

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Mitchell, Congressman Parren J., House  
 Other names/site number: B-1373-2  
 Name of related multiple property listing: Civil Rights in Baltimore, Maryland:  
1831-1976 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

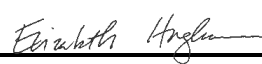
Street & number: 1805 Madison Avenue  
 City or town: Baltimore State: Maryland County: Baltimore City  
 Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
 I hereby certify that this x nomination     request for determination of eligibility meets  
 the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic  
 Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.  
 In my opinion, the property x meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria.  
 I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following  
 level(s) of significance:

    national     statewide   x   local  
 Applicable National Register Criteria:

   A   x   B    C    D

 _____ <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b> <u>Maryland Historical Trust</u> <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	5/12/2023 _____ <b>Date</b>
In my opinion, the property <u>   </u> meets <u>   </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
_____ <b>Signature of commenting official:</b>	_____ <b>Date</b>
_____ <b>Title :</b>	_____ <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

##### Category of Property

(Check only one box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

##### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

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**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN/Queen Anne

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: brick

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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#### Summary Paragraph

The Congressman Parren J. Mitchell House at 1805 Madison Avenue sits near the northeast corner of Madison Avenue and Laurens Street among a collection of similarly styled rowhouses. The three-story, red-brick rowhouse was constructed circa 1886 in the Queen Anne style on an 18 x 128-foot lot and faces southwest. The building is a contributing resource within the Old West Baltimore National Register Historic District (NRHP#04001374/B-1373). Given its strong association with Congressman Mitchell, the house is now being nominated individually under Criterion B.

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#### Narrative Description

The circa-1886 Parren Mitchell House is an elaborate Queen Anne-style rowhouse on the northeast side of Madison Avenue, standing near the southeast corner of the block, in an area occupied by rowhouses. It is built to the lot line and is separated from the street by a concrete sidewalk. It sits on a narrow lot, with its backyard consisting only of a partially brick-floored area and grass. There are no ancillary structures.

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The three-story, two-bay dwelling is constructed of red brick and has a wood cornice over a band of uneven brick corbels with brick brackets. A projecting brick belt course runs above the third-story windows. Diamond-shaped decorative terra-cotta tiles are centered in each bay between the belt course and the corbels. The rowhouse holds 3,402 square feet, containing three bedrooms and four baths.

### **Façade**

A steep flight of painted stone steps with a metal railing leads to an arched entrance in the northwest bay. The opening is surrounded by an inner course of beaded bricks surrounded by an exterior brick soldier course. The multi-light, stained-glass arched transom tops paired wood-and-glass doors with metal foliate-carved panels over the glass. Metal light sconces are on both sides of the entry. A circa-1974 label for a doorbell, reading "MITCHELL," is attached to the door frame. Above the entrance is a band of three square decorative terra-cotta tiles with floral and foliate designs.

The second story of the northwest bay has a vinyl one-over-one window with a stone sill and brick segmented-arch lintel. Above this window is a panel with soldier course bricks set at a forty-five-degree angle, creating a sawtooth pattern. A brick belt course runs between the second and third stories, intersecting with the stone sill of the third-story window. This window is also one-over-one vinyl with a brick segmented-arch lintel.

The southeast bay is more elaborate and is set between brick pilasters that terminate in brick brackets that support the wood cornice. The first story has an arched opening with a patterned brick lintel supported by brick pilasters. The opening rests on a painted stone sill and contains paired one-over-one vinyl windows separated by a vinyl-covered wood panel. Above is the original multi-pane, stained-glass arched transom resting on a narrow, carved wood panel. Over the first-story windows is a band of five square terra-cotta panels with alternating foliate designs.

The second story has a segmented-arch opening set within brick pilasters and topped with a projecting brick pediment. The paired vinyl one-over-one windows sit on a smooth stone sill and have a decorative wood panel above. A vinyl-covered wood panel rests between the windows. The pediment has brick returns. Inside the pediment, bricks are set at a 45-degree angle, creating a triangular area with a sawtooth pattern.

The third story also has a segmented-arch opening set between the brick pilasters. The paired windows are vinyl one-over-one and have the original wood panel in between. The windows rest on a stone sill and are topped by a decorative wood panel.

A painted stone belt course runs between the first story and the basement. The basement contains a segmented-arch opening with paired windows separated by a wood panel. A decorative arched wood panel is between the windows and the brick lintel. The two-light windows are covered with a metal mesh security grate.

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## **Rear Elevation**

The northeast (rear) elevation faces Morris Street. A wood board and lattice fence separates the backyard from the alley. The elevation has a brick two-story addition extending to the northeast. The first floor has two bays—one with a one-over-one vinyl window and one with a three-horizontal-light door topped by a transom. The second story has a three-sided projecting bay covered in vinyl siding. There is a glass door flanked by single fixed-pane windows. The third story has three vinyl one-over-one windows with soldier-course lintels..

## **Interior**

The interior plan of the building is typical of a late nineteenth-century Baltimore rowhouse. It has a side hall flanked by two large rooms and a rear wing that contains the kitchen and other service space. The building was reconfigured into two apartments in 1974 during Congressman Mitchell's ownership. The first and second stories hold one apartment, with another unit on the third floor.

## **Ground Floor**

The paired entry doors from the street lead to a small vestibule with paneled wainscoting. At the northeast side of the vestibule is another set of paired wood-and-glass doors accessed by two steps. These doors also have metal foliate-carved panels over the glass. Above is a rectangular transom with stained-glass blocks. The doors lead to the building's hall. A stair with a massive newel post rises along the northwest wall to the second story in one long flight. The stairs give access to the third-story apartment.

On the southeast wall are paired paneled wooden doors that nearly reach the fourteen-foot-high ceiling. These doors provide access to the first- and second-story apartment. They lead to an ample open space with wood floors that was likely originally divided into two parlors. The southwestern side is used as a living room and is illuminated by paired windows topped with a rectangular transom that contains an arched stained-glass window. There is an elaborately painted slate mantel on the southeast wall. The northeastern side is used as a dining room and contains a painted slate mantel with an arched opening.

Southwest of this space is a metal spiral staircase that leads to the second story through a square opening in the ceiling. The northeast wall has a paneled door that opens to a circa 1974 bathroom with a tile floor. Original molding remains around the window and door openings on the first story.

A small hallway along the northwest wall accesses the northeast wing. The hallway has two doors that lead to storage areas. The kitchen at the end of the hallway has early-twenty-first-century fixtures. Along the northwest wall is an original fireplace with exposed bricks. Its flue has been filled with the same material. A single door opens to the rear yard. At the southwest

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corner are stairs leading to the second story. The second story, accessed via the spiral staircase, contains the bedroom used by Congressman Mitchell and retains its association with Mitchell. The third story contains a separate apartment that does not have a strong association with Mitchell.

