, Oscar. "Buckingham: Housing Laboratory." Architectural Record. January, 1938. p. 69.

planners.

Building 12 was part of the original design and the first construction phase of the Buckingham complex, consequently its design, and siting were part of the original plan as prepared by Henry Wright with the assistance from Leuders and Kamstra. Wright's guiding hand, philosophy's and influence continued after his death in 1938, although the actual design work was directed by architects Leuders and Kamstra.

Henry Wright (1878-1936)

At the time of his death in 1936, Henry Wright was considered "the nation's number one town- and site-planner."² Henry Wright attended architecture school at the University of Pennsylvania where he graduated in 1901. Although educated in the field of architecture, his primary interests and ideas focused on the principals of planning. From his earliest employment as park planner in Kansas City in 1903, Wright devoted his career to park, town and residential planning.

His career spanned the United States working in the Mid-West and along much of the east coast. He served as one of the planners for the St. Louis Fair, and subsequently relocated to St. Louis in 1907. He helped organize the St. Louis City Plan Association, and was largely responsible for that city's forward-looking city planing program. In 1918-19, as Town Planner under Robert Kohn for the Housing Division of the Emergency Fleet Corporation, Wright offered his expertise as city and site planner, architect and subdivider for community development plans for Chester, Pa., Newburg, New York, Bridgeport, Connecticut and Camden, New Jersey. In 1923, he became the Town-Planning Consultant to the New York City Housing Corporation. In New York, he began his association with Clarence Stein, which resulted in the designs for Sunnyside, Radburn, and Chatham Village. Henry Wright consulted for the Rosenwald Foundation for its tenement projects in Chicago.

In constant need of the stimulation and challenges presented by academic environments, Wright set up a studio at his farm in New Jersey, to develop projects in community planning based on current theories and ideas. Later in his career, he lectured at various colleges, compelled to pass on his ideas to younger generations. In 1935, his book "Rehousing Urban America" was published, "unquestionably the best technical book on housing in America."³

The design of the Buckingham Apartment Complex was one of Henry Wright's last projects. Its successful integration of building and landscape, and the superior site plan benefitted from Wright's years of experience and was the culmination of his career in community planning.

² "Henry Wright, Town Planner, Dies Suddenly." The Architectural Record. Vol 80. August, 1936. p. 83.

³ Stein, Clarence S. "Henry Wright, 1878-1936." American Architect and Architecture. Vol. 149, August, 1936. pp. 23-24.

Allan Kamstra (1897-1964)

Born in the Netherlands, Kamstra studied architecture at the University of Amsterdam. He emigrated to the United States shortly after serving as a Lieutenant in the Dutch Army during World War I. Kamstra's first architectural position in the United States was with the firm of Wright and Stein in New York City. In the 1930s, he moved to Washington and was employed as a government architect. Kamstra met Allie S. Freed in Washington, at the time Freed was beginning plans for the Buckingham Complex in Arlington. Subsequently, Freed employed Kamstra as the Paramount Community staff architect, to work in association with Wright and Stein on the design of the Buckingham Apartment Complex. Kamstra continued his association with the Buckingham Community through the 1950s, completing designs for Phase 1 through 6 during his tenure as architect for Paramount. Of his work on Buckingham Kamstra notes that: "He learned to buy shrewdly as well as to hold the reins on design and construction."⁴ He additionally designed the Claremont garden apartments in South Arlington. Kamstra died in 1964 in his home at the Buckingham apartments.

Albert Leuders

While no biographical materials have been located regarding the career of Albert Leuders, according to Oscar Fisher in his article in Architectural Record, Leuders worked with Clarence Stein and Henry Wright for over 17 years. At the time of his work on Buckingham he was serving in the capacity of Director of Architecture. After Wright's death, Leuders continued to serve as architectural consultant to Paramount Communities, Inc., insuring the adherence to Wright's vision and maintaining a constant design program throughout the six phases of construction.

- 3. Original and Subsequent Owners:** The original owner of the Buckingham Apartment Complex was Allie S. Freed. Freed formed Paramount Communities, Inc. and purchased one hundred acres of farm land in Arlington County, Virginia in the early 1930s. Freed promoted economic recovery through the development of economically viable rental housing using only private sources of income, and by using the production techniques of the automobile industry. Freed chose the site for his pioneer development close to the Nation's Capital where he believed it would have maximum exposure to an eager press corps and the vigilant Federal Government.

Freed's ideas and beliefs regarding economic recovery had a sounding board in the Committee for Economic and Social Progress, Inc., of which he was Chairman. Composed of leading American business, financial, industrial and educational figures, the Committee sponsored the Buckingham Apartment project in an advisory capacity. The Committee, acting as advisors, was available to all residential building projects in the United States. The financial backing for the Buckingham project, was provided by Paramount Communities under the direction of Allie Freed.

⁴ Fisher, Oscar. "Buckingham Housing Laboratory." Architectural Record. January, 1938, p. 69.

Buckingham continued to expand, eventually covering the original 100 acres with 1850 apartment units. After Allie Freed's death his widow, Frances Freed, took over management of Paramount Communities, and directed the construction of Phases 3-6. The last of the buildings, erected in 1953, continue to exhibit the basic design and planning of the original complex, although architectural embellishments and landscaping have been minimized reflecting increased construction costs and a harsher economic climate.

Allie S. Freed (1891-1938)

Entrepreneur and financier Allie S. Freed was raised in Tennessee and New York City. He attended public schools in Nashville and New York City and graduated from the College of the City of New York. His first business venture was to improve the appearance and comfort of New York taxi cabs. In 1923, he organized the Luxur Cab Manufacturing Corporation. The Luxur cabs were "of striking design, plentifully supplied with lighted exterior ornament, and marked a radical change in taxicab construction."⁵ His difficult, but eventually successful dealings with the Luxur Cab led him to incorporate the Paramount Cab Manufacturing Company, a conglomerate of the Luxur Cab Company and several other smaller companies. By 1929, Freed was a leader in the taxicab field, and the head of a million dollar enterprise. In 1933, he turned his business operations over to executives and embarked on a life of public service, of which he was to become nationally recognized. His leadership of the Committee for Economic and Social Progress, and his development of the Buckingham Apartment complex did much to provide affordable, well-built housing, and to promote economic recovery through the housing industry.

Upon the death of Frances Freed in 1977, the entire Buckingham Complex consisting of 3,500 units was sold. A portion of Buckingham was renovated in the late 1970s and sold as cooperative apartments. Subsequent sales have included only portions of Buckingham, and the complex today is owned by four separate groups. The chronology of sales and ownership throughout the history of the Buckingham complex is outlined in the following chart:

⁵ The National Cyclopedia of American Biography. Vol. XXXIII, New York: James T. White Company, 1947. p.378.

