

Mount Rainier (68-013)

Incorporated in 1910, Mount Rainier is located in northwest Prince George's County adjacent to the northeast quadrant of the District of Columbia. Oral tradition maintains that the community was named by its early developers, former army officers from Seattle, who named the area after the famed mountain in Washington state.¹ Mount Rainier developed as an early-twentieth-century streetcar suburb for the middle class, and the community retains a large and diverse collection of vernacular residences and commercial buildings constructed between 1900 and 1939.

Mount Rainier is roughly bounded by Eastern Avenue on the southwest, 28th Street on the west and Arundel Road to the north. At the intersection of Arundel Road and 34th Street, the boundary proceeds southeast, across Rhode Island Avenue to the intersection of 37th Street and Wells Avenue. From Wells Avenue, the boundary returns southwest to Eastern Avenue.²

Mount Rainier remained a rural, agricultural landscape until the early 1900s. Both the 1861 Martenet map and the 1878 Hopkins map show relatively little development in the area that would become Mount Rainier. Roads leading east to Bladensburg and west to Washington, D.C. appear on the historic maps.³ An early subdivision of the community in the 1890s failed, despite the arrival of a streetcar line in 1897 connecting Mount Rainier with the District of Columbia. Between 1900 and 1910, eight different subdivisions were platted by various companies.⁴ Construction slowly developed along the western edge of Prince George's County. Locally important real estate developers were involved in the development of Mount Rainier, including J. Harris Rogers and his brother James C. Rogers, who were also responsible for developing portions of Cottage City, Edmonston, Rogers Heights, Hyattsville, and Riverdale.⁵ In most cases, lots were sold unimproved and contractors were retained to design and erect the houses. Other lots were developed by speculative investors. Further subdivisions in the 1920s and 1930s expanded the community to the north and to the east. The commercial area of what is now "downtown," developed around the streetcar station and included grocery, hardware, and supply stores, as well as a bakery, pharmacy, and tailor shop. By the 1930s, new businesses appeared along the commercial corridor of 34th Street and provided access to a movie theater, bowling alley, banking, and auto repair shops.⁶

The gently rolling landscape of Mount Rainier was developed from 1900 to 1940 and contains mostly modest, detached, single-family dwellings of wood-frame construction.⁷ With the exception of six architect-designed buildings, the majority of the buildings in Mount Rainier are vernacular interpretations of popular architectural styles and forms. The street pattern of the community is an extension of Washington, D.C.'s rectilinear grid; however Mount Rainier's grid is oriented to the northwest. North-south streets are numbered in ascending order from west to east and east-west streets are named and ordered alphabetically from south to north. Rhode Island Avenue, a major diagonal route through the District of Columbia, cuts through the southern portion of Mount Rainier. The majority of lots within the

¹ Howard S. Berger, "Mount Rainier Historic District," National Register of Historic Places nomination form (April 2006 and April 2007), 8:7.

² Berger, "Mount Rainier," 10:1.

³ Simon J. Martenet, "Atlas of Prince George's County, Maryland, 1861, Adapted from Martenet's Map of Prince George's County, Maryland" (Baltimore: Simon J. Martenet C.E., 1861) and G.M. Hopkins, "Atlas of Fifteen Miles Around Washington, Including the County of Prince George Maryland" (Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins, C.E., 1878).

⁴ Berger, "Mount Rainier," 8:8.

⁵ Berger, "Mount Rainier," 8:10-11.

⁶ Berger, "Mount Rainier," 8:13-14.

