

## HISTORIC MOUNT PLEASANT Journal LIVING IN AN HISTORIC DISTRICT: FOUL DEEDS

November 2023

Our Historic Mount Pleasant (HMP) Newsletter strives to inform community members about [historic district permit requirements](#), technical issues and solutions, and other aspects of the historic district, including its history. This month's newsletter highlights the legal, systemic racism that shaped the growth of Washington D.C. and permeated life in our neighborhood as it developed.

By Jonathan Herz

### Covenants

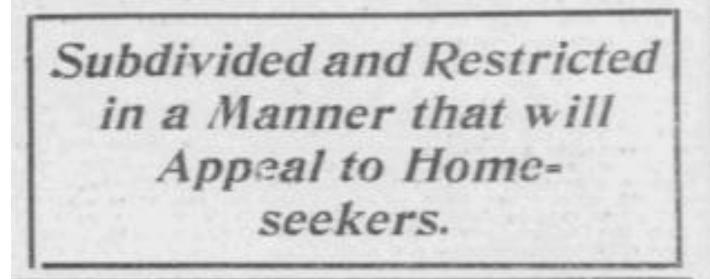
Before zoning ordinances became common, residential property deeds used covenants to regulate the height, lot occupancy, use and other building characteristics. Deeds could also forbid things like exterior color scheme and landscaping changes or construction of hotels or apartments. The reason? As one article in the May 15, 1937, Evening Star put it, "[to keep the standards of \[the\] neighborhood high.](#)"

And often, covenants also prohibited selling, leasing, use or occupancy "[by any person other than one of the white or Caucasian race, except such as may be serving as domestics for the owner or tenant of said lot, while said owner or tenant is residing thereon.](#)"

While residential racial restrictions were almost always practiced without explicit covenants, after 1910 when [millions of Black Americans moved from the South to the Northeast, the Midwest and the West](#) to escape Jim Crow segregation and seek prosperity, racially restrictive covenants -- well documented by [Helen C. Monchow's 1928 report](#) on the subject -- became common and widespread around the country.

The [Mapping Segregation in Washington DC](#) project by former Mt. Pleasant resident Mara Cherkasky and Sarah Jane Shoenfeld, shows all of Mount Pleasant restricted in 1940. You had to go east of 13<sup>th</sup> St. NW to find areas occupied by non-whites. They write:

"Although eventually outlawed, racial covenants had a lasting imprint on the city. Their association of Whiteness with higher property values led to decades of disinvestment in areas where most Black



residents lived. Their legacy remains visible in the unequal distribution and quality of public resources such as parks, hospitals, and grocery stores and in the persistence of segregated neighborhoods and schools. Finally, by barring Black access to wealth-building through real estate, covenants are behind today's vast racial wealth gap in DC."

And Black Americans were not just excluded from new developments. Often, established Black neighborhoods in what had become highly desirable residential areas for whites were condemned and replaced by parks, schools, and highways. In 1911, the land for Meridian Hill Park on 16<sup>th</sup> St. NW was condemned at the behest of Mrs. John B. Henderson -- who described the area as worse than "the most unsightly of dumping grounds" -- for use as a public park and home for the new Lincoln Memorial. The Memorial was not built there, but the "cascades and fountains" she proposed were. No trace remains of the vibrant Black communities that occupied what are today Meridian Hill/Malcolm X Park, Fort Reno Park in Tenleytown, and other vanished Black neighborhoods in the District.

**"Three squares of ground were purchased for Meridian Hill Park. Every inch of it could be elaborated as a part of the monument. In front is an opportunity for cascades and fountains which could surpass anything of the kind in the world. Very imposing would also be the immediate view from below, looking up broad steps—cascades and the battlements surrounding the monument."**

Washington's newspapers were enthusiastic about covenants. A writer in the [April 13, 1929 Evening Star](#) cites Ms. Monchow's 1928 report's findings:

"The man who buys a subdivision lot today looks to it carefully to see that the deed to his lot limits him as to just what he can build thereon in order that he may be spared a shack, factory, garage used as residence, or some other inappropriate building on the lot adjoining his property or at the corner of the block, and so that he may be sure of the color and race of his next door neighbor..."