OWNER	YEARS OWNED
Allie S. Freed and Frances Freed (Paramount Communities)	1937-1977
James T. Klingbeil (Purchased entire Buckingham Complex)	1978
Richard Stein (Purchased 1,356 of 1,821 units)	1981
Hall Management (Purchased 818 units) (Purchased 466)	March-April, 1983 Summer, 1983
K/W Realty Group (Purchased 18 acres)	1990
Hall Arlington Associates Stanley Ferenc	1993
Buckingham Jenco, Ltd. Partnership Marvin Jawar	1993
Aetna Insurance Company Paradigm Management Company Agent for Aetna	1994

4. **Builder, Contractor, suppliers:** Allie S. Freed directed all aspects of the Buckingham project, acting as owner, manager and general contractor. A paper analyzing Freed's life notes that:

Freed insisted on high-quality materials such as brick and structural clay tile bearing walls, slate roofs, copper gutters and downspouts, oak block flooring, concrete floors, and gypsum block partitions. Acting as general contractor himself, Freed was personally involved with selecting materials, and considered the competence of individual subcontractors as well as technical performance before choosing materials. Construction was extremely efficient; only seven months after the start of construction in March 1937, all six hundred twenty-two units in the first phase were occupied.⁶

Critical to the success of the Buckingham development was the use of innovative materials, efficient production techniques, and new solutions to a challenging design program. Allie Freed's experiences in the automobile industry, advanced his beliefs that automobile assembly line technology could be transferred to the housing industry. Freed's objective through the Buckingham project was to show the building industry

⁶ Kahn-Leavitt, Jonathan P. "Allie S. Freed and the Buckingham Community Project." unpublished paper, January 21, 1985.

was capable of maintaining a high standard of construction while at the same time offering efficiently constructed buildings with well-priced materials.

Freed did much to ensure a fair price for materials: "Sales directors of building material manufacturers were called in, and their factory prices compared with dealers prices to get an idea of the spread between the two prices. Freed then reached an agreement with most of the manufacturers and their dealers to supply products on terms which the builders considered would guarantee the dealers a fair profit for large-scale sales."⁷ Materials used within Buckingham were purchased directly from the manufacturer, and packaged as a unit. Additionally, "Deliveries were geared to construction needs at the site, and standard units of layout were devised which might be repeated without monotony."⁸ As a result, for efficiency of handling, tiles for the bathroom were assembled at the factory, packaged for an individual bathroom and shipped to the site.

Freed continually sought ways to standardize building techniques at Buckingham, leading the way in large-scale prefabrication: "Experimentation geared to production with a watchful eye on the market, was the key to the designing of the unit suites and unit buildings."⁹ This resulted in the development of a "Ford Unit" consisting of three rooms and a bath, as the most popular room arrangement in Buckingham. The "Ford Unit" was "the one most susceptible to repetition in quantity in other buildings of almost any size or shape."¹⁰ Similarly designed apartment buildings in groups of five or six buildings around a courtyard also provided a standardization that could be repeated numerous times. Importantly, this arrangement could be repeated throughout the Buckingham complex, or as designed a single building could stand on its own.

⁷ Cooper, Lee. "New Ideas Used for Model Housing." The New York Times. January 9, 1938.

⁸ Cooper, Lee. "New Ideas Used for Model Housing." The New York Times. January 9, 1938.

⁹ "Assembly Line Technique Used At Buckingham." The Washington Post. January 9, 1938.

¹⁰ "Assembly Technique Used at Buckingham." The Washington Post. January 9, 1938.

A list of local and out-of-state suppliers follows:

LOCAL SUPPLIES	SUPPLIERS	LOCATION
Geran Realty Corp	General Contractor	Washington, D.C.
United Colonial Brick	The United Clay Products Company	Washington, D.C.
White Top Plaster	Mathieson Alkali Works, Inc.	Washington, D.C.
Electrical Supplies	Atlantic Electrical Supply Co.	Washington, D.C.
Stone	Edmonds Art Stone Co.	Washington, D.C.
Hardware & Electric Supplies	Fetterman Hardware & Electric Co.	Washington, D.C.
Plumbing Supplies	Fetterman Plumbing Supply Co.	Washington, D.C.
Electric Supplies	General Electric Supply Co.	Washington, D.C.
Supplies & Equipment	Hudson Supply & Equipment Co.	Washington, D.C.
Sand & Gravel	Smoot Sand & Gravel Corp.	Washington, D.C.
Iron Works	Union Iron Works	Washington, D.C.
Clay Products	United Clay Products Co.	Washington, D.C.
Roofing Products	Washington Roofing Products Co.	Washington, D.C.
	F.G. Schafer Co.	Washington, D.C.
	Noland Company, Inc.	Washington, D.C.
	W.E. Kingswell, Inc.	Washington, D.C.
	Nathan Goodman Co., Inc.	Washington, D.C.
	Barber & Ross Co., Inc.	Washington, D.C.
	F.W. Bolgiano & Co.	Washington, D.C.
Iron Work	Alexandria Iron Works, Inc.	Alexandria, Virginia
Concrete Pipe	Arlington Concrete Pipe Corp.	Arlington, Virginia
	Murphy & Ames, Inc.	Rosslyn, Virginia
	George M. Yeatman & Son, Inc.	Arlington, Virginia