⁷ Berger, "Mount Rainier," 7:2.

community are rectangular, between 40-50 feet wide and 120-150 feet deep with set-backs of 15 or 20 feet.⁸

Most of the buildings within Mount Rainier are residential, with the single-family dwelling as the prevailing building type. The earliest buildings in the community were constructed between 1900 and 1920 and the majority have simple plans with minimal ornamentation. However, the architecture ranges from high-style Victorian-era illustrations such as Queen Anne, Shingle, and Stick to vernacular interpretations of Greek Revival, Colonial Revival, and Craftsman. Common building forms include the I-house, front gable with wing, American Foursquare, and bungalow. Twelve mail-order houses by Sears, Roebuck & Company have been identified in Mount Rainier and reflect the Craftsman, Colonial Revival, and Dutch Colonial Revival styles.⁹ Commercial buildings in the community are centered around Rhode Island Avenue from the District line to Brentwood and on 34th Street from the avenue to north of Bunker Hill Road. Many of the commercial buildings are traditional Flat-front forms and have single-, double-, and multiple-store arrangements. Several of the commercial buildings combine residential and commercial functions.¹⁰ There are five revival-style churches in the community that were designed by local architects, one of which was designed by Murphy & Olmstead, a firm nationally known for its ecclesiastical buildings.¹¹ Public buildings include several schools, a firehouse, and City Hall.

There are six Historic Sites in the Mount Rainier community, including:

- PG: 68-013-02, Prince George's Bank, 3800 34th Street
- PG: 68-013-43, St. James Church Complex, 3628, 3700, 3706 Rhode Island Avenue
- PG: 68-013-59, Richards House, 3806 30th Street
- PG: 68-013-60, Bellman House, 4012 33rd Street
- PG: 68-013-71a, Thomas W. Smith Farmhouse, 3426 Newton Street
- PG: 68-013-71b, Ziegler Cottage, 3424 Newton Street

There are four Historic Resources in Mount Rainier:

- PG: 68-013-08, Lightbown Building, 3842 34th Street
- PG: 68-013-10, Sanitary Grocery Company, 3401 Perry Street
- PG: 68-013-36, Mount Rainier United Methodist Church, 3401 Bunker Hill Road
- PG: 68-013-39, Gonzalez House, 3434 Rhode Island Avenue

National Register Historic District

The Mount Rainier Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1989. Mount Rainier achieved significance as the product of a distinctive period, with individual components combine to create a distinguishable entity with high artistic value. The district meets National Register criteria A and C, and is significant under the themes of architecture, community planning/development, and religion with the period of significance extending from 1900 to 1940. There are 1,152 buildings in the district, of which 1,001 contribute to the historic district. The remaining 151 buildings were either constructed after 1939 and post-date the district's period of significance, or they have suffered a loss of integrity and do not contribute to the historic district.¹²

⁸ Berger, "Mount Rainier," 7:2-3.

⁹ Berger, "Mount Rainier," 7:23.

¹⁰ Berger, "Mount Rainier," 7:27-31.

¹¹ Berger, "Mount Rainier," 8:23-32.

¹² Berger, "Mount Rainier."