### **Integrity**

The house maintains the integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, and materials, including features added by Mitchell during his renovation of the property in 1974. These include the addition of the spiral staircase and first-story bathroom.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE/Black  
SOCIAL HISTORY/Civil Rights

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1974–1986  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

\_\_\_\_\_  
1974  
1986  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person** (Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Congressman Parren J. Mitchell  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Congressman Parren J. Mitchell House at 1805 Madison Avenue in Baltimore City is significant under Social History and Ethnic Heritage for its association with Parren J. Mitchell, a prominent civil rights activist and Maryland's first black congressman. It is being nominated under Criterion B for its association with Congressman Parren J. Mitchell at the local level of significance. It meets the requirements of "Properties Associated with Prominent Persons," outlined in the "Civil Rights in Baltimore, Maryland, 1831-1976" Multiple Property Documentation Form, and was identified in the document as an individually eligible resource. The period of significance begins when Congressman Mitchell acquired the house in 1974 and continues through 1986, when he sold the property. It is the property most clearly associated with his productive years, connected to his time in Congress when he worked on groundbreaking civil-rights legislation.

The house meets Criteria Consideration G, as it is associated with an important leader of Maryland's post-Civil Rights Act of 1964 era. Despite the passage of major civil rights legislation in the 1960s, small minority businesses were still treated unequally regarding access to financing programs and federal contracting. As explained in the MPDF, Congressman Mitchell implemented programs that would level the playing field for small minority-owned businesses. This work occurred primarily in the 1970s and '80s.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

### **Historical Background**

#### **1805 Madison Avenue Between 1880 and 1923**

Old West Baltimore was established after the Civil War as an elite suburb of the rapidly growing city. It was primarily occupied by German immigrants and their descendants. Some African Americans lived in smaller houses along alleys, such as Etting Street, Shields Place, Vincent Alley, and Parrish Alley. Between 1892 and 1905, all the major German Jewish synagogues moved to the area bounded by Lanvale Street, Park Avenue, North Avenue, and McCulloh Street. Before the 1910s, the neighborhood's population was segregated and dominated mainly by white residents. Many areas enforced segregation through deed restrictions, local legislation, and even physical attacks on black families that attempted to move into the neighborhood.

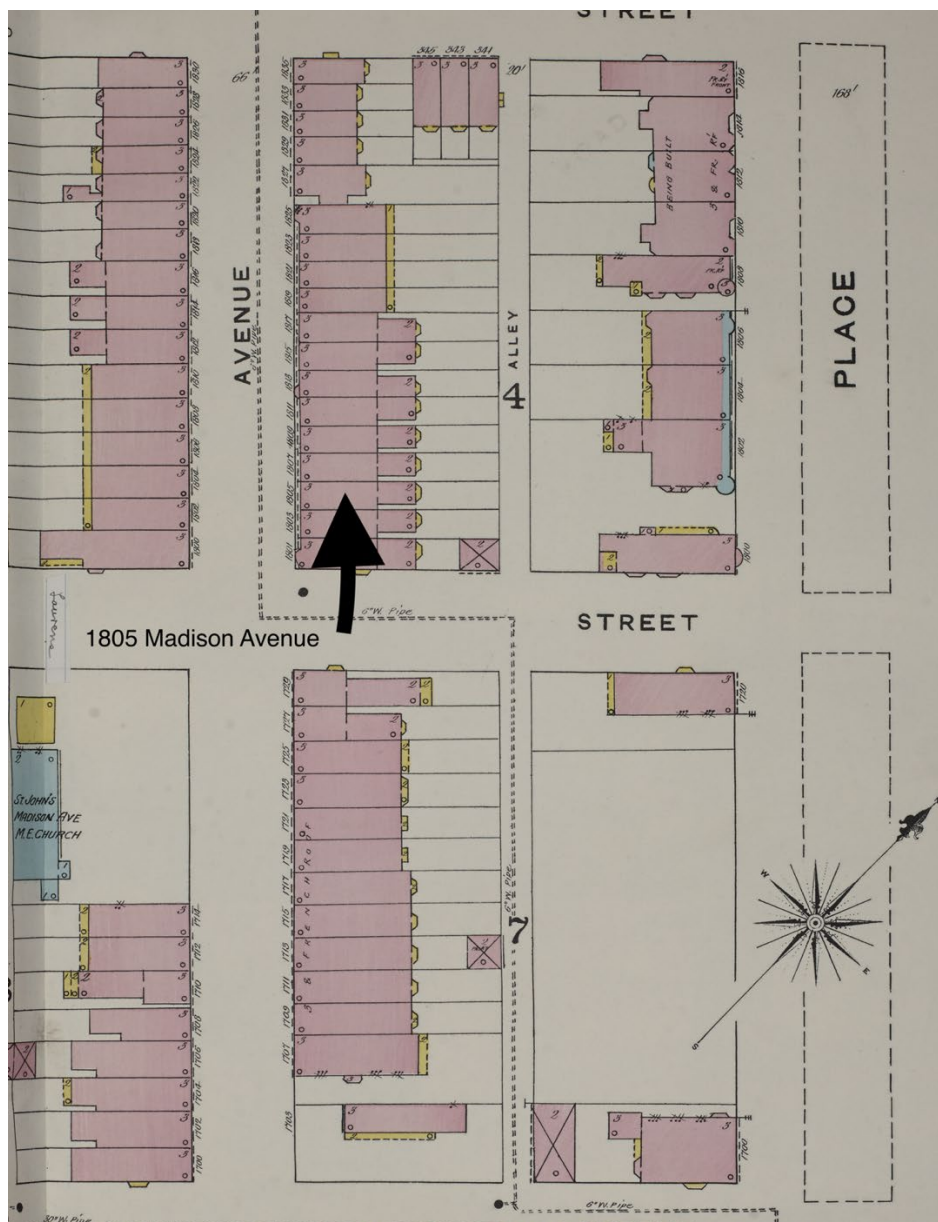
The building at 1805 Madison Avenue is representative of that trend. It was constructed by 1886, when the address was listed in a Baltimore *Sun* real estate advertisement (*The Sun* 1886, 4). In May 1888, the houses at 1803 and 1805 Madison Avenue were advertised for sale at public auction. The lots were described as being improved with "a three-story brick dwelling house,

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brownstone trimmings, containing modern improvements ... and two-story brick back building” (*The Sun* 1888, 5). The house appears on the 1890 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map (Fig. 1).

Sarah Rosenstock purchased the property at the sale and immediately transferred it to Rosetta Rosenheim, also known as Sadie R. Rosenheim (MSA BCLR, JB 1200, 257–9). Her husband, Benjamin Rosenheim, was a lawyer with an office downtown at 19 East Fayette Street (Polk 1889). In January 1889, the Rosenheims, who were the Maryland-born children of German immigrants, placed an advertisement in the *Sun* seeking a “White Girl, from 15 to 17 years, to nurse two children, aged 2 ½ and 4” (*The Sun* 1889, 3; US Census 1900).