OUT OF STATE
SUPPLIES

SUPPLIERS

LOCATION

OUT OF STATE SUPPLIES	SUPPLIERS	LOCATION
"Hy-Test Masonry Cement"	Hy-Test Cement Company	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Finishing Lime	National Lime & Stone Company	Findlay, Ohio
"Horn Paint"	A.C. Horn Company	Long Island, New York
Window Frames	Malta Manufacturing Company	Malta, Ohio
"Unique Sash Balances and Weatherproofing"	Accurate Metal Weather Strip Company	New York, New York
Board Fabricators	Board Fabricators, Inc.	Long Island City, New York
"Fuel Saver Water Tube Steel Heating Boilers"	International Boiler Works	East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania
Boilers	Burnham Boiler Corp.	Irvington, New York
Radiators	American Radiator Company	New York, New York
"Petro Oil Burners"	Petro-Noko	Stamford, Connecticut
Tiles	Standard Tile Co. Superior Ceramic Corp. Architectural Tile Company	Brooklyn, New York Anderson, Indiana New York, New York
Steel Products	Triangle Steel Products Corp United Metal Company, Inc.	Brooklyn, New York New York, New York
Cast Iron Verandas	Smyser-Royer Company	York, Pennsylvania
"Airco Gases, and Welding and Cutting Apparatus"	Air Reduction Company	New York, New York
"Sealex Linoleum"	Congoleum-Nairn Inc.	Kearny, New Jersey.
"Rock Wool Home Insulation"	Johns-Manville Company	New York, New York
Stove Works	Crown Stove Works	Chicago, Illinois
Lumber & Millwork	Lumber & Millwork Co. of Philadelphia	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
"Baxter Cabinets"	Baxter Steel Equipment Company	Indianapolis, Indiana
"Briggs Beautyware Plumbing Fixtures"	Briggs Manufacturing Company	Detroit, Michigan
Bathroom Accessories	Bay Ridge Speciality Company	New York, New York
"Walseal Plumbing Piping"	Walworth Company	New York, New York
"Fir Rezo Doors"	M & M Wood Working Company Plylock Corporation	Portland, Oregon
Hardware Supplies	Reading Hardware Corp.	Reading, Pennsylvania
Electrical Supplies Kitchen, Wiring, Lighting, Heating and Air-Conditioning	Graybar Electric Company General Electric	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania New York, New York and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

5. **Original plans and construction:** Developed in six phases, from 1937 to 1953, Buckingham's two-and three-story apartment buildings are arranged around courtyards and along curving streets. The buildings occupy less than twenty percent of the land, leaving abundant open space, landscaped grounds, connected walkways, play areas, and streets.

Building 12 is sited on the edge of the original phase of the Buckingham apartment complex, completed in 1937. The swimming pool complex lies immediately to the north and the heavily travelled Glebe Road to its west. Building 11 is sited adjacent to Building 12 on 5th Street. Building 12 is the closest apartment building in the Buckingham Complex to the active commercial development along Glebe Road including the Ballston Mall and Ballston Metro. Currently, Building 11 and 12 give the appearance of providing a buffer or transition between the residential community of the apartment complex and the active industrial and commercial area to the northeast.

Two stories in height with a gable roof, Building 12 is a three-bay, 12-unit brick apartment building in the Colonial Revival style. Three separate entrances are defined by round arched, rectangular and swan's neck surrounds, providing variation on the dark-red brick facades. Brick quoining at the corner bays, eye brow dormers, and stone window sills provides additional decorative elements. Building 12 has not been painted like many of its neighbors through-out the complex.

As part of the original plan and one of the first apartment buildings completed Building 12 is a critical component of the original scheme. The apartment buildings constructed as part of Phase 1 and 2 of the Buckingham Complex were constructed according to the original scheme and design as developed and laid out by Wright. After 1938, with the construction of the additional phases the decision was made to augment and vary the original plans according to residents input. Consequently, as part of the original phase of construction and as a tangible representation of the authentic scheme, Building 12 is an integral component of the original 1937 design.

6. **Alterations and Additions:** As conceived, few alterations mar the superior design and plan of Buckingham Apartments. The exteriors remain true to the architect's original plans, and provide a uniquely unspoiled example of garden apartment architecture and planning from the 1930s.

Building 12 remains essentially intact. New windows were added in the 1980s. The building's plan and exterior composition remain unchanged. Throughout the various development phases of the Buckingham apartment complex changes were made as construction progressed. Freed celebrated the evolution of the design from experience on the site and guided by tenant preferences. Additionally, with the death of Allie Freed and the new-direction by Frances Freed the appearance of the complex changed with new siting and landscape arrangements. Frances Freed dealt with the harsh realities of economics and increasing construction costs. Allie

Freed, until the time of his death, remained committed to the success of Buckingham and assisted the development with large sums of his personal finances.

After the completion of Phase 1 and 2, based on tenant recommendations, the owner painted more of the buildings white, widened the streets, and eliminated the garages.¹¹ Larger buildings, arranged around U-shaped courtyards became the dominant scheme, altering the original conceptual plan for the development of the remainder of the site. The site within the complex proposed for a school was developed for apartments after Arlington County built a school nearby. Land originally set aside for a community center, was sold as an out parcel in the 1940s, and the community center was never built at Buckingham. The last of the buildings, erected in 1953, are easily identified as integral components of the Buckingham complex, although their design reflects a more modernistic design environment, and subsequently the buildings lack the detail typical of Phase 1 and Phase 2 buildings.

B. Historical Context:

Summary History of the Neighborhood

Building 12 is located in what today is known as Ballston, in Arlington County, Virginia. Ballston is one of Arlington's oldest and most historic communities. Ballston has been a crossroads of commerce and transportation since before the American Revolution. Known historically by a variety of names including Birch's Crossroads, Thompson's Crossroads, and Ball's Crossroads, the intersection of Wilson Boulevard and Glebe Road held the traditional tavern and a blacksmith shop that served as the link to social as well as commercial activities. Until the advent of the rail, the Crossroads was a major thoroughfare for trade between riverside towns and the plantations and agricultural villages of Virginia. Wilson Boulevard, named after President Wilson, was formerly Awbrey's Ferry Road and originated at the Ferry dock in what is now Rosslyn, while Glebe Road stretched between Alexandria and the Falls Bridge.

Garden Apartments

Apartment buildings were constructed with great speed and in great numbers during the 1920s and 1930s in the metropolitan area. The population in Washington and its suburbs increased tremendously in the years prior to the war, and the population remained much higher after the war had concluded. The federal work force tripled in numbers between 1916 and 1918.¹² The 1920 census revealed that, for the first time, the majority of Americans lived in urban and suburban settings, and that the suburbs

¹¹ Cooper, Lee. "New Ideas Used for Model Housing." The New York Times. January 9, 1938. p. 1.

¹² Goode, James. Best Addresses. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988. p. 173.

were growing at a much faster rate than the urban cores.¹³

The two types of housing, single-family houses, and multi-family dwellings, accommodated the expanding urban and suburban population. Standard urban lots typically resulted in narrow, deep buildings with dark side lots. Suburban development often continued this pattern. Speculators subdivided land into rectangular lots that expanded the urban grids into the countryside with little concern for the existing landscape or the conservation of open space. One reason for increased popularity of rental housing was the cost of home ownership. Eighty-five percent of the houses built in 1936 were priced for those in the upper ten percent income bracket.¹⁴ Not only were houses difficult for the average American to purchase, they were in short supply. Studies determined that the United States had a housing shortage of as many as 10,000,000 units.¹⁵ The concepts of garden apartments and garden city planning provided developers the framework to build more attractive affordable apartment buildings, which were desperately needed in the 1920s and 1930s. The construction of garden apartments in the metropolitan area reached a peak in the mid-1930s and early 1940s. Hundreds of garden apartment complexes were constructed during these years throughout the area.

