

30 WOODWARD



2311 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.; northeast corner of Connecticut Avenue and Ashmead Place

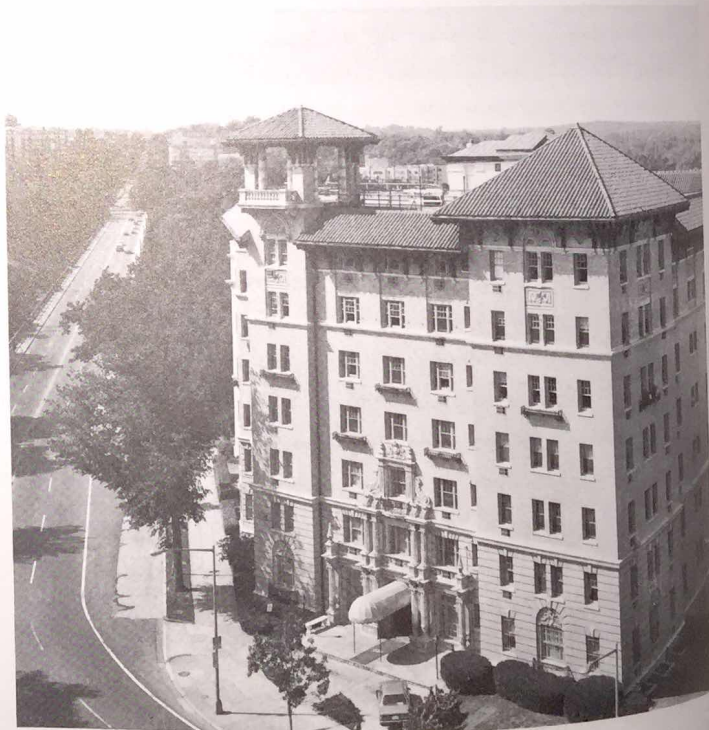
ARCHITECT: Harding and Upman, 1909

ORIGINAL APARTMENTS: 45 (14 one-bedrooms; 14 two-bedrooms; 17 three-bedrooms)

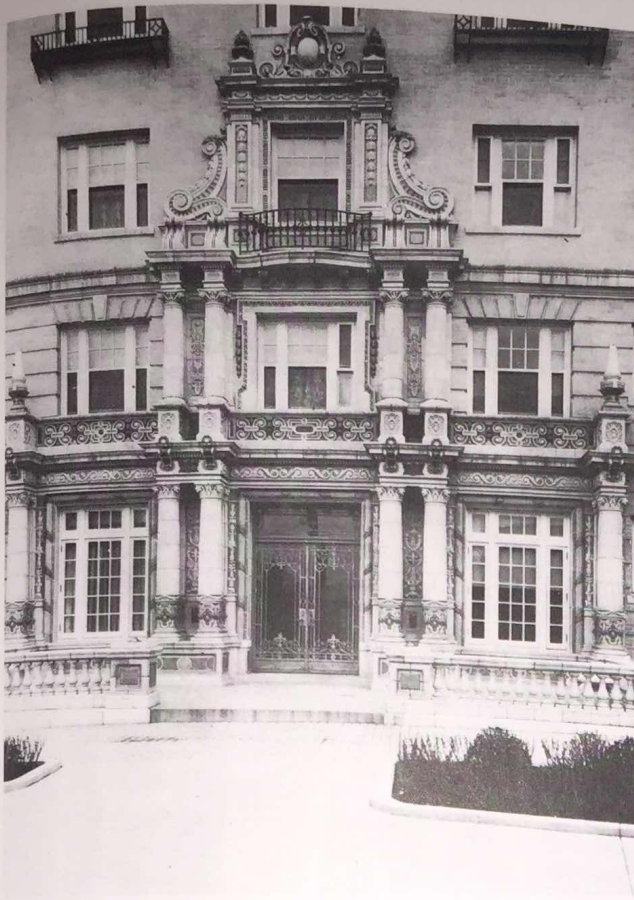
STATUS: opened as rental in 1910; converted to condo in 1973