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*Figure 1: Detail of 1890 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing 1805 Madison Avenue shortly after construction.*

Benjamin and Rosetta Rosenheim sold the property to Julia Gusdorff on May 29, 1893 (MSA BCLR, JB 1448, 179). Julia lived with her husband, Lewis A. Gusdorff; both were Maryland-born children of German immigrants. According to the 1900 census, a servant, 22-year-old Pearl Sinder, who immigrated to the United States from Russia in 1890, also lived with them (US Census 1900). The Gusdorffs sold the property to William B. Moses on March 25, 1902 (MSA BCLR RO 1949, 161).

William and his wife Henrietta were German immigrants who came to the United States in the mid-1850s. In 1910, they lived at the house with their 33-year-old daughter Bessie (US Census 1910). Moses sold the property to Gertrude L. Yingling on August 14, 1914 (MSA BCLR, SCL 2922, 129). By 1920, Yingling, a dance instructor, was married with the last name Coburn. She was living with her mother, Martha Biggs, and Martha's 10-year-old granddaughter Helen E. Yingling (US Census 1920, Polk 1918–9). Yingling may also have taken on boarders or rented rooms as in 1919, residents at the address included Robert Shafer, an Assistant Professor of English at Goucher College (MLA 1919).

Yingling owned the house until 1923, when she sold it to “an undisclosed client,” as described in the *Sun*. The lack of disclosure was likely because the purchaser was a black man, Keiffer A. Jackson (*The Sun* 1923, 16; MSA BCLR, SCL 4122, 459). The sale to Jackson was not disclosed in the *Sun* until a year later (*The Sun* 1924a, 12).

### **1805 Madison Avenue Between 1923 and 1974**

By the turn of the twentieth century, the neighborhood's demographics had begun to change. The white German residents that had previously occupied the area began moving to new suburban developments further from downtown. The older houses in Old West Baltimore could not compete with the detached, single-family dwellings and modern amenities found in new residential suburbs such as Ten Hills and Hunting Ridge that were easily accessible downtown by new electric streetcars. The lack of demand for older rowhouse neighborhoods created new housing opportunities for the city's growing black population. Immigration from rural areas in Maryland and the south swelled the black population, and various public and private investments displaced existing residents, many of whom found a new home in Old West Baltimore (Pousson and Diehlmann 2019, 61–2; Shoken 2004, 8.4–5; Baltimore Heritage 2018).

The population shift was rapid and often fraught with racial strife as the remaining white residents fought the arrival of new black residents. Passage of a series of segregated housing ordinances beginning in 1910 attempted to keep the area segregated, but black attorneys fought to overturn the laws. By 1904, half of the city's black population was living in Old West Baltimore. It was a diverse neighborhood housing maids, chauffeurs, cooks, laborers, and professionals such as dentists, physicians, attorneys, and schoolteachers.

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The wealthier professional residents tended to live in the northern part of the district in large three-story rowhouses along major streets like Druid Hill Avenue and McCulloh Street. In contrast, the working class lived in smaller houses like those on Etting Street. The poorest residents lived in the alley houses in the centers of the blocks, but most of these houses have been demolished. This concentration of black residents, particularly affluent and well-educated professionals, resulted in Old West Baltimore's development as the city's premier African American neighborhood (Olsen 1991, 59–61; Pousson and Diehlmann 2019, 58–60; Wilson 1989, 136).

The population in the district continued to grow. Between 1910 and 1930, the African American population in the area doubled. By 1940, 60,000 African Americans were living in the district, comprising 93.5 percent of the population. As more African Americans moved to the city for defense jobs during World War II, the district experienced severe overcrowding, mostly because segregation limited their housing options. This high demand for housing prompted many owners and landlords to convert single-family houses to multiple apartments, including the property at 1805 Madison Avenue (Shoken 2004, 8.7–8; Pousson and Diehlmann 2019, 103–4).

By 1923, 1805 Madison Avenue had a black owner: Keiffer Jackson, husband of the noted civil rights activist Lillie May Carroll Jackson. Jackson purchased the property for \$3,200 and maintained it as a rental property, one of several rentals the family owned (Fig. 2). The income from these properties enabled Lillie Carroll Jackson to pursue her civil-rights activism. From the 1920s through the 1970s, the home accommodated a broad range of tenants in multiple units.

By 1924, a “colored girl” living at 1805 Madison Avenue was seeking a position in cooking, cleaning, or nursing (*The Sun* 1924b, 23). Resident Frank H. Berryman was arrested in March 1930 on charges of stealing goods from the Hahn Shoe Store, where he was employed as a porter (*Afro-American* 1930a, A17). Another resident Elnora Murdaugh passed away at age 80 in December 1928 at home (*Afro-American* 1928, 18). Resident Ryland Hudnell was noted as being injured in an accident while operating a truck (*Afro-American* 1930b, A11). In 1945, a two-alarm fire in the building caused “considerable damage” to the third floor and roof (*The Sun* 1945, 18).

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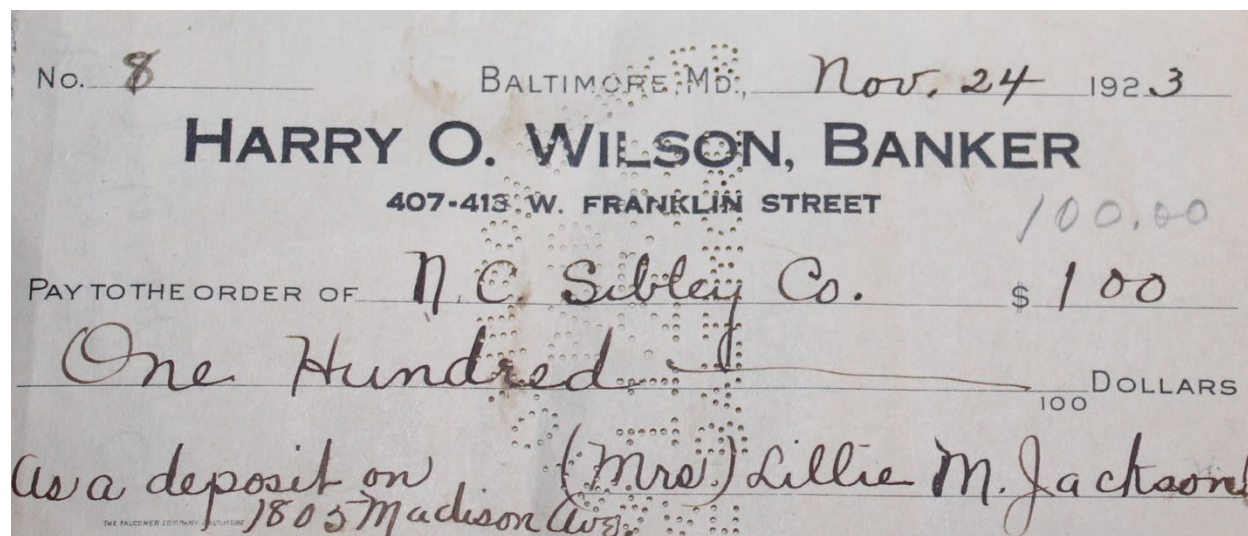


Figure 2: Deposit check written by Lillie May Carroll Jackson for purchase of 1805 Madison Avenue.