During the 1920s, "the advent of freestanding apartment houses with large amounts of open space an integral part of the scheme" was a new concept.¹⁶ Developers hoped that by providing open space and landscaped gardens around the apartments they could dispense with many of the stigmas attached to city apartment buildings particularly in Washington. These new "garden" apartments offered superior air circulation, more pleasing views, and enhanced light in each apartment.

The earliest garden apartments appeared in Washington in the 1920s. Noted apartment building historian, James Goode defines garden apartments as "a group of two-or-three-story buildings without lobbies or elevators arranged together in a landscaped setting."¹⁷ The first garden apartment in the city was developed by Allen E. Walker, and constructed in 1921-22. Located adjacent to the Soldier's Home at 124-126-128-130 Webster Street, N.W., the buildings were modeled after the famous Pomander Walk community in London.¹⁸ The complex, known as Petworth Gardens, was designed by Washington architect Robert Beresford, who used red brick, hipped roofs,

¹³ Wright, Gwendolyn. Building The Dream: A Social History of Housing in America. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1981. p. 195.

¹⁴ New York Times, February 14, 1937. p. 4RE.

¹⁵ Washington Post, May 16, 1937. p. 1.

¹⁶ Goode, James. Best Addresses. page 173.

¹⁷ Goode, James. Best Addresses. page 183.

¹⁸ "Construction of First Unit of Petworth Gardens Begun." The Evening Star. October 8, 1921.

decorative dormer windows, glazed sleeping porches, arched doors and eaves to create a suburban, residential, small-scale quality for the development. Beresford used the same design for each of the six buildings in the complex. The landscaping was limited to narrow, rectangular lawns which separate each building. James Goode further discusses the city's earliest garden apartments as unsuccessful architecturally because: "...their elements were poorly related to one another. The idea works best when the buildings are grouped together harmoniously around a spacious landscaped courtyard."¹⁹

Colonial Village in Arlington County, Virginia was the vision of developer Gustave Ring. Ring had survived the Depression with careful management of his Westchester Apartment development in Washington. He saw the severe housing shortage of the 1930s as an opportunity to develop a large garden apartment complex. Ring purchased a tract of land, ideally located close to the city via the Key Bridge and Georgetown. Ring's architects Harvey H. Warwick, Sr., and Francis Koenig produced carefully conceived apartment building designs within park-like settings. Colonial Village was the area's first garden apartment complex designed as a planned community, with adjacent shopping developed by Ring and meticulous attention to amenities and the comforts of the renters. The success of Colonial Village was immediate, the first phase was completed in 1935 with 276 apartments, and a waiting list of 10,000 people.

The Buckingham Apartment Complex also in Arlington, Virginia equalled these in both vision and practical application. The success of Buckingham Apartments was directly related to its appeal to the average government worker, and to the carefully integrated architecture and landscape plan, which made the apartments an affordable alternative to the usual city apartment building. Buckingham Apartments offered a unique residential enclave of domestically scaled apartment buildings that was closely associated with and enhanced by a courtyard, garden setting. Although built on farmland in a developing suburban neighborhood, the rental apartment venture was met with enthusiasm and the apartments rented quickly.

Construction of the Buckingham Apartment Complex

The Buckingham Apartment Complex holds significance primarily for its important architectural and historical role as one of the largest, middle-class planned communities in the United States. Designed and constructed in the period of rapid suburban expansion of the 1920s and 1930s, the Buckingham Apartments was a prototype, multi-family development in suburban Washington. As conceived, the Buckingham Apartment Complex was to be the largest and one of the earliest garden apartment developments in Arlington County. Although the land that developer Allie Freed purchased was essentially in an undeveloped part of Arlington, he believed that increased automobile ownership, and public transportation made the site not only accessible but attractive for its scenic beauty and tranquil setting. The original plan was to occupy 100 acres around the intersection of North Glebe and North Pershing

¹⁹ Goode, James. Best Addresses. page 183.

Roads, with 2,000 families eventually residing in the complex.

The appeal of Buckingham Apartment Complex in 1937, was the new and fresh idea of living in a garden apartment complex. The Colonial Revival style buildings clustered around a center courtyard offered the best in garden apartment living: sunlight, privacy, varied buildings and a natural setting. The high-quality construction and attention to detail were unusual for middle-class apartments.

With the completion of all six-phases, there were 183, 2-story Colonial Revival apartments buildings in the Buckingham Apartment complex. (Nine buildings were demolished in the 1970s.) The building's arrangement and setting suggest a small, rural community rather than a large, city apartment complex. The buildings contain apartments ranging in size from the smallest with two rooms, to the largest with seven rooms. The rectangular-shaped apartments are sited close to the street at various angles, or arranged around formal courtyards which open up to the street. In the earliest phases ground-floor access through rear entrances opened onto rear courtyards and walkways. Subsequent developments in the complex eliminated rear access, and forced all activity to the interior courtyards. Each building is connected to the garden walk by individual sidewalks, which lead from the main "outside" streets as well as from the individual buildings. This careful site-planning and concern for light and ventilation for the apartment residents marks the caliber of the Buckingham design concept.

The design and facade composition of Buckingham Apartment Complex is attributed to Henry Wright, Allan Kamstra, and Albert Leuders. All three architects had recently completed the Chatham Village Garden Apartments in Pittsburgh, acknowledged as one of the most significant garden apartment complexes in the country. Working together, these architects were particularly skilled at producing quality designs which closely related and enhanced the garden setting, as well as buildings that suggested in scale and character a private residence rather than a multi-residential unit.

As a rural part of the County, the land purchased by Freed had no formal landscaping. The landscaping plan, produced by H.E. Van Gelder provided for a park-like setting with oaks and elms along the streets and within the courtyards. A neighborhood shopping center was constructed at the heart of the community. Utilizing designs advocated by Stein and Bauer, the shopping area provided off-street parking and delivery areas.²⁰ The retail tenants included a barber shop, cleaners, drug store, sporting goods store, and theater. The retail component of the original plan helped Buckingham to realize the ideal of neighborhood self-sufficiency.