These practices were also fully backed by the federal government. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) began requiring redlining after its establishment in 1934. Its 1936 Underwriting Manual, rationalized this practice by claiming that no loan could be economically sound if the property was located in a neighborhood that was or could become populated by Black people, since "A change in social or racial occupancy generally leads to instability and a reduction in values. The protection offered against adverse changes should be found adequate before a high rating is given to this feature."

In 1948, the Supreme Court ruled that such racial covenants could not be legally enforced, but in reality, discrimination persisted against persons described as "of the African or Negro, Japanese, Chinese, Jewish or Hebrew races, or their descendants." Progress was slow. Ms. Cherkasky writes that after that Supreme Court decision, Black people started moving onto formerly white blocks, and white flight, accelerated by the Brown v. Board of Education decision, opened up more areas to Black buyers. Realtors began showing Mount Pleasant houses to Black Americans in the mid-1950s.

It was not until the 1968 Fair Housing Act that racial covenants became illegal, but enforcement has always been problematic.

## MT. PLEASANT HISTORY

### Meet the Neighbors

On February 1, 1927, ten years after construction of their houses, the sixty-seven homeowners in the 1800 block of Lamont St., NW in Washington DC, "for their mutual benefit, as well as for the best interests of the said

community and neighborhood," signed a binding agreement to ensure that none of their properties could be sold to "negroes or any person of the negro race or blood."

Now, therefore, in consideration of the premises and the sum of one dollar (\$1.00) each of the other in hand paid, the parties do hereby mutually covenant, promise and agree each with the other and for their respective heirs and assigns, that no part of the land now owned by the parties hereto, a more detailed description of said property being given after the respective signatures hereto, shall ever be used or occupied by, or sold, conveyed, leased, rented, or given to negroes or any person or persons of the negro race or blood. This covenant shall run with the land and bind the respective heirs and assigns of the parties hereto for the period of fifty (50) years from and

Around that same time, identical agreements were being adopted on other Mount Pleasant streets that did not already have these restrictions. You can find deeds for your DC property at the [Recorder of Deeds](#) website. Their records start in August 1921, after many Mount Pleasant houses were built, but deed covenants and petition covenants like the Lamont Street one, can often be found attached to later property transfers.

Some real estate ads could be completely brazen, with headlines like, "White People Only!" in the [May 6, 1906 Washington Times](#). Browsing the [August 04, 1928, Evening Star](#) Real Estate Section (Page 18) you see, almost side-by-side, two ads for new developments, each restricted in their own way:

**Woodley Park**

THIS highly restricted community of distinctive homes is ideally situated—accessible yet secluded, it ranks as one of the most desirable residential sections in the Nation's Capital.

Here you are but 12 minutes' drive from downtown and only a couple of blocks from Connecticut Avenue—far enough to be assured of absolute privacy without being isolated.

Here you may live in an environment of culture and refinement among many of the District's most influential families.

H Street Cars to 24th Street N.E.  
17 Minutes by Street Car to Treasury—10 Minutes by Auto

**KINGMAN PARK**

**\$6,175**

**Outstanding Colored Development**

Kingman Park, [the first D.C. neighborhood of single-family houses to be developed specifically for Black people](#), had amenities like a miniature golf course, but unfortunately, it also succumbed to the oppressive culture of the time with its own restrictions, below, against some Black Americans in the [July 19, 1930, Evening Star](#).

## Restrictions

The sale of homes in this community is restricted to colored citizens of the better class, and every effort is put forth to maintain most desirable neighborhood conditions. Home ownership and good citizenship, with ideal social surroundings, are enjoyed by all who live in Kingman Park.