A broader increase in awareness of issues around civil rights also accompanied the demographic transition in the neighborhood. On November 14, 1931, the *Afro-American* published several short commentaries from Baltimore residents responding to a recent action by the Baltimore school superintendent to segregate white and black children on a recent field trip to Fort McHenry. Mrs. Lizzie Futz, identified as a housewife at 1805 Madison Avenue, wrote, "I honestly think that the principal was unquestionably wrong in asking that the two groups be separated. There was no reason for the separation. School children of today get along better than their elders. It's such segregation acts that breeds prejudice in the future" (*Afro-American* 1931, 23).

Even more changes came to the neighborhood following the US Supreme Court's 1948 decision in *Shelley v. Kraemer*, a landmark decision that ended the legal enforcement of racially restrictive covenants. This decision significantly expanded access to new houses for black households that could afford the cost of new homes. While the federal Housing Act of 1949 expanded access to mortgages for white Baltimoreans, black residents did not have equal access to these funds. This resulted in the wealthiest black households leaving the district, while the poorer residents remained (Shoken 2004, 8.7–8; Pousson and Diehlmann 2019, 103–4). By this time, the blocks surrounding the rowhouse had filled in with dwellings (Fig. 3).

The successes of the Civil Rights Movement, first by the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision and passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and ultimately by the passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968, led to the decline of the neighborhood. The *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision ended the "separate but equal" doctrine established over 50 years earlier in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. The Civil Rights Act confirmed equal access to public accommodations, allowing African Americans to shop, dine and seek entertainment throughout the city. The Fair Housing Act ended racial discrimination in housing sales and occupancy, giving middle-class blacks entry to suburban neighborhoods.

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Pennsylvania Avenue declined as a viable retail and entertainment center, and Old West Baltimore became a poor enclave as residents began to shop and live elsewhere. The city soon designated portions of the district as urban renewal areas resulting in massive demolition and abandonment in the late 1960s and 1970s (Shoken 2004, 8.12–13; Pousson and Diehlmann 2019, 144). It was in this condition that Parren J. Mitchell bought 1805 Madison Avenue.



Figure 3: Detail of 1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing 1805 Madison Avenue in same configuration as constructed.

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## **Parren James Mitchell**

Parren James Mitchell was born in Baltimore on April 29, 1922, and lived in several houses in Old West Baltimore, including 712 North Carrollton Avenue, where he moved when he was seven years old with his older brother, Clarence M. Mitchell Jr. By 1935, the family was living at 1543 Myrtle Avenue (US Census 1940). Parren Mitchell graduated from Douglass High School the same year. In 1942 he enlisted in the US Army, serving as a commissioned officer and a company commander within the originally all-black 92nd Infantry Division. He was awarded a Purple Heart for his service. After the war, Mitchell returned to Baltimore after the war and attended Morgan State College (Baltimore Heritage 2018).

In 1950, he successfully sued the University of Maryland to gain admittance to the university's graduate school at College Park, which remained segregated, despite the NAACP's success in integrating the University of Maryland Law School in 1935 (Pousson and Diehlmann 2019, 75). Mitchell earned a master's degree in sociology in 1952 and worked as a professor of sociology at Morgan State College between 1953 and 1954 (US House).

Mitchell held various positions in the late 1950s and 1960s that allowed him to advocate for anti-poverty, criminal justice, and housing programs that benefited black residents. Between 1954 and 1957, he supervised probation work for the Supreme Bench of Baltimore City. In 1963 he became the executive secretary of the Maryland Commission on Interracial Problems and Relations, where he oversaw the implementation of the state's new public accommodation law. Between 1965 and 1968, he led the anti-poverty Baltimore Community Action Agency, and afterward, he returned to Morgan State as assistant director of the school's Urban Affairs Institute. In 1969, he served as president of Baltimore Neighborhoods Inc., a fair housing organization established to promote stable integrated neighborhoods (US House; Pousson and Diehlmann 2019, 93).

Mitchell became a member of the so-called "Goon Squad," a loosely affiliated group of eleven influential black religious and civic leaders that fought to provide equal rights for black citizens that faced systematic prejudice and racism. According to the *Afro-American*, the "group became known for their fights for equal employment, education, and justice and at least one of the surviving members recalls that the name—the Goon Squad—grew from a newspaper article that accused them of being thugs rather than forward thinking activists" (Taylor 2013). Other Goon Squad members included Rev. Vernon Dobson of Union Baptist Church, Rev. Marion Bascom of Douglas Memorial Community Church, Judge Joseph Howard Sr., the first Black Associate Judge of the Supreme Bench of Baltimore City, and Dr. Homer Favor of Morgan State University.

Convinced that he could best improve the lives of black urban residents through elected office, he first ran for Congress in 1968, challenging a 16-year Democratic incumbent in the Seventh Congressional District. This predominantly white district encompassed the west side of the city as well as adjacent suburbs. He lost by 5,000 votes but, undeterred, ran again two years later. This time he prevailed with a 38-vote win in the three-way Democratic primary with the

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incumbent Samuel Friedel and state senator Carl Friedler. In the general election, Mitchell easily defeated his Republican opponent in the overwhelmingly Democratic district. Not only was Mitchell the first black man elected to Congress from Maryland, he was also one of the first black men to be elected to Congress in a district where blacks comprised the minority of the population.

The district was redrawn in 1971, eliminating white suburban areas to make it a majority-black district. Mitchell did not have serious opposition for reelection, and he went on to serve eight terms, finally retiring in 1986 (US House; Pietila 2010, 205). When he was elected to Congress, Mitchell was living in a small red-brick apartment building at 951 Brooks Lane, just south of Druid Lake, in what is now called Reservoir Hill (B-1379) (White Pages 1970–1, 8).

### **Congressman Parren J. Mitchell**

Parren Mitchell's most significant work in Congress was advocating for small and minority-owned businesses. In 1976, Mitchell attached an amendment to a billion-dollar public works program that required those applying for federal contracts to reserve 10 percent of the funding under the contract for minority-owned companies. He described this as "my proudest congressional accomplishment" (US House).