Buckingham remains significant today as a well-planned, designed and constructed garden apartment community. The Buckingham Complex maintains essentially intact the character-defining features for which the complex is recognized as an Arlington County local historic district. The plan, financing and design of the Buckingham apartments provides important insight into the movement to provide affordable, housing for large numbers of Americans. Henry Wright and Allie S. Freed comprised

²⁰ The Arlington Heritage Alliance, Inc. Draft "National Register of Historic Places Nomination for Buckingham." 1991.

a formidable team. Together they produced a unique and successful housing project employing Wright's concepts for planned communities, and Freed's vision for privately financed housing within the confines of market-driven development. The location of Buckingham in the Nation's Capital, Freed's intimate association with the Roosevelt's and Wright's significance as a planner combined to make Buckingham a project worthy of wide coverage in the popular press. The influential press attention coupled with the immediate success of Buckingham contributed to the endorsement by residents and the real estate industry of the lessons of Wright's earlier projects -- elimination of lot lines, large-scale planning, and viability of high-quality, moderate-cost rental housing.²¹ The strategy of Buckingham which combined a self-sufficient community with low-cost yet flexible construction set Buckingham apart from other garden apartment developments constructed through the United States in the 1930s and 1940s. Oscar Fisher summarizes the significance of Buckingham:

If we are not to be satisfied with building a few scattered Utopias which it is impracticable to reproduce in great numbers, it is to projects like Buckingham that we must turn: here are physical patterns of the future; here is the beginning of a new kind of business.²²

²¹ The Arlington County Heritage Alliance, Inc. "Draft National Register Nomination for the Buckingham Complex." 1991

²² Fisher, Oscar. "Buckingham: Housing Laboratory." 1938. p. 70.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION:

A. General Statement

1. **Architectural Character:** Building 12 like all the buildings within the Buckingham apartment complex (except one modern-styled apartment) is designed in the Colonial Revival style. The building is a two-story, common bond brick structure with a gabled roof, and eyebrow dormers. Brick quoins mark the corners of the building. The building is divided into three sections, a central projecting portion and two flanking sides. The scale and detailing of each section mirrors that of single-family residential structures found throughout Arlington. The illusion of single-family dwellings provided a sense of life in a village rather than a large apartment complex. The central portion of the building is capped by a gabled pediment, with an eyebrow window set within. Eyebrow dormers are centered above the two side entries. The doorways provide the decorative focus on all the buildings throughout the Buckingham complex. The central entry of Building 12 is marked by a swan neck pediment, with a flat stone surround. The side entries are marked by segmentally arched pediments, with flat stone surround. The architects set the buildings within the complex apart by employing a variety of entry trims and surrounds. Eleven different types of cast stone doorways, including broken pediments, segmental arches, and stylized jack arches, mark the entrances on other buildings throughout the complex.

Building 12 is twelve bays in width, with three separate entries and three stairwells leading to twelve one-bedroom apartments.

2. **Condition of fabric:** The general condition of the exterior of Building 12 is excellent. Evidence of brick and mortar deterioration is minor. All the original exterior materials remain on Building 12 except for the replacement windows. The general condition of the interior of the building is fair. Over the years, apartments have been continually upgraded and little of the original trim remains. Windows have been replaced throughout Building 12. The twelve rental apartments in Building 12 are fully-occupied, reflecting the original purposes and functions of a garden apartment.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. **Overall Dimensions:** The building was planned as an elongated rectangular form, divided into three sections marked by individual entries and stairwells. The central portion projects slightly and the two flanking bays set slightly back from the building line. Building 12 measures 125'3" in length by 42'7" in width.
2. **Foundations:** Building 12 has a concrete foundation, with concrete floor slabs. The concrete foundation and concrete floor slabs were poured from a tower on-site.

3. **Walls:** The exterior walls are eight inches in width, made of red-brick and hollow tile. When the building was constructed the walls were damproofed on the inside, and the construction considered fireproof. Cinderblocks are used where nailing is required. The original designers avoided exposed wood surfaces on the exterior as much as possible, for fire protection and low maintenance. Commenting on the wall construction Freed notes that: "We made an exhaustive study of various types of wall construction. Frankly, we wanted a fireproof wall, which would be weather-tight, and which would be durable. We selected "Speedtile" with your brick as veneer because we would get these features we wanted to obtain and a sturdy load-bearing wall at the same time."²³
4. **Structural system, framing:** Building 12 was constructed as a fireproof structure with brick load bearing walls, and concrete frame and floors. The load bearing walls are supported in the basement through a system of concrete poured beams and posts.
5. **Chimneys:** A single brick chimney is located at the peak of the gable within the eastern section of the building.
6. **Openings:**
 - a. **Doorways and doors:** The three main entries in Building 12, are a wood panelled and glass door, enclosed by cast stone surrounds. The pediments are also cast stone. The original supplier of the cast stone door surrounds, Edmonds Art Stone Company, notes that they provided materials for 125 entrances of eleven different varieties of stone, as well as sills, lintels, belt courses and copings.

Each ground floor apartment in Building 12 has a rear door opening to the play areas and landscaped gardens behind the building. These openings are more utilitarian in appearance than the front entrances. They are wood and glass panelled doors, with metal screen doors affixed to the outside molding. The rear doors do not have stone surrounds.
 - b. **Windows and shutters:** The original windows in Building 12 were wood, six-over-six, and four-over-four, double-hung windows. Windows are paired flanking each entry and smaller, single windows are located on the interior of each facade. Small wood shutters are located at all the paired windows. These shutters are purely decorative and are smaller than the actual size of the window. The original windows were replaced with aluminum double hung windows in the 1980s. The aluminum windows have flush muntins, and lack the silhouette provided by the original wood windows.

²³ Letter from Allie S. Freed to Mr. E.T. Chowning, president United Clay Products Company, December, 1937.

The original wood double-hung windows were rot proofed, primed with aluminum paint, metal weatherstripped, and operated with sash balancers. Full screens were supplied. A new system of hanging the windows was used at Buckingham employing Unique Sash Balances instead of the usual weights. Unique Sash Balances provide and allow for: "weathertight window construction; narrow mullions and narrow trim; maximum light and more wall space; and perfectly balanced sash and trouble-free windows for the life of the building."²⁴ This necessitated a new weather stripping which was provided by the Accurate Metal Weather Strip Company of New York.

In 1937, each window had stone sills and lintels. The cast stone sills remain exposed on both the front and rear facades of Building 12. While many buildings in the Buckingham complex have splayed keystone lintels, the lintels on Building 12 are modest, flat lintels on both the first and second floor.

Air-Conditioners have been inserted in the bottom sash of many windows on the front and rear facades of Building 12.