Local Historic District Evaluation

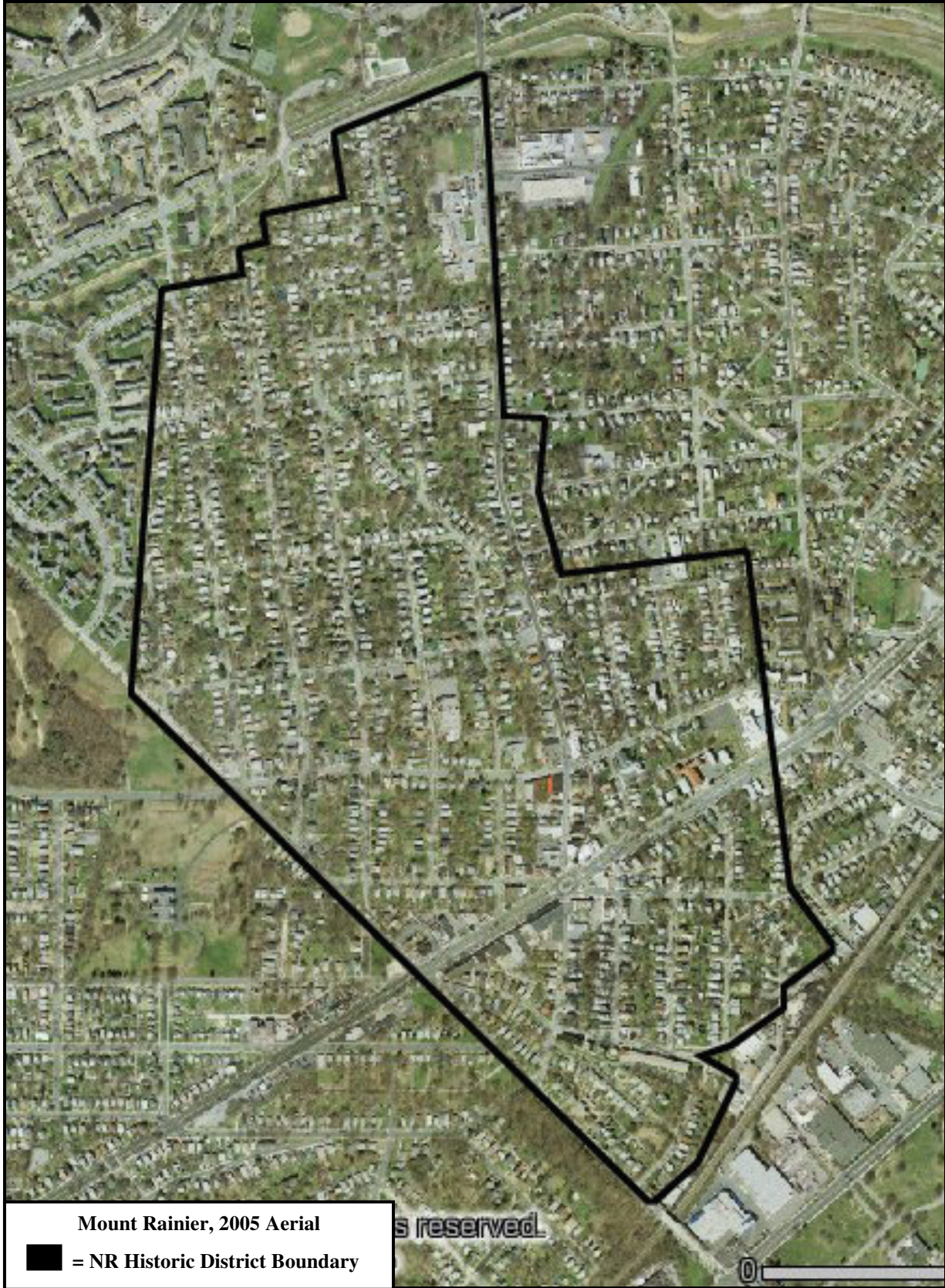
Mount Rainier represents suburban growth and residential architectural styles, two Prince George's County Heritage Themes. In addition, Mount Rainier meets the following criteria for designation as a Prince George's County Historic District:

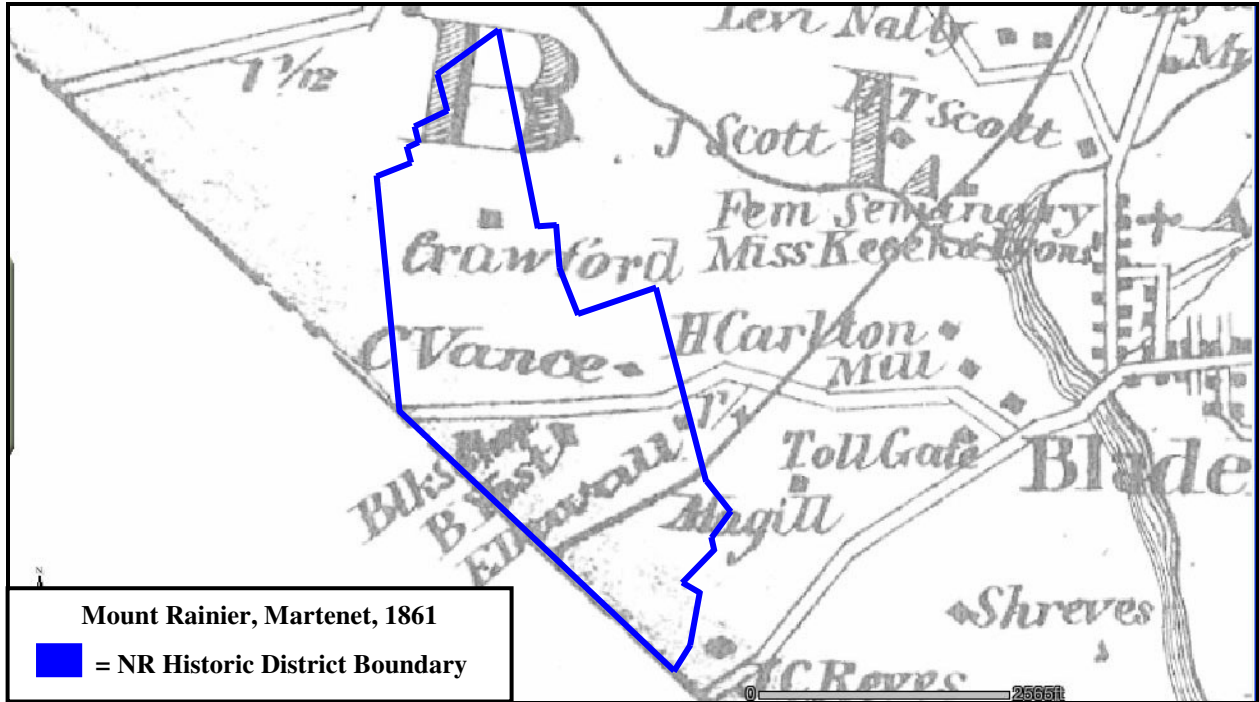
- (1)(A)(i) and (iv) – Mount Rainier developed in the early twentieth century as a streetcar suburb that catered to the growing middle-class population of Washington, D.C. Eight subdivisions were platted in the community by 1910 and a bustling commercial area soon developed around the streetcar station. The area's development and growth was directly related to the transportation resources available nearby, including Rhode Island Avenue and the streetcar.
- (2)(A)(i) – Mount Rainier embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type and period through its collection of domestic and commercial architectural styles and forms that demonstrate the evolution of popular style and taste in the first half of the twentieth century.
- (2)(A)(iv) – As a whole, Mount Rainier is a cohesive community that represents a middle-class suburban neighborhood in Prince George's County. The variety of architectural styles and building forms show a community that has evolved over time.