In 1982, he spearheaded a bill to set aside funding for economically disadvantaged small business owners. When criticized regarding such affirmative action proposals, he "maintained that such legislation was necessary to balance the economic scales" (US House). He also assisted small businesses in procuring contracts from the Defense Department by removing limitations on the number of companies permitted to bid on spare parts contracts. He was a major supporter of the Small Business Administration (SBA) and fought against interest rate increases for small business loans. He also sought to prevent the establishment of subminimum wages for workers under 18 (US House).

Parren Mitchell was deeply opposed to the Vietnam War. He used his time in Congress to fight US policy in Southeast Asia, believing its cost lessened funding for social programs. Mitchell consistently opposed increased military funding in general. According to his US House biography, in 1977, "he proposed transferring \$15 million from the military budget for programs to increase employment opportunities in the US. 'I have no great fear of the Soviet Union or China ... If this democracy should ever fail it will come from within because of the enormous disparity between the rich and the poor'"(US House).

Congressman Mitchell was a founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus, serving as its chairman between 1977 and 1979 and shaping its legislative course of action. He also supported sanctions against the apartheid government in South Africa.

Mitchell retired from Congress in January 1987 but continued his work advocating for minority businesses. He founded the Minority Business Legal Defense and Education Fund, which offered legal assistance to minority businesses. In a 1989 speech to the Baltimore teachers' union, he

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stated: “If you believe in fighting racism, you make a commitment for the rest of your life. ... There is no getting off that train. You can’t say, ‘I’ve put five years in fighting racism and how I’m finished.’ No, you are not finished. Our job is to fight it every day, to continue to shove it down and when it rises up to shove it down even harder” (*Los Angeles Times* 2007).

### **Parren J. Mitchell and 1805 Madison Avenue**

On March 11, 1974, Parren J. Mitchell purchased 1805 Madison Avenue for \$3,500 from the estate of Keiffer A. Jackson. Mitchell continued to commute daily from Baltimore to Washington, DC, to stay accessible to his constituents. This move came at a time when the city was struggling with the aftermath of urban unrest following the 1968 assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

Mitchell renovated the house, combining the first and second stories into a single unit with a new spiral staircase leading to the second story from the main first-story room. He added a full bathroom on the first story but retained many original features, such as the mantels and trim work. He kept the third-story apartment, accessed by the original stairs in the hall. He used conventional financing to pay for the \$32,000 project. These features appear in a 1979 *Ebony* magazine article profiling Mitchell (Poinsett 1979, 66)(Fig. 4).

Mitchell’s acquisition of the house was a statement of his pride in the city of Baltimore and his belief in the ability of government programs, such as the city’s new homesteading program (established in 1973) and the federal Community Reinvestment Act (passed in 1977), to improve the living conditions of poor Baltimoreans. Mitchell once remarked: “Come to my house at 1805 Madison Avenue in the heart of a ghetto in Baltimore City and look at the home across the street which was sold for \$1 under the Homestead Act. If you do you will see a beautiful and decent residence for a family” (Baltimore Heritage 2018).



*Figure 4: Parren Mitchell arranging flowers in the central room of 1805 Madison Avenue (Ebony, September 1979).*

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During his time in Congress, Mitchell supported efforts to invest in urban areas. During hearings for the Housing Act of 1985, he spoke in support of Section 312, which provided loans of up to \$15,000 to property owners at 3% interest for 20 years in areas where private banks would not offer credit and encouraged rehabilitation of existing housing as an alternative to demolition for property owners within urban renewal areas. Mitchell stated:

But I bought an old rowhouse in Baltimore 12 years ago deep in the ghetto. I paid \$3200 for an old rowhouse. I took the light switch off; 10,000 roaches came out. Certainly, there was a problem with rats. It was in the 1800 block of Madison Avenue. Now the whole block and adjacent blocks have been purchased by black professionals who ordinarily would have gone to the suburbs. Instead, they have built — rehabilitated almost all of the avenue, and it is really one of the classiest areas of the city. So I am emphasizing we need Nehemiah, 312. We need everything to come to grips with the type of housing crisis we have in this country (US Congress 1985, 2901).

His work followed him home, including a phone that constantly rang with requests from constituents highlighted in a September 1979 profile published in *Ebony* magazine: “[

The] 57-year-old man's fidgety, chain-smoking, workaholic lifestyle, his hectic, 14-hour-a-day pace that leaves little room for rest and relaxation, his conscientiousness that drives him, for example, to take home stacks of mail and laboriously answer each letter by hand... Mitchell, a bachelor who insists on doing his own housekeeping and cooking, is sometimes too busy to do his laundry and, having run out of clean underwear, must hurry and purchase more... The phone rings so incessantly at his Baltimore home--a restored, inner city row house laded with books, antique furniture, and African wood carvings--he long since has ceased taping his messages because the tape playbacks often consumed hours. Instead, he simply handles complaints as they come in from around his 85-percent-Black District" (*Ebony* 1979, 60).

The home was also notably the site of violence and intimidation directed at Congressman Mitchell for his active role in local and national politics. Historian George Derek Musgrove has described how, from 1968 to 1974, the Baltimore Police Department Inspectional Services Division (ISD) placed the home of Parren Mitchell under 24-hour surveillance, illegally bugged his home and office telephones for eight months, and placed paid informers in his congressional campaigns. Once their actions were uncovered, Mitchell became a strong critic of the ISD.

In 1975, a Baltimore City police officer arrested Mitchell's godson, McLeod Townes, at the home. Townes, then 23 years old, had been living at the house before the arrest. In interviews with the *Baltimore Sun*, the *Afro-American*, and the *Washington Post*, Mitchell argued that the arrest constituted “retaliation for what I'm doing on the ISD investigation. If you can't hurt me, hurt somebody close to me. That appears to be the police tactic” (Cohen 1975, B3). The Baltimore Police Department contested Congressman Mitchell's characterization of the arrest, arguing that “The officers didn't even know who the congressman was until after [the incident].

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Mr. Mitchell will continue to get whatever police protection he asks for, just like any other citizen" (Cohen 1975, B3). Reflecting in the late 1970s of the time, Mitchell described the "psychological impact" of the surveillance and intimidation as "surrealistic" (Musgrove 2012, 58).

In 1978, three members of the Maryland Ku Klux were arrested and charged with possession of explosive devices in connection with a scheme to bomb 1805 Madison Avenue. A special small unit had been formed "with the purpose of engaging in illegal, violent acts," primarily aimed at specific religious groups, mostly Jewish, and prominent black politicians (*The Sun* 1978, B1). In 1984, after Parren Mitchell helped to organize a boycott of Coors beer in response to racist remarks by Coors Brewery executive William L. Coors, Mitchell's opponents stuck posters to his house.