7. **Roof:**

- a. **Shape, covering:** The gabled roof is constructed of wood rafters with the second floor ceiling hung from the wooden rafters. The original slate shingles remain on Building 12. The shingles are in excellent condition. Copper gutters and leaders drain to dry wells. A pedimented, central gable marks the main portion of the facade.
- b. **Dormers, cupolas, towers:** Eyebrow dormer vents are located above each entry. The central eyebrow is located within the pedimented, gable. The dormers are constructed of wood, and have been painted green and white on Building 12.

C. **Description of Interior:**

1. **Floor plans:** Building 12 is divided into three sections, marked by three separate entries and accessed by three stairways. Each entry serves four apartment units, two apartments on each floor to either side of the stairwell. All the apartments in Building 12 are one-bedroom apartments.

The interior arrangements of the Buckingham Apartments was planned by a master hand; Henry Wright. Wright remains one of the country's premier apartment building architects from the twentieth century. His designs for apartment buildings number in the hundreds, and Buckingham represents an excellent example of his ability to plan comfortable and modern apartment space within an economically sound budget suited

²⁴ Advertisement for Unique Sash Balances. Architectural Record. January, 1938. p. 100.

to the middle class. Buckingham Apartments offered many interior features other apartment buildings developers had yet to consider. The numerous articles in all of the local papers highlight the interest in this early garden apartment in Arlington County and describe the innovations found at Buckingham when it first opened in 1937.

Unlike grander, luxury apartment buildings where the lobby tends to be the focal point, and establishes the prestige of the apartment building, the lobbies of Buckingham Apartments were designed to be inconspicuous spaces, with few architectural details or elaboration. The lobby and corridors of each building are relatively small. Brass mail boxes provide the singular architectural embellishment in the lobby.

The apartment complex was planned with a variety of sized apartments in each building. The largest apartments containing six or seven-rooms, the smaller apartments feature two-and-three room models. By far the most popular units were the one-bedroom apartments which occupied sixty-seven percent of the complex. All the units in Building 12 are one-bedroom apartments.

2. **Stairways:** Each entry opens to a small, narrow vestibule with a metal staircase leading directly to the second floor. A simply molded chair rail runs the length of the staircase and acts as a balustrade on the east wall. The staircases in Building 12 are presently covered with carpet.
3. **Flooring:** The floor was constructed of concrete T-beams, reinforced concrete and hollow tile slabs. Forms used for the concrete were reused continuously, producing a more cost efficient method of construction. The floor as originally finished was oak block laid on hot mastic. Much of the original flooring remains in Building 12. The oak block flooring gives the appearance of parquet floors, and is generally in good condition. Several apartments have carpeting laid over the original floor. In instances where water damage has occurred as the result of a flood, the carpeting is laid directly on the concrete or plywood has been laid.
4. **Wall and Ceiling Finish:** There are no bearing partitions. Partitions are three inch gypsum with eight inch hollow tile used between apartments. The second floor ceiling is hung and is insulated with rock wool. Originally, the plaster work received three coats and was finished with casein paint. The walls are in fair condition and have received numerous coats of paint since the original application in 1938.
5. **Openings:**
 - a. **Doorways and doors:** The interior doors are flush faced and have metal bucks. A variety of narrow wood trim has been identified in Building 12. The trim ranges from a simple turned molding to a flat, unornamented molding.

- b. **Windows:** The replacement aluminum windows are surrounded by the original wood molding. The windows are six-over-six double hung sash, and four-over-four double hung sash. The aluminum muntins are very narrow, unlike the original wooden muntins.
6. **Decorative features and trim:** The interiors of each apartment are simply ornamented with molded trim around the doors and windows. This trim is narrow, and in many cases is not the original. Kitchens and bathrooms throughout Building 12 feature a variety of fixtures dating from the 1950s through the present day. The bathroom tile and several kitchen cabinets may be original in Apartment 3 in 4011 5th Street of Building 12.
7. **Hardware:** Several original decorative metal doorknobs were located in the apartments throughout the complex. In Building 12, (entry 4011 5th Street the ground floor apartment #1) a single decorative doorknob was identified. This art-deco styled fixture, made of steel or aluminum featured geometric designs typical of the 1930s. Other hardware throughout the apartments in Building 12 are replacement or upgraded fixtures. The original metal kitchen cabinets and bathroom fixtures have been removed in most of the kitchens.
8. **Mechanical equipment:**
- a. **Heating, air conditioning, ventilation:** The heating system was originally planned for a one-pipe system, that was changed to hot water for economy of operation. Part of the Buckingham has circulating pumps. Each apartment unit has its own boiler and oil burner. The system is designed to maintain a constant temperature of 68 degrees. It is operated automatically by thermostat control from the outside temperature, which regulates the flow of hot water from the boiler. Hot water is supplied from coils in the boiler. Originally, sixty percent of the units were equipped for both gas and electric ranges, forty percent with only gas.
- The original heating system was removed and currently new electric heat pumps located in the basements provide heat for the apartments. Residents may install air-conditioning units for an additional fee.
- b. **Lighting:** At the time of construction, all exterior wires were put underground at the owner's expense. The improved appearance, and uninterrupted views throughout the complex were considered worth the additional expense. Transformers are above ground. Circuit breakers were used instead of fuses in each apartment. Sheradized conduit was used throughout.
- Few original lighting fixtures remain. The exterior lights located on Building 12, appear to be original. They are bronze lantern type fixtures characteristic of the Colonial Revival period.

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) documentation for the Buckingham Apartment Complex is intended to provide the documentation necessary to comply with the Section 106 requirements related to the extension of North Quincy Street and the demolition of Building 12 and the Swimming Pool within the Buckingham Apartment Complex, in Arlington County, Virginia. The designation of the Buckingham Apartment Complex as a Virginia Landmark in 1992, and the recognition of its architectural and historic significance, has triggered this review process. The HABS documentation was undertaken by the firm of Tracerics, under the direction of the firm's principal Emily Hotaling Eig.

The North Quincy Street extension project involves the construction of a four-lane roadway between Wilson Boulevard and North Glebe Road. This project has been in the County's transportation plan since 1960. The adopted Ballston sector plan supports the extension of North Quincy Street as a key element in the transportation network to alleviate traffic constraints and to serve the redeveloped Ballston area.