Of the handful of Spanish Colonial apartment houses built in Washington prior to World War I when this style was fashionable, the Woodward remains the most exuberant. It was designed in a modified U shape to fit the site at Connecticut Avenue and Ashmead Place adjacent to the Taft Bridge, which had been completed only two years before the Woodward opened in 1910. The most striking feature is the elaborate baroque, three-story-high polychromed terra cotta entrance entablature with pairs of columns crowned by the third-floor window surround. The slightly projecting corner pavilions on the front facade are embellished with prominent hipped roofs; the left corner serves as an open summer house or roof pavilion, with a sweeping view of Rock Creek Park.

The Woodward was built as an investment by Samuel Walter Woodward, a native of Damariscotta, Maine, who had come to Washington in 1880 from Chelsea, Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston, with his partner, Alvin Mason Lothrop. They were seeking a recession-proof economy for their dry goods operation, originally known as the Boston Dry Goods Store. Woodward and Lothrop believed in the long-range possibilities of the Washington market not only for their department store but for real estate as well. Mr. and Mrs. Woodward reared their six children in a house on the northeast corner of Connecticut



The Woodward was one of six apartment houses built as investments by Samuel W. Woodward, founder of the Boston Dry Goods Store, now known as Woodward and Lothrop.



The Woodward's elaborate Spanish Colonial entrance, shown here, and other details, including the summer pavilion on the roof, were based on the design of a New York apartment house, the Hendrik Hudson, built in 1906 at Riverside Drive and 110th Street.

and Wyoming avenues near his two luxury apartment houses, the Woodward and the Woodley. Woodward built four other smaller apartment houses elsewhere in the city—two with names derived from his own, the Wood and the Ward, plus the Damariscotta and the Eckington. He also built several commercial buildings for investments, the largest of which was the Woodward Office Building at 15th and H streets, N.W.

The Woodward's forty-five apartments ranged from two to six rooms, each with kitchen and bath. The most prominent apartments are the set of three duplex units over the entrance, which form the No. 7 tier. They were designed with the dining room, kitchen, pantry, parlor, and library on the lower level and the bath and three bedrooms above. The largest flats are found in the No. 2 tier, in the right rear, with parlor, dining room, three bedrooms, bath, kitchen, and pantry. Perhaps the most

unusual original design feature was the bank of four elevators—a large number for a medium-sized building. Two passenger elevators faced the lobby, while behind were located a servants' elevator and a freight elevator.

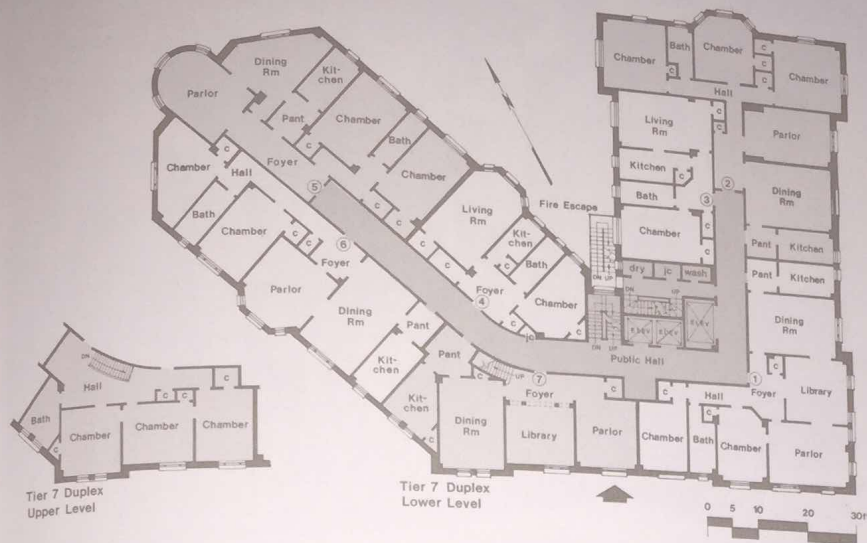
The rectangular lobby, with the office to the right and parlor and telephone room to the left, was designed with mosaic floors, buff Caen stone walls, and white marble wainscoting. The original woodwork in the apartments varied from mahogany to oak, according to the original rental price. Tile floors and walls originally lined each bathroom and kitchen. Amenities included a roof garden with a summer pavilion, a mail chute on each floor connecting to a public mailbox in the lobby, an outlet in each apartment leading to a central vacuum system, a room to the left of the lobby arranged as a doctor's office, and a wall safe in each apartment. The spacious basement contained a "social hall" for parties, a billiard room, barber shop, servants' bath, and individual storage lockers.