Afterward, Mitchell wrote: "He [LaRoche] commands a very small army of followers whose campaign tactics are thoroughly, completely despicable. During one of my congressional campaigns, his Baltimore satraps harassed me on my home telephone nightly, and when they threatened to kill me, I notified the F.B.I. thereby winning their undying hatred. The front of my home at 1805 Madison, still has paste marks on the brick where the LaRouche people in Baltimore smeared propaganda junk" (*Afro-American* 1984, 5).

### **Final Years**

In 1986, Mitchell sold the Madison Avenue property to Sarah Holley and moved to 1239 Druid Avenue, in an apartment above the Mitchell family's law office (MSA BCLR, SEB 971, 21). He remained at that location until 1993, when he moved to 828 North Carrollton Avenue in Harlem Park, where he remained until 2001. Sarah Holley lived in the dwelling from 1986 through 1989. Since 1989, the property has been occupied as a rental unit except for a recent three-year vacancy period (Baltimore Heritage 2018).

Congressman Mitchell died in 2007 and was buried in Arlington National Cemetery. Upon his death, Representative Elijah E. Cummings, who represented Mitchell's former district, lauded Mitchell: "Throughout his life, Congressman Mitchell dedicated himself to opening the doors to opportunity for all Americans ... He was a true servant leader, never concerning himself about fame or fortune but, rather, devoting himself entirely to the uplifting the people he represented" (*Los Angeles Times* 2007).

### **Evaluation of Significance**

In 1977, 1805 Madison Avenue was included in the Madison Park local historic district, designated by the Baltimore City Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation (CHAP). Michael B. Lipscomb, an aide to Parren Mitchell and office manager at the Congressman's Bloomingdale Road office, supported the designation. Lipscomb was a resident of Madison Park and the vice president of the Madison Park Improvement Association. In his testimony before CHAP, Lipscomb observed that the area was the "city's first all-black historic

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district," continuing, "I came here because I love the house. I love the size of the house, the rooms, the old architecture, the high ceilings, the 10-foot high solid wood doors, the marble fireplaces and the stained glass windows. To get a house built like this would be astronomically expensive' (Rozhon 1977, C1).

In 2004, the house was added as a contributing resource to the Old West Baltimore National Register Historic District. The nomination acknowledged Congressman Mitchell and other prominent black citizens as one-time residents. Still, it did not specifically associate the house with the congressman and his civil rights accomplishments. The "Civil Rights in Baltimore, Maryland, 1831-1976" MPDF highlighted Mitchell's achievements and, thereby, created a mechanism for listing the house individually.

### **Criterion B**

The house at 1805 Madison Avenue is significant under Criterion B for its association with Congressman Parren J. Mitchell, a prominent civil rights activist and Maryland's first black Congressman. The Madison Avenue property is the one best associated with his productive life as he lived at the residence during the majority of his time in Congress where he undertook groundbreaking civil-rights work, including ensuring that minority firms received equitable treatment in federal contracting. In addition, Mitchell was proud of his 1805 Madison Avenue residence and frequently referenced his house and the role federal, state, and local reinvestment programs played in urban revitalization. The property maintains integrity of location, design, and materials, including features added by Mitchell during his renovation of the property in 1974, such as the addition of the spiral staircase.

### **Comparison with Related Properties**

Extant houses at 712 North Carrollton Avenue, 951 Brooks Lane, 1239 Druid Avenue, and 828 North Carrollton Avenue, representing different residences that Mitchell lived in during his lifetime, have little to no association with his civil rights work or his role as a congressman. Parren Mitchell died in 2007, giving sufficient time to evaluate his legacy as a significant civil rights leader in Baltimore.

### **Criteria Consideration G**

1805 Madison Avenue meets Criteria Consideration G for properties that have achieved significance within the last 50 years. It is of exceptional significance to the Civil Rights Movement in Baltimore. As the first black man elected to Congress from Maryland, Mitchell was uniquely qualified to advocate for the civil rights of the residents of his district. Despite the passage of major civil rights legislation in the 1960s, small minority businesses were still treated unequally regarding access to financing programs and federal contracting. Using his role as a US Representative, he put in place programs that would level the playing field for small minority-owned businesses.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register (within Old West Baltimore HD)
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** B-1373-2

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** 0.06

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

### Or UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |              |                    |                      |
|--------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Zone: 18S | Easting: 359295.52 | Northing: 4352146.97 |
| 2. Zone: 18S | Easting: 359292.13 | Northing: 4352150.82 |
| 3. Zone: 18S | Easting: 359320.44 | Northing: 4352176.21 |
| 4. Zone: 18S | Easting: 359324.73 | Northing: 4352176.68 |

### Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The nominated property at 1805 Madison Avenue occupies a rectangular lot and is identified legally as Baltimore City Tax Map 14, Ward 14, Section 13, Block 0331, Lot 003.

### Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary comprises the entirety of the lot on which the original house was built circa 1886 and the entirety of the lot when Parren J. Mitchell occupied the property.

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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Nicole A. Diehlmann with research by Eli Pousson (Baltimore Heritage)  
organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number: \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town: Baltimore state: MD zip code: 21210  
e-mail ndiehlmann@comcast.net  
telephone: 410-353-0407  
date: August 8, 2020

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

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## PHOTO LOG

**Name of Property:** Congressman Parren J. Mitchell House

**City or Vicinity:** Baltimore

**County:** Baltimore City

**State:** Maryland

**Photographer:** Nicole A. Diehlmann

**Date Photographed:** August 10, 2020

Photo 1 of 10

MD\_BaltimoreCity\_CivilRightsMPS\_ParrenMitchellHouse\_0001.tif  
Southwest façade, facing southeast

Photo 2 of 10

MD\_BaltimoreCity\_CivilRightsMPS\_ParrenMitchellHouse\_0002.tif  
Detail of southwest façade, facing southeast

Photo 3 of 10

MD\_BaltimoreCity\_CivilRightsMPS\_ParrenMitchellHouse\_0003.tif  
1800 block of Madison Avenue, southwest elevations, facing northeast

Photo 4 of 10

MD\_BaltimoreCity\_CivilRightsMPS\_ParrenMitchellHouse\_0004.tif  
Northeast (rear) elevation, facing southwest

Photo 5 of 10

MD\_BaltimoreCity\_CivilRightsMPS\_ParrenMitchellHouse\_0005.tif  
Stair hall, facing northeast

Photo 6 of 10

MD\_BaltimoreCity\_CivilRightsMPS\_ParrenMitchellHouse\_0006.tif  
Stair hall, vestibule doors, and early light fixture, facing southwest

Photo 7 of 10

MD\_BaltimoreCity\_CivilRightsMPS\_ParrenMitchellHouse\_0007.tif  
Wooden doors between hall and living room, facing northwest