The Master Transportation Plan - Part I, 1986, states that "the extension of North Quincy Street would facilitate north-south traffic movements between the Quincy Street/Military Road Corridor and the Glebe Road/George Mason Drive Corridor. Access to the Virginia Square area from points south would be improved, reducing the demand for traffic on nearby north-south neighborhood street to the east. As a minor arterial, North Quincy Street is expected to serve longer trips within Arlington County. To the extent that it takes traffic destined for the Ballston area off North Glebe Road, it will free up North Glebe Road, a principle arterial, to perform its function of serving through traffic."²⁶

The need for the improvement relates to the intensive level of development under construction and programmed for the Ballston area. Numerous transportation studies have reaffirmed the need for the North Quincy Street extension, including two traffic engineering studies which have analyzed traffic in the Ballston area.²⁷

As proposed, North Quincy Street would be constructed as a four-lane facility with four-foot wide planting strips with street trees and grates and sidewalk widths varying from six to ten feet. It is not possible to provide a uniform ten-foot wide sidewalk because extensive additional demolition would be required. North Fifth Street will dead-end at the newly extended Quincy Street, although the exact terminus of the road has not been determined as of May, 1994.

Form Prepared by: Laura Harris Hughes
Title: Senior Architectural Historian
Affiliation: Tracerics
Date: April, 1994

²⁶ Department of Public Works. "Environmental Assessment: North Quincy Street Extension Project." April 1991.

²⁷ Traffic Engineering Study of the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor and the Site Access and Area Road Net Analysis of the Parkington Regional Center.