Below are:

1. The [May 6, 1906 Washington Times advertisement](#) for a "Whites Only! Capitol Heights development in Prince George [sic] County.
2. The [July 19, 1930, Evening Star advertisement for Kingman Park, DC.](#)
3. The 1927 petition covenant for the 1800 block of Lamont St. NW from a 1958 deed, excerpted above, identical to petition covenants throughout Mount Pleasant. This one was attached to a deed from 1958.

THE WASHINGTON TIMES, SUNDAY, MAY 6, 1906.

**White People Only!  
Capitol Heights**

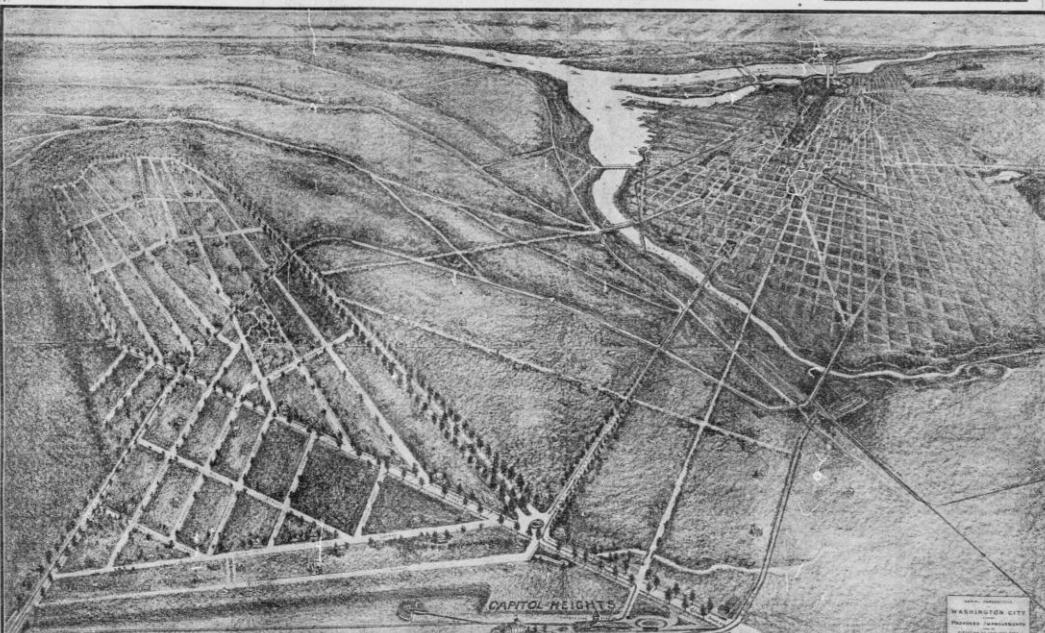
**\$1.00 Down** **\$1.00 a Month**

Prince George County, Maryland, Bordering on District Line.

**Lots \$20.00 to \$100.00** **Terms \$1.00 Down  
\$1.00 Month**

Within Easy Reach of a Poor Man's Means

No Interest	No Landlord	No Building Restrictions	No Liquor
No Taxes	No Rent to Pay	No Permits Required	No Colored People



Capitol Heights was placed on the market less than eighteen months ago. Today, five hundred people have homes there, a large school building has been erected, and a hundred children are receiving instruction. The subdivision has excellent streets, good car connection with all parts of the Capital, and is in every respect adapted as a site for an ideal suburban home. An invitation is extended to everyone to look over the property.

5c Car Fare   Graded Street   Pure Water   Public School   Pleasure Park   Perfectly Healthy  
Mail Collected and Delivered   Beautiful Driveway From City   **A Maximum Good at a Minimum Cost**   Splendid Natural Drainage   Handsome and Homelike

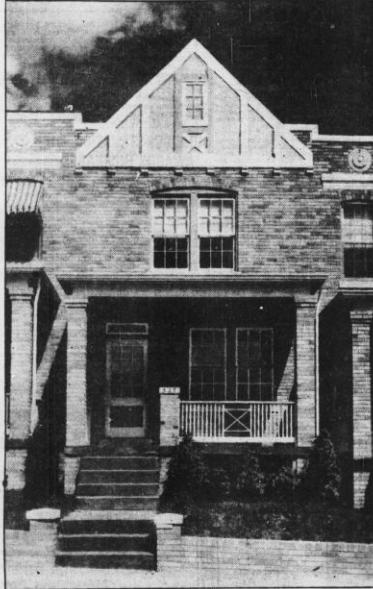
Agents on Grounds Daily. Take H St. Car--Get Off at 61st St. N. E.