Photo 8 of 10

MD\_BaltimoreCity\_CivilRightsMPS\_ParrenMitchellHouse\_0008.tif  
First floor interior, facing southwest

Photo 9 of 10

MD\_BaltimoreCity\_CivilRightsMPS\_ParrenMitchellHouse\_0009.tif  
Living room fireplace, facing southeast

Photo 10 of 10

MD\_BaltimoreCity\_CivilRightsMPS\_ParrenMitchellHouse\_0010.tif  
Dining room and spiral staircase to second floor installed by Parren Mitchell, facing northeast

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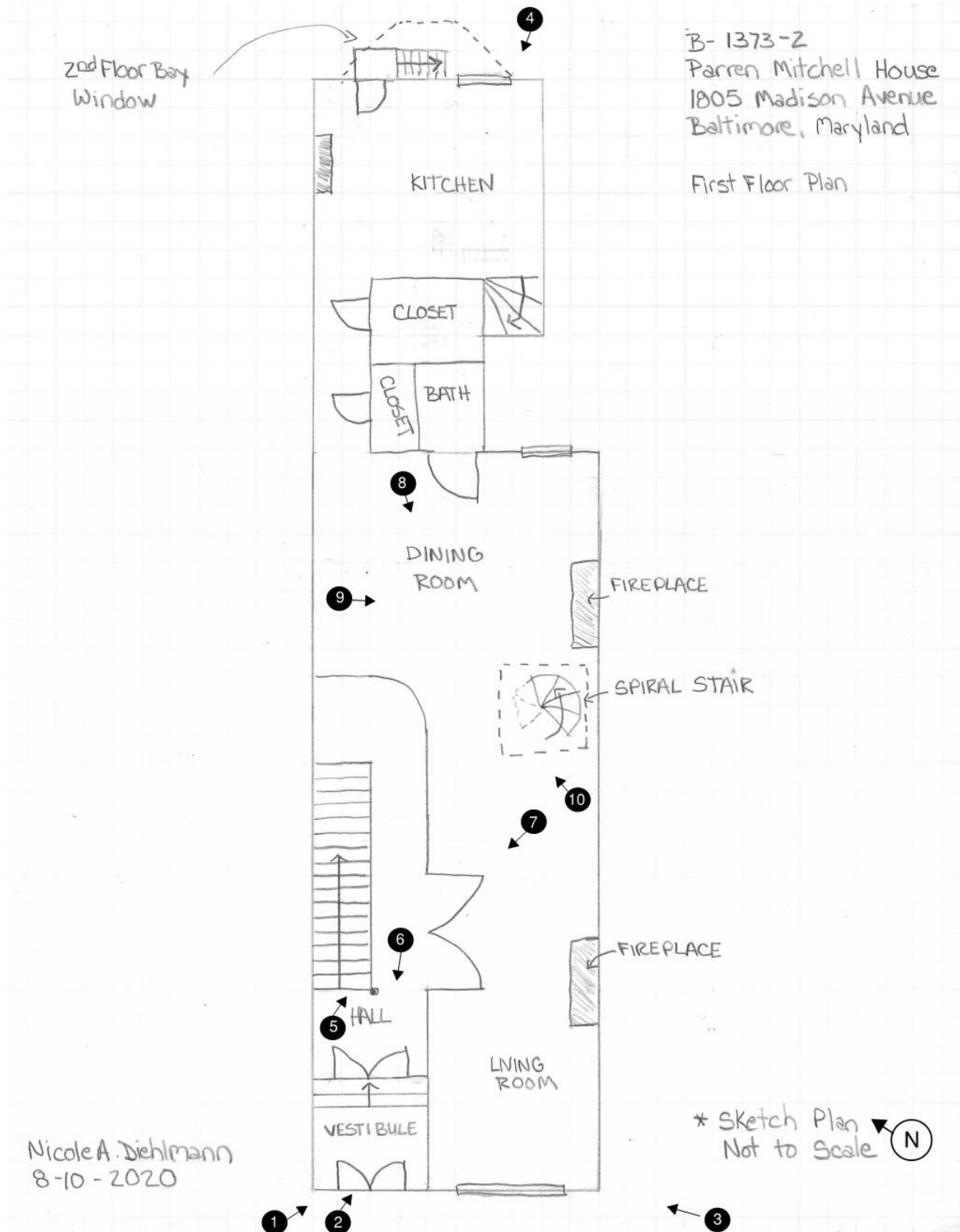
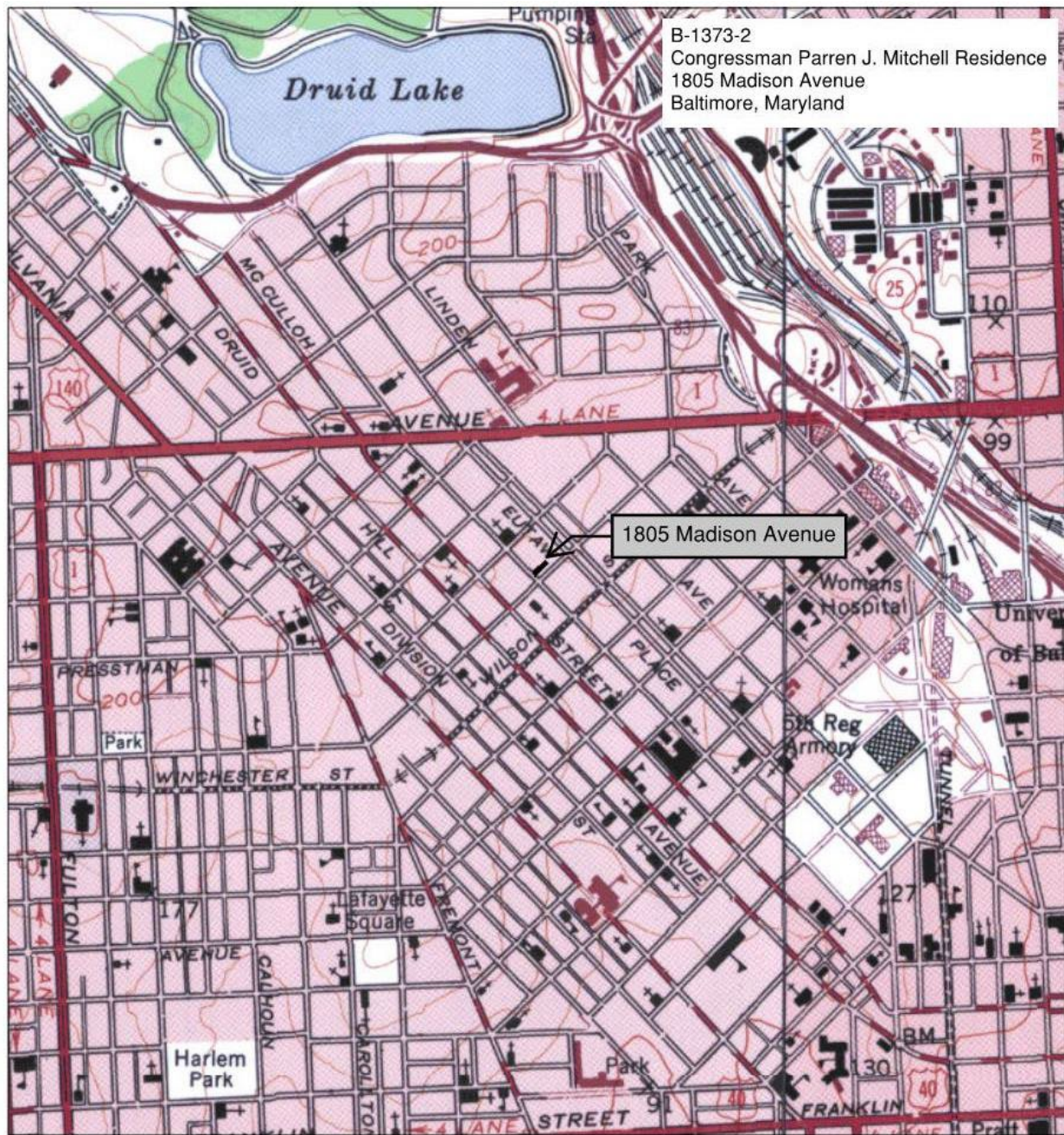