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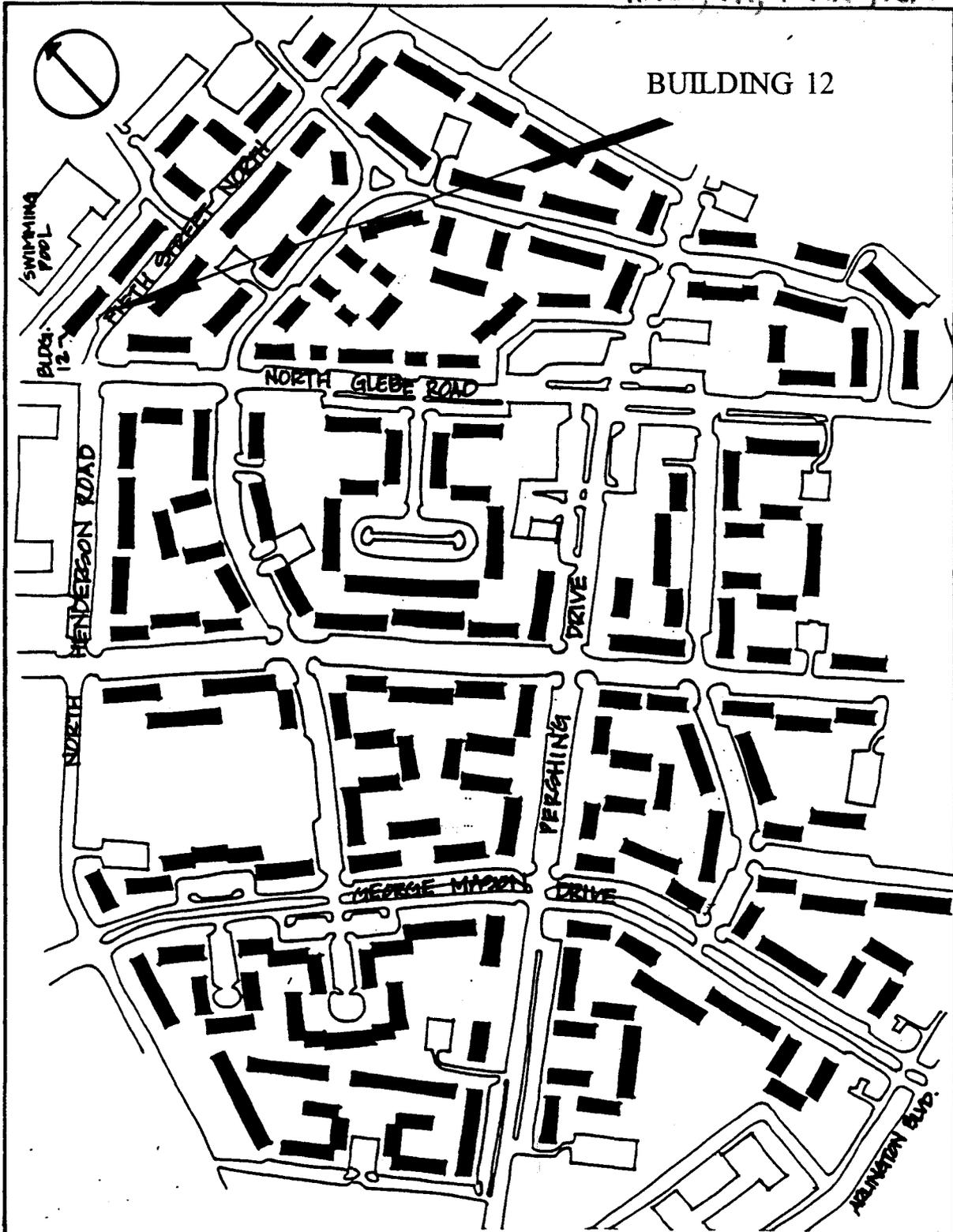
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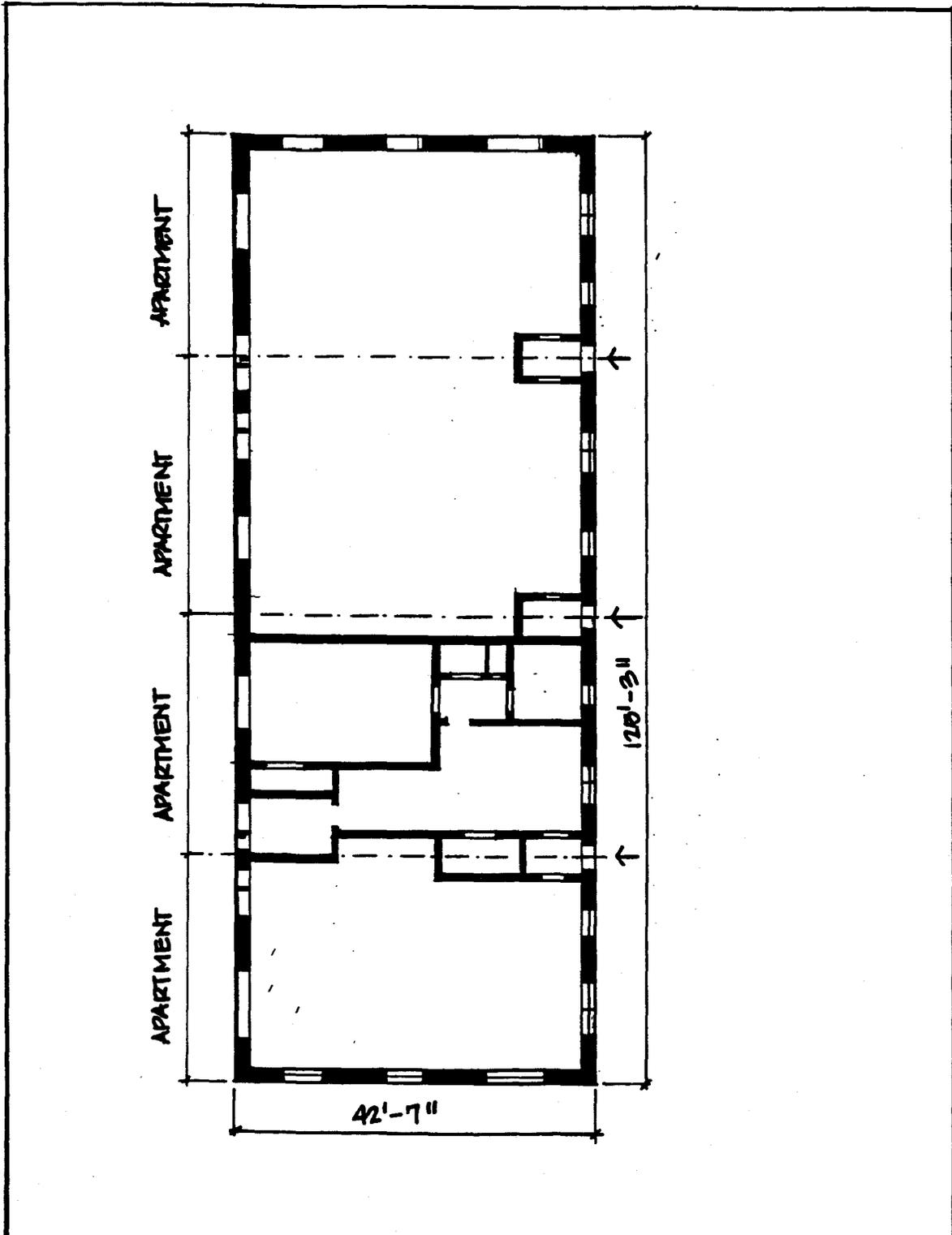
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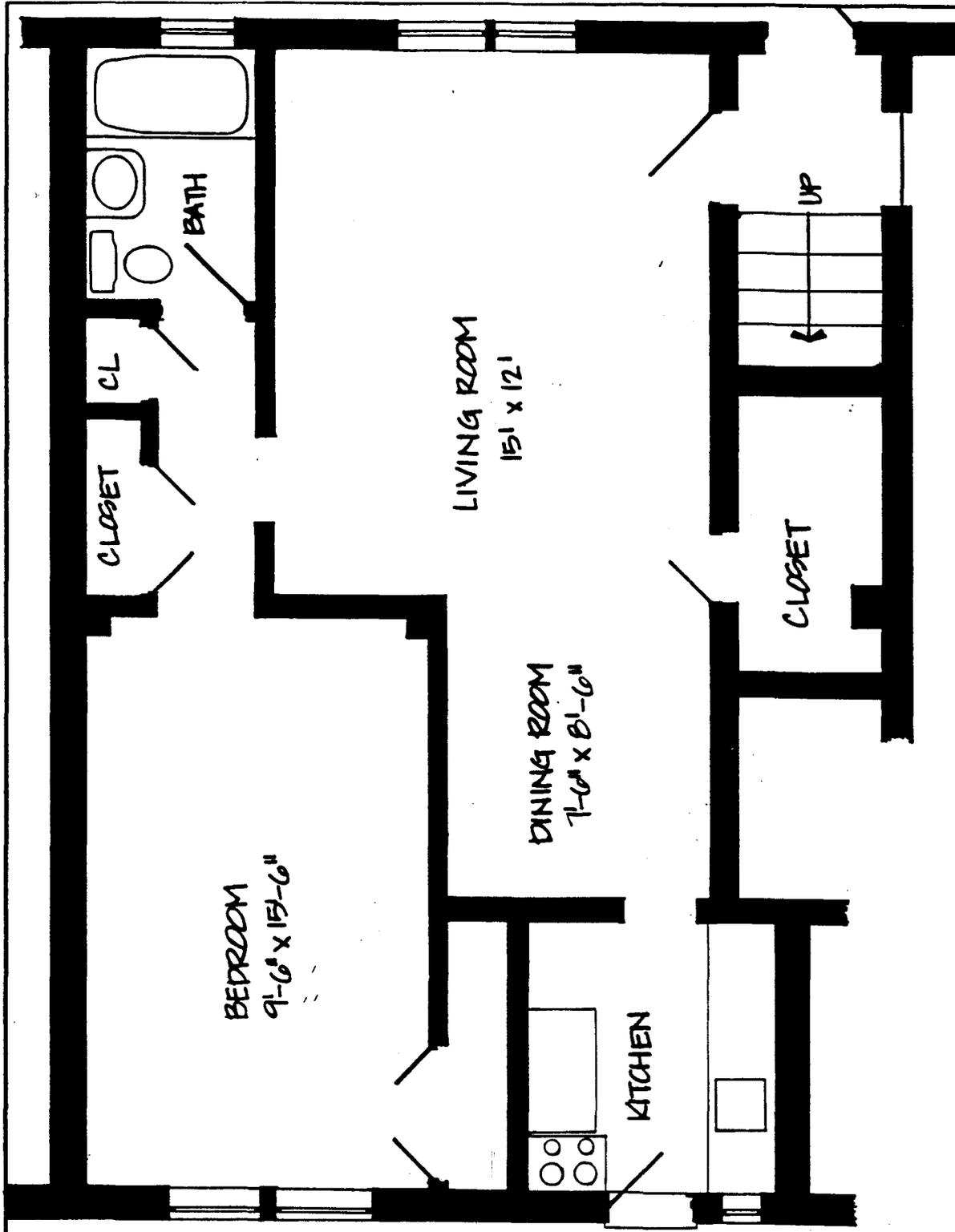
BUCKINGHAM
APARTMENTS
ARLINGTON-VIRGINIA

CURRENT PLAN-1994

HABS No.
VA-1339



BUCKINGHAM APARTMENTS ARLINGTON-VIRGINIA	BUILDING 12 - PLAN	HABS NO. VA-1339-A
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BUCKINGHAM
APARTMENTS
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

UNIT PLAN
1/4" = 1'-0"

HABS NO.
VA-1339-A