**\$1.00 Down**   **61st Street and Central Ave., Capitol Heights**   **\$1.00 a Month**

Offices 214-215 McGill Building, 908 G Street N. W.  
Come Out Today, Sunday, or Any Day

# KINGMAN PARK

## *The "In-Town Suburb" for Colored*



Open for Inspection Until 9 P.M. Daily and Sunday

NEVER BEFORE HAS THERE BEEN BUILT SUCH AN EXTENSIVE COMMUNITY OF MODERN HOMES FOR COLORED HOME BUYERS

### Furnished Sample House

521 23rd St. N.E.

Furnished by R. E. Burks, Inc.

7th and "L"

EVER before has a home of such beauty and high character been offered at such a low price. You should take advantage of this wonderful opportunity to own a home in the Nation's Capital. Varying sizes and styles in prices ranging from

\$6,175.00 to \$7,250.00

"Whether you rent or whether you buy,  
You pay for the home you occupy."

### 150 HAVE BEEN SOLD

#### Location and Transportation

Kingman Park is ideally located, adjoining an extensive river park area where over three million dollars are being expended for improvements by the U. S. Government. All centrally located business establishments may be reached in fifteen minutes by street cars.

#### Trading Centers

Excellent trading facilities are furnished, not only by the stores built as a part of this community, but also by numerous chain stores, located both on Benning Road and at 15th and H Streets. There is also a new Sears, Roebuck Department Store, located only a few blocks away on the Washington-Baltimore Boulevard.

#### Schools

Excellent schools are assured by the recent purchase of 42½ acres of ground adjoining Kingman Park for the purpose of locating three new schools (Junior High, Health School and Platoon Grade School), all of which will be of most improved design.

#### Restrictions

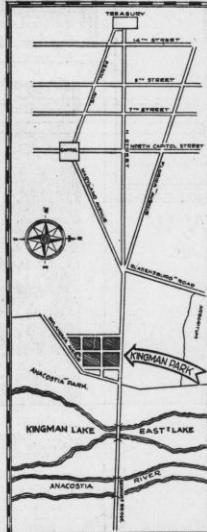
The sale of homes in this community is restricted to colored citizens of the better class, and every effort is made forth to maintain a desirable neighborhood condition. Home ownership and good citizenship, with ideal social surroundings, are enjoyed by all who live in Kingman Park.

H Street Cars to 23rd Street N.E. ----- 17 Minutes From the Treasury



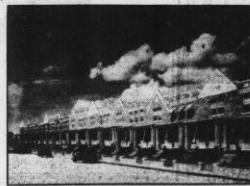
Interior View

Note the spacious proportions of this beautifully arranged home, its abundance of light, delightful cheerfulness, attractive archways, beautiful, hardwood floors, artistically paneled walls and many other features conducive to comfort and cleanliness.



#### Part of Development

Attractive exteriors, varied designs, all brick walls, concrete porches, insuring low upkeep costs; beautifully landscaped, terraces supported with brick retaining walls. Maximum home charm.



Thos. E. Clark J. E. Clark L. F. Clark  
Established 1891

THOS. E. CLARK, Inc.  
Registered Plumbing and Heating  
Contractors

"Proper Installation Pays"  
Telephone, Columbia 6356 3831 Kansas Avenue N.W.  
Washington, D. C.

