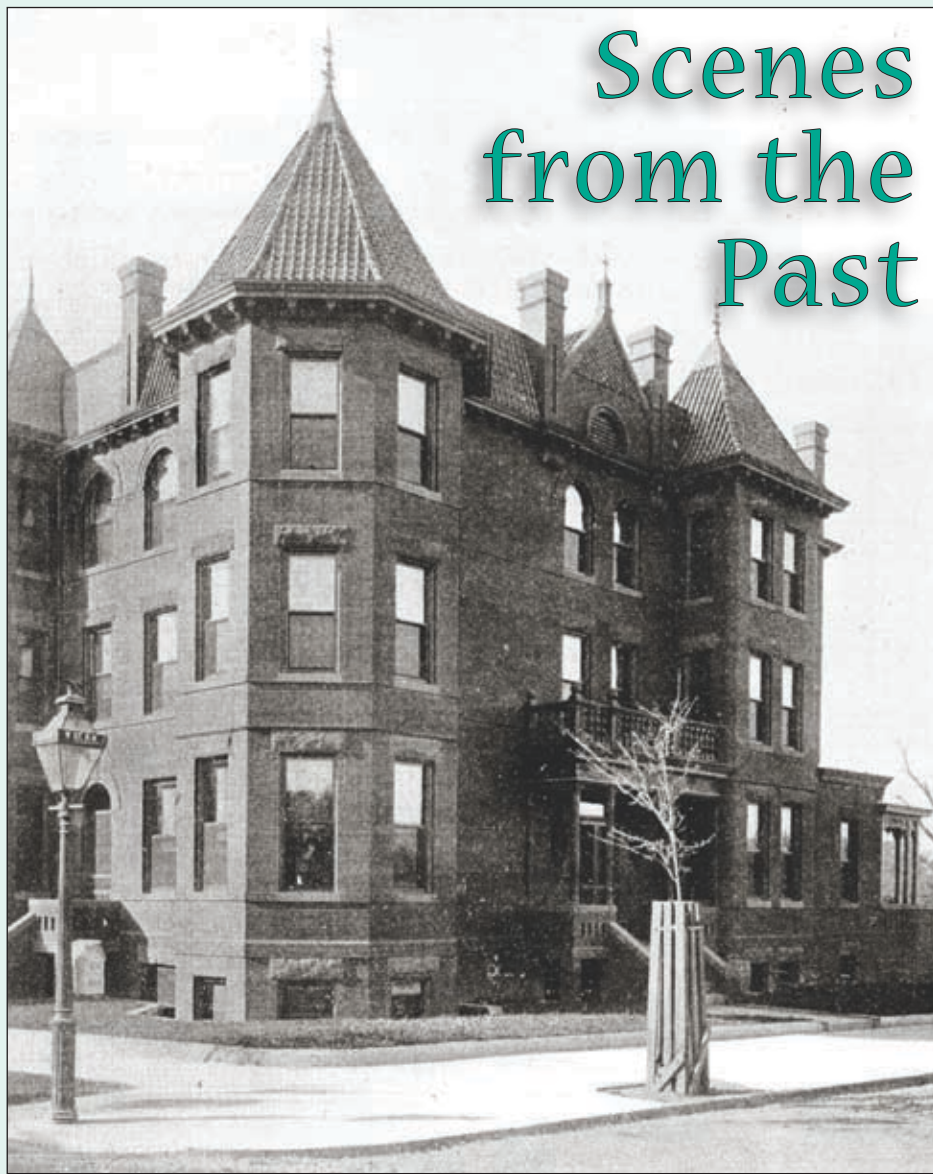


Scenes from the Past



photo—The Book of Washington (Washington Post, 1902).

1902 view of Frances Blundon's own residence in the Bloomingdale neighborhood, at the corner of 1st and W Streets, NW.

Many Washington homeowners of houses built around the turn of the 20th century are told by real estate agents and some historians that their houses were likely built by Harry Wardman, and many are advertised as such in local newspapers.

While Wardman is responsible for several thousand homes, most of the other prevalent builders of the era have largely gone unnoticed, although collectively they built far more Washington town houses than Wardman could ever imagine. One

such individual was Francis Blundon. Blundon was born in Loudoun County, Virginia on April 14, 1867. The son of contractor John V. and Fannie (Nolan) Blundon, Francis was educated in the public schools, and served as an apprentice and journeyman in carpentry for about eight years thereafter. He then started independent work as a builder in 1892, erecting approximately 700 houses in Washington during the first 10 years of his career alone. His successful commercial ventures included building the Virginia Flats for Joseph R. Portner, one of the first apartment houses in the city. Many of his projects were done in partnership with his brother, Joseph A. Blundon who lived in the Blundon family house at 3219 O Street in Georgetown.

On January 5, 1893, Blundon married Mamie Schenable, who had been born in August of 1873 in Virginia. They had two sons together – Francis Edward, born January 31, 1894, and Victor Sylvester, born February 7, 1896, both of whom eventually became salesmen in their father's real estate business.

Some examples of Blundon's developments in Washington include the seven homes from 1408 to 1420 Hopkins Place, NW built in 1896, six homes between 2817 and 2827 13th Street, NW, and 1228-1230 Harvard Street, NW built in 1904, and three at 2019-35 13th

Street, NW, built in 1911.

The Blundon family lived in his own designed and built house at 100 W Street, NW, pictured here about 1902. In June of that year, he sold the adjoining four houses for an impressive \$23,000. The Blundon family had moved there from a house located close-by at 67 S Street, NW. His brother Robert, a salesman in the real estate business joined them at the house in 1910, according to the census. That year, Blundon had a live-in African-American chauffeur named Frank R. Payner, age 23, and a live-in African-American cook named Hattie Clement, then age 30. The



photo—Paul K. Williams—The InTowner.

One example of Blundon's work can be seen on the west side of Hopkins Street, between P and O Streets, where in 1896 he built the row houses designed by William J. Palmer, located at Nos. 1408 through 1420.

house is now owned by the Soul Saving Center Church of God.

Early in his career, Blundon maintained an office at 1220 G Street, NW, and joined with partners Abin G. Belt and Robert Lee O'Brien in a construction firm coined Blundon, O'Brien & Belt, Inc., specializing in "real estate, loans, and insurance." At the time, Belt resided at 3117 13th Street, NW and O'Brien at 439 Rhode Island Avenue, NW. In 1894, he partnered with builder John W. Brashears as "Blundon & Brashears" to build the houses located between 1202 and 1218 T Street, NW, designed by Richard E. Crump. He also partnered with architect William Allard and William Freeman in several building projects.

Passenger lists from the 1920s indicate that Blundon and his wife enjoyed steamship vacations, such as a trip to Bermuda in 1926. The Blundons and their two grown, yet unmarried, sons moved to a 50-acre farm at 10000 Georgia Avenue in Forest Glen, Maryland by 1918, where they continued to reside together until after 1930. It was once part of the Getty farm, and is where the Finmark Americana condominium building stands today. Francis Blundon died in 1939.

While a law student, former DC Councilmember Vincent Orange lived in the former Blundon House at 100 W Street, and the only changes to the exterior since its original construction have been the former rear porch being filled in with a garage built towards the alley and the replacement of the original clay roof tiles with standard roofing material.

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photo—Paul K. Williams—The InTowner.

Blundon's house at 100 W Street as seen today.

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