The Woodward was basically unchanged until it was sold in 1968–69 by the trustees of the Alonzo O. Bliss Estate to the Landmark Companies, owned by J.E. Bindeman and his son, David P. Bindeman. The Bindemans renovated the entire building and reopened it in September 1970. Apartments remained spacious, and a second bathroom, created from a large closet, was added to many. The small public parlor was detached from the lobby and added to the adjacent doctor's office. The servants' hall on each floor—with its toilet, elevator, and janitor's closet—was converted to a laundry. In addition, four new apartments were developed from unused basement space. The Woodward has no garage but provides eight parking spaces behind the building.

The Bindemans were the first real estate firm to buy pre-World War I Washington apartment houses for renovation. They chose only buildings in good locations. The cost of renovations—rewiring, new plumbing, new elevators, new roofs, new heating systems, and new baths and kitchens—usually equalled the purchase cost. By doubling the rents, the cost of remodeling was repaid in three years. In 1973 they converted the Woodward to a condominium, one of the earliest in Washington. Since then the Woodward's board of directors has made significant improvements, including restoring the red-tile



One of the most elegant classical apartment house lobbies in Washington is at the Woodward; note the unique elevator-cab entablatures.



The 1909 Woodward was the second apartment house with duplex apartments—unpopular and rare in Washington until the 1960s.

roof, repointing the exterior brickwork, and restoring the ceilings of the public corridors, which had unfortunately been lowered during the first remodeling.

ARCHITECTS HARDING AND UPMAN

Harding and Upman were Samuel N. Woodward's favorite architects, designing not only the Woodward apartments but the Woodward Building at 15th and H streets, N.W., and the Woodward and Lothrop department store as well. A native of Rochester, Minnesota, Frank Upman practiced architecture in Washington from 1903 until close to his death in 1948. He was associated with architect Henry Ives Cobb before forming a partnership with Clarence L. Harding in 1904. While a partner with Percy C. Adams (Upman and Adams) from 1924 to 1948, his firm designed the Chevy Chase Theatre (now the Avalon) on Connecticut Avenue, a number of important public schools in Washington suburbs, hospitals for the Army and Navy departments, and post offices across the country. In ad-

dition to serving as president of the Washington chapter of the American Institute of Architects and president of the Allied Architects, he supervised the drawing of plans for the Longworth House Office Building on Capitol Hill.

There is no doubt that the facade of the Woodward was influenced by earlier buildings in both Washington and New York. Perhaps the most influential predecessor was the Hendrik Hudson apartment house at Riverside Drive and 110th Street in Manhattan, designed in 1906 by the architectural firm of Rouse and Sloan. Remarkably similar to the Woodward in massing and general features, it too had a Spanish red-tile roof and a pair of hipped roof summer pavilions that served as part of the roof garden. An account of the Hendrik Hudson, with numerous photographs, which Harding and Upman must have seen, was published in *Apartments of the Metropolis* in 1908. Two other local pre-World War I buildings also feature elaborate Spanish Colonial doorways—the Cordova apartment house by Waddy B. Wood, at Florida Avenue and 20th Street, N.W., and the Spanish Embassy, by George Oakley Totten, at 2801 16th Street, N.W.

A CENTURY OF WASHINGTON'S DISTINGUISHED APARTMENT HOUSES

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ADDRESSES



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