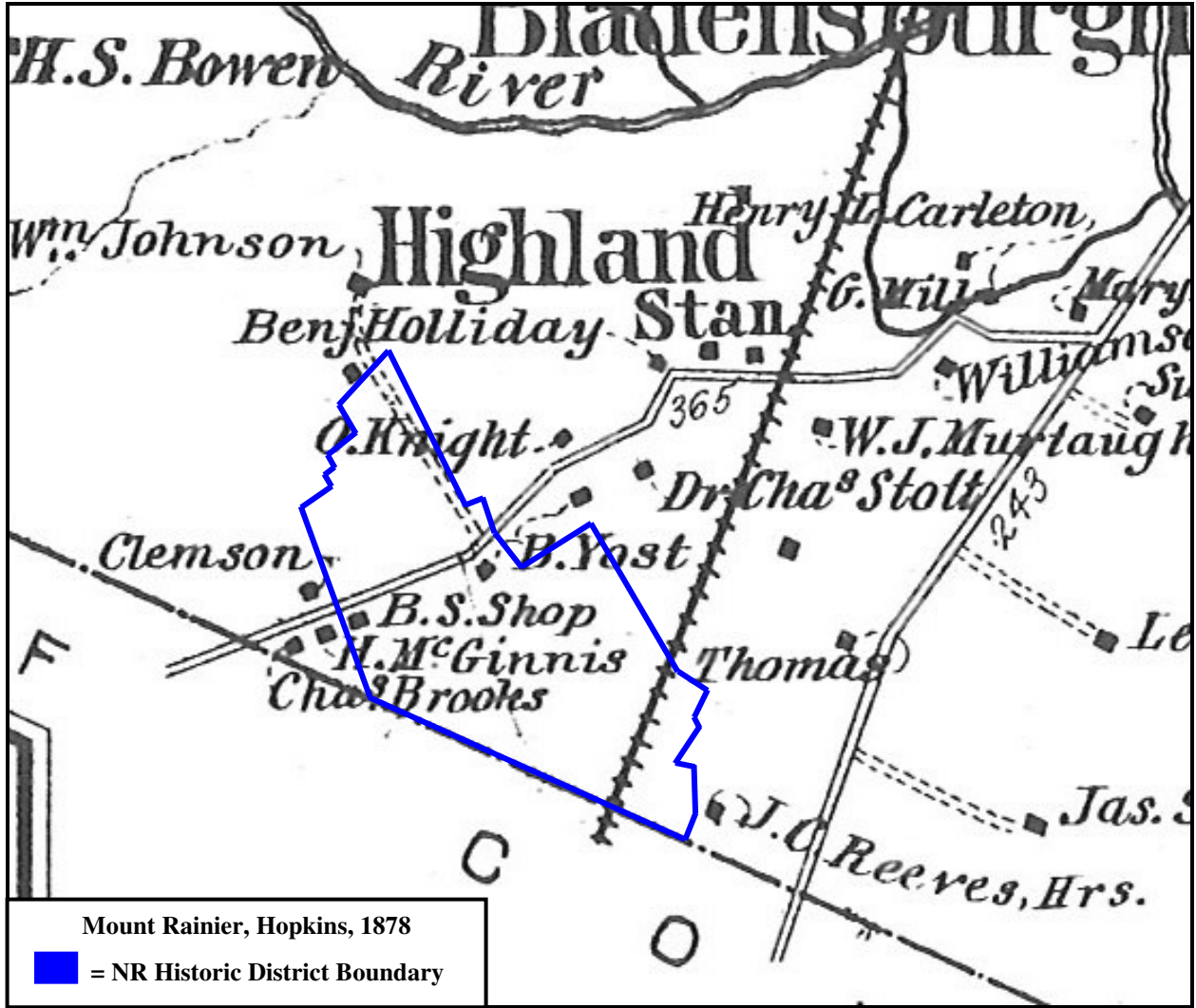
Windshield Survey

A windshield survey of Mount Rainier was conducted in July 2007. There were few visible changes observed in the district. The boundaries of the district have not been compromised and both the district as a whole and the boundaries retain their integrity.

Prepared by EHT Tracerics, Inc.
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Mount Rainier, 1938 Aerial

■ = NR Historic District Boundary



Looking southeast, 3719-3713 34th Street (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking northwest, Prince George's Bank (PG: 68-013-02), 3800 34th Street (*EHT Tracerics, 2007*)



Looking east, 3600-3604 Perry Street (*EHT Traceries, 2007*)



Looking southwest, 3728-3724-3722 37th Street (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking southeast, 3500 block of Otis Street (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking northeast, 3807-3815-3817 34th Street (*EHT Traceries, 2007*)



Looking northwest, 3822 34th Street, Metropolitan Church of God (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking south, 4112-4110 33rd Street (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Northwest corner, 3209 Shepherd Street (*EHT Traceries, 2007*)



Looking southeast, 4013-4011 30th Street (*EHT Traceries*, 2007)



Looking southwest, 4000 30th Street, Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church (*EHT Traceries, 2007*)



Looking northeast, 4005-4007-4009 29th Street (*EHT Traceries, 2007*)