H. L. RYAN CO.  
1920 Benning Rd. N.E.  
Lincoln 0801-0802

Purveyors of Lumber to the Public  
LUMBER and MILL WORK

CHARLES D. SAGER  
Builder-Owner  
924 14th Street N.W.  
Phone National 0036  
W. A. Sherwin, Sales Director  
Write or Phone for Illustrated Booklet

#### MINIATURE Golf Course

Most Completely Equipped  
Furnishes Ideal Recreation

FASCINATING AND INTERESTING AS  
GOLF, CROQUET AND BILLIARDS COMBINED

18 Holes, 25c and 20c

Benning Rd. and 23rd N.E.

Langdon Mill & Lumber Co.  
Incorporated  
2150 Bryant St. N.E.  
Pot. 2303-45  
"Service & Quality—Satisfaction"  
Lumber, Millwork, Glass, Mirrors, Paints

## A G R E E M E N T

This Indenture, made this 25th day of January, A. D. 1927, by and between the undersigned, all being owners of real estate situate in the City of Washington, District of Columbia, WITNESSETH, that:

Whereas, the said parties hereto are all owners of real estate in the District of Columbia and located on Park Road N. W. Street, both on the North side and South side of said street, said property being parts of Squares 2614 and 2606, as recorded in the Surveyor's Office of the District of Columbia, and,

Whereas, the said parties hereto desire, for their mutual benefit, as well as for the best interests of the said community and neighborhood, to improve and in any legitimate way further the interests of said community.

Now, therefore, in consideration of the premises and the sum of one dollar (\$1.00) each of the other in hand paid, the parties do hereby mutually covenant, promise and agree each with the other and for their respective heirs and assigns, that no part of the land now owned by the parties hereto, a more detailed description of said property being given after the respective signatures hereto, shall ever be used or occupied by, or sold, conveyed, leased, rented, or given to negroes or any person or persons of the negro race or blood. This covenant shall run with the land and bind the respective heirs and assigns of the parties hereto for the period of fifty (50) years from and after the date of these presents; provided, however, that if this indenture be not executed by the owners of all of the property above described and if any of the property the present owner or owners of which do not execute this indenture, be hereafter, by the owner or the owners thereof, sold, conveyed, leased, rented, given to or allowed to be used or occupied by a negro or negroes, or any person or persons of the negro race or blood, or if any of the above described property, the present owners of which have executed this indenture, be hereafter sold, conveyed, leased, rented, given to or allowed to be used or occupied by a negro or negroes or any person or persons of the negro race or blood, by or under a power or authority of a prior or superior right, title or encumbrance, then, or in either of said events, the undersigned and their several successors in ownership and their several properties now owned by them shall not thereafter be bound by this indenture.

The owner of any lot or parcel of land within the limits above described may become a party to this covenant at any time by executing and recording an instrument showing his intention to be bound thereby, this covenant thereupon to apply to such lot or parcel with like effect as if such owner had executed this instrument.

Signature of owner	Location of property	Lot No.	Square
Margaret McLain Wilson	(S) : 1810 Park Rd. :	71	2606
Philo L. Bush	(S) : 1812 Park Rd. :	70	2606
Margaret D. Bush	(S) : " " " :	70	2606
J. H. Luthy	(S) : 1814 Park Rd. :	69	2606
Eva M. Luthy	(S) : " " " :	69	2606
Matilda Comelli	(S) : 1816 Park Rd. :	74	2606
Mary Agnes Richards	(S) : 1826 Park Rd. :	77	2606
Karl Koetz	(S) : 1828 Park Rd. :	76	2606
Byron S. Adams	(S) : 1801 Park Rd. :	624	2614
Estelle P. Adams	(S) : " " " :	624	2614