Figure 5: First floor plan and photo locations.

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August 7, 2020  
USGS Baltimore West

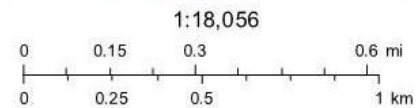


Figure 6: USGS Baltimore West Quad Map indicating 1805 Madison Avenue.

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**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

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Photo 1 of 10

MD\_BaltimoreCity\_CivilRightsMPS\_ParrenMitchellHouse\_0001.tif  
Southwest façade, facing southeast

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Photo 2 of 10

MD\_BaltimoreCity\_CivilRightsMPS\_ParrenMitchellHouse\_0002.tif  
Detail of southwest façade, facing southeast

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Photo 3 of 10  
MD\_BaltimoreCity\_CivilRightsMPS\_ParrenMitchellHouse\_0003.tif  
1800 block of Madison Avenue, southwest elevations, facing northeast

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Photo 4 of 10  
MD\_BaltimoreCity\_CivilRightsMPS\_ParrenMitchellHouse\_0004.tif  
Northeast (rear) elevation, facing southwest

Mitchell, Congressman Parren J., House  
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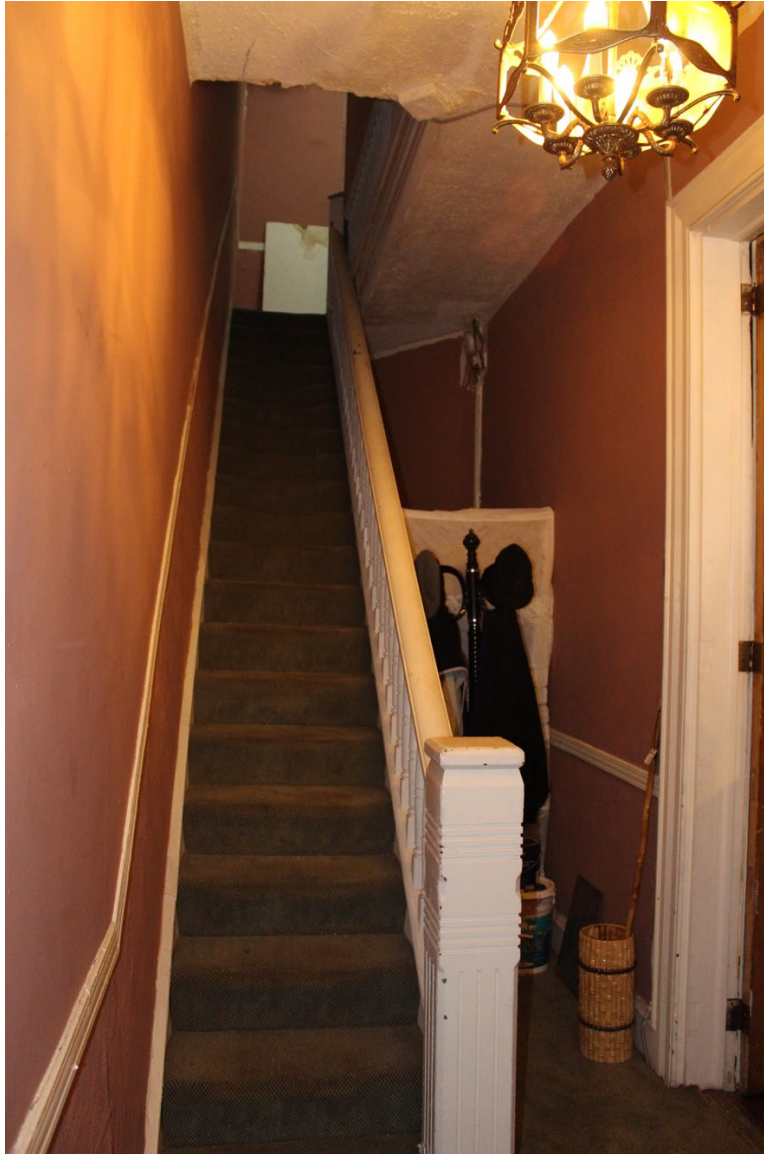


Photo 5 of 10  
MD\_BaltimoreCity\_CivilRightsMPS\_ParrenMitchellHouse\_0005.tif  
Stair hall, facing northeast

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Photo 6 of 10

MD\_BaltimoreCity\_CivilRightsMPS\_ParrenMitchellHouse\_0006.tif  
Stair hall, vestibule doors, and early light fixture, facing southwest

Mitchell, Congressman Parren J., House  
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Photo 7 of 10

MD\_BaltimoreCity\_CivilRightsMPS\_ParrenMitchellHouse\_0007.tif  
Wooden doors between hall and living room, facing northwest

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Photo 8 of 10  
MD\_BaltimoreCity\_CivilRightsMPS\_ParrenMitchellHouse\_0008.tif  
First floor interior, facing southwest

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Photo 9 of 10  
MD\_BaltimoreCity\_CivilRightsMPS\_ParrenMitchellHouse\_0009.tif  
Living room fireplace, facing southeast

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Photo 10 of 10

MD\_BaltimoreCity\_CivilRightsMPS\_ParrenMitchellHouse\_0010.tif

Dining room and spiral staircase to second floor installed by Parren Mitchell, facing northeast