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Rowhouses, 1810-1820 19th St. NW (left), the Irish ambassador's residence, 2244 S St. NW (center), and

## Form and Function

# Stamped With the Waddy Wood Architectural Personality

By Sarah Booth Conroy

Waddy Wood is not a name many people remember today (though after hearing it, who could forget it?). But the 100-odd buildings and houses he designed for Washington from 1895 to 1940 are among the ones people still point at and wonder about.

A good case can be made that Wood was the most prolific architect of his era. And since his era stretched over such a long and important period, it is his designs that give large sections of Washington, especially Kalorama, their architectural personality.

Wood's first Washington commission was the Capitol Traction Company Car Barn at Key Bridge and M Street in Georgetown. His last was the Interior Department at C Street between 18th and 19th Streets.

In between, he designed the World War I "tempos," the temporary structures that cluttered up the Mall for 40 years.

Wood planned inaugural stages for Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. And once, in a burst of misguided traditionalism, he got through Congress a scheme to tear off the Executive Office Building's Second Empire facade and remodel it to match the Greek Revival exterior of the Treasury Department. Only the Depression saved the Wedding Cake architecture of the EOB.

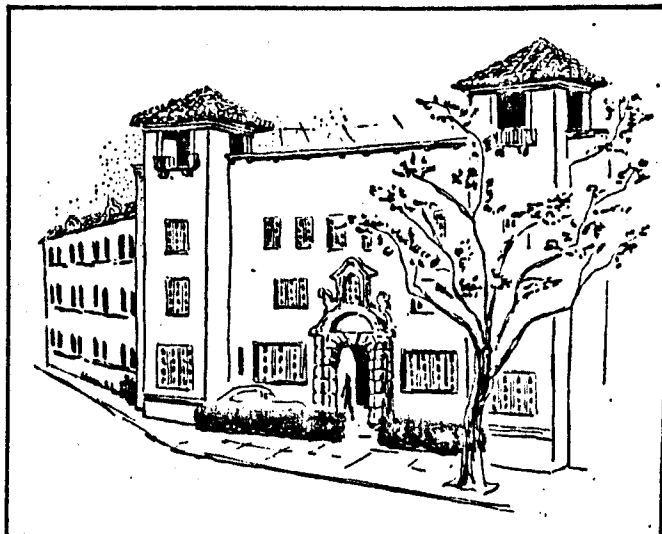
The revival of interest in Wood is due to months of hard detective work by Emily Hotaling Eig, an architectural historian interning at the National Trust for Historic Preservation while finishing her museum studies master's degree at George Washington University. Eig has had help from Gray Bryan, a student assistant who is going on this fall for his master's degree in architectural history. The two started at Woodrow Wilson House, designed by Wood, and ended in the garage attic of Lady Lindsay Hadow, a Wood daughter, in Charlottesville, Va.

They turned up all sorts of letters from Wilson and Roosevelt, as well as other social and political friends of Wood.

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Sketches by Robert Brown

The President Madison Apartments, 20th Street at Florida Avenue, all designed by Waddy Wood, below.

The products of their research should help Washingtonians and visitors know a great deal more about this city. They include an exhibit and slide show at Woodrow Wilson House, 2340 S St. NW.; a soft book, published by Preservation Press and including sketches by Robert Brown, the Wilson House administrator; and a walking tour of Wood's Kalorama houses, at 1:30 and 3 p.m. Sundays through July 29.

As Eig tells it, with help from Bryan, Waddy Wood (his wife eternally tried to get him to change his name to Wadsworth) was born in 1869 and named by his father for the first Confederate soldier killed in the War Between the States. He went to Virginia Polytechnic Institute for two years to study engineering but quit to come to Washington to work as a draftsman.

Aside from the obvious advantage of being born in Virginia close to Thomas Jefferson's major architectural works, a strong influence on his work, Wood learned his profession by studying architectural books at the Library of Congress. From 1903 to 1912 he was the principal in the firm of Wood, Donn and Deming, but he preferred to run his own show after that. It is said he was especially fond of women architects and often would give them desk space when he couldn't afford to hire them as assistants.

One of his earliest, and likely his funniest, houses was the Barney Studio house on Sheridan Circle. Built in 1902, it had stages (for the production of Alice Barney's plays warning of the evils of opium), ornate columns, mysterious balconies and peek-throughs.

According to Eig, when Wood designed the small Jewell residence on R Street in 1900, Kalorama was "still known as Kalorama Woods and was little more than a forested picnic site, dotted with a few houses."

See FORM, F3, Col. 1



Blank and Studer photo

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## The Waddy Wood Stamp

FORM, From F1

Kalorama is bounded by Massachusetts Avenue on the east, Florida Avenue in the south and Kalorama Road on the north. Connecticut Avenue divides Kalorama proper (including the ritziest part, Kalorama Circle) from the re-developing Kalorama Triangle area.

The section took its name from Joel Barlow's country home, Kalorama (Greek for beautiful view), built in 1807 at 23rd Street and Bancroft Place and demolished in 1889. The area was outside the "city of Washington," which ended at Florida Avenue. It wasn't until the 1880s that the area was divided.

Wood was a real estate speculator and did much to tout the area among his clients. He built and lived in three houses in the area himself.

Many of his designs are now embassies—the Philippine at 2253 R St. NW; the Cypriot at 2353 R; his own house and that of his partner William Deming, now the embassy of Malta at 2017-19 Connecticut Ave; and, best-known, the former home of an uncle of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Frank Delano, at 2244 S St. NW, now the Irish Ambassador's residence.

Many of the houses were more modest. He designed several groups of row houses. The 1810-1820 19th St. NW are handsome houses with red tile roofs, Flemish gables, baroque stone work, bay windows, lights courts and cream-colored brick with the trim originally sage green. According to Eig and Bryan, the six are now used variously as offices of the Founding Church of Scientology, a halfway house, and multi-family homes. Another group of Wood houses is in the 1300 block of Harvard Street NW.

The twin townhouses of Wood and

Deming at 2017-19 Connecticut had a frontage of only 45 feet on Connecticut (which was quieter before the Taft Bridge was finished). According to the researchers, Wood brought light and air to the attached houses by making a front interior courtyard.

One of the best looking of Wood's designs is the Cordova Apartments, now called the President Madison apartments, at 20th Street and Florida Avenue.

The building is marked by the Spanish Colonial style cupolas topping twin towers. Eig says some of the apartments are duplexes and some face an inner court.

A daughter, Virginia Riggs, a painter who did the frescoes in a Chevy Chase church, still lives at the house her father designed at 23rd and California Streets.

Architecturally, Wood started with the Jeffersonian classic revival, but much of his work was strongly influenced by the Spanish mission style. This derivation of Tuscan Revival was trendy at the time (it also produced the "arts and crafts" design in furniture). His best work, or at least the work that seems most interesting today, was in that style. His Georgian houses now seem rather dull beside the more romantic Mediterranean details.

Wood was not as strict a classical architect as John Russell Pope, a contemporary far better remembered for, among other buildings, the National Gallery of Art. And he wasn't nearly as romantic as George Totten, another contemporary who designed most of the Meridian Hill extravaganzas and the Turkish Embassy.

But he did work hard and succeeded in giving Washington some elegant, comfortable buildings now on their way to new appreciation and use.