Signature of owner	Location of property	Lot No.	Square
A. C. Pisapia	(S) : 1820 Park Rd.	72	2606
Carrie Pisapia	(S) : " " "	72	2606
Claughton West	(S) : 1834 Park Rd.	82	2606
Mrs. Willie A. West	(S) : " " "	82	2606
Lyda N. Ashford Exec.	(S) : 1836 " "	81	2606
Lyda N. Ashford C, S. Kimball	(S) : 1838 " "	80	2606
Margaret I. Kimball	(S) : 1838 " "	80	2606
M. Kileen Schmid	(S) : 1840 " "	79	2606
Mr. C. L. Schmid	(S) : 1840 " "	79	2606
Frank A. Novotny	(S) : 1842 " "	46	2606
Christasie Novotny	(S) : 1842 " "	46	2606
Philip Buettner	(S) : 1844 " "	45	2606
Margaret L. Buettner	(S) : 1844 " "	45	2606
Wm. Trauty	(S) : 1832 Park Rd.	83	2606
Mrs. Wm. Trauty	(S) : " " "	83	2606
H. M. McDade	(S) : 1846 " "	44	2606
Bessie C. McDade	(S) : " " "	44	2606
Cornelius W. Paxson	(S) : Park Rd.	40	2606
Marie Adams King	(S) : 1802 Park Rd.	66	2606
T. Craig King	(S) : 1802 Park Rd.	66	2606
Elmer E. Fisher	(S) : 1822 " "	57	2606
Helen T. Fisher	(S) : 1822 " "	57	2606
Jay I. Dimon	(S) : 1827 Pk. Rd.	801	2614
Harriet A. Dimon	(S) : 1827 Pk. Rd.	801	2614
Rosa M. Padgett	(S) : 1833 Pk. Rd.	823	2614
Lily M. Tingle	(S) : 1809 Pk. Rd.	800	2614
Alice A. Moseley	(S) : 1850 Park Rd.	42	2606
Walter H. Beal	(S) : 1852 Park Rd.	41	2606
Eleanor A. Beal	(S) : 1852 Park Rd.	41	2606
Dr. L. F. Davis	(S) : 1843 Park Rd.	806 & 807	2614
Grace W. Davis	(S) : 1843 Park Road	806 & 807	2614
Johanna E. Kraemer	(S) : 1841 Park Road	41	2614
Charles Kraemer	(S) : 1841 Park Road	42	2614
Elizabeth W. Essex executrix of estate F. W. -	(S) : 1835 Park Road	825	2614
Brandenburg	Lot southwest		
Ferdinand T. Schneider	(S) : corner 18th & Pk. Rd.	67	2606
Paul Sperry	(S) : 1824 Park Rd.	78	2606
Josephine Sperry	(S) : " " "	"	"
Anna L. Wilson	(S) : 1830 Park Rd.	75	2606
Iola E. Wilson	(S) : " " "	"	"
A. S. Hitchcock	(S) : 1867 Park Rd.	38	2614
Rania B. Hitchcock	(S) : " " "	"	"
John P. Sheehan	(S) : 1869 Park Road		
Sara V. Sheehan	(S) : 1869 Park Road	819	2614
Mrs. Elizabeth Beall	(S) : 1864 Park Road	110	2606
Pickens Neagle	(S) : 1858 Park Rd.	38	2606
James Milford Place	(S) : 1857 Park Road	30 & 31	2614

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February 8th, 1927, Martha E. Griggs; Susan J. Rogers; Wilamina M. Adams; Katharine M. Gordon; and on February 9th, 1927, Bessie McArthur; and on February 11th, 1927, Margaret C. Buckingham; and on February 19th, 1927, Ruth C. Schneider; and on February 23rd, 1927, Lyda N. Ashford; and on February 25th, 1927, Hilda F. Rogers; and on February 26th, 1927, Paul V. Rogers; and on March 18th, 1927, Daisy Eloise Traut; Elizabeth W. Essex; Elizabeth Brandenburg; Hilda F. Rogers; and on March 19th, 1927, Paul V. Rogers; Wilamina M. Adams; Katharine M. Gordon; and on March 21st, 1927, Francis W. Brandenburg, who are personally known to me as the parties to and the persons who executed the foregoing and annexed indenture, dated January 25th A. D. 1927; personally appeared before me in the said District of Columbia and acknowledged to said indenture to be their act and deed.

Given under my hand and seal this 6th day of April A. D. 1927.

(Notarial Seal)

W. B. Robinson

Notary Public District of Columbia

My commission expires  
March 5th, 1930.