

**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. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

## **1. Name of Property**

historic name Powell, J. Davis, House

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

## **2. Location**

street & number 1410 Shirley Street  not for publication

city or town Columbia  vicinity

state South Carolina code SC county Richland code 079 zip code 29205

## **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     local

Signature of certifying official

Date

Elizabeth M. Johnson, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, South Carolina Department of Archives & History, Columbia, S.C.

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## **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): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- |                                     |                  |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | private          |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | public - Local   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | public - State   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | public - Federal |

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- |                                     |             |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | building(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | district    |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | site        |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | structure   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | object      |

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<b>Contributing</b>	<b>Noncontributing</b>	
3	0	buildings
		district
		site
4		structure
		object
7	0	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use****Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

DOMESTIC: Secondary Structure

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

DOMESTIC: Secondary Structure

**7. Description****Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Prairie School

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Brick

roof: Asphalt

other: Wood

Stucco

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### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

### Summary Paragraph

The J. Davis Powell House, located at 1410 Shirley Street, in Columbia, Richland County, South Carolina, is a two-story Prairie Style home built in 1919-20, set on a large, sloping lot within the Melrose Heights neighborhood, an early twentieth century residential development that is still characterized by small to medium-sized brick and frame Craftsman bungalows, Colonial Revival and Tudor Revival cottages. The Powell family, who developed and built the neighborhood, ordered plans for their home matching those that appeared in the March 1916 issue of *Ladies Home Journal*. Constructed with yellow brick, the house has an irregular plan, a broad, low-pitched, sheltering, asphalt shingle-covered hipped roof, cantilevered eaves, and sets of elongated, repeated windows on both floors. Though some of the family's choices of materials differ from the original plans and some additions and alterations have been made over the years, the house retains its Prairie Style features and integrity. Located approximately forty feet to the rear (east) of the house is an early twentieth century stuccoed masonry garage that originally consisted of the automobile bay level (ground level at façade) and a lower living level that is fully visible from the rear (east) of the lot where it slopes downward. About 1940 the owners added a wood-frame second level with hipped roof above the four garage bays. Opposite the main driveway and to the northeast of the house is a small one-story wood-frame pool house with hipped roof, and a concrete and ceramic tiled pool located immediately to the west of the pool house. To the west of and on an east-west axis with the pool and pool house are four cast stone classical columns - remnants of what originally was an extensive pergola system that encompassed a driveway around the house on the property - with steel threaded rods/bolts extending upward from each that once carried the timber frame structure of the pergola. In addition, to the immediate rear of the house is a flagstone crosswalk leading from the house to and surrounding a small circular pool (goldfish pond), at the center of which is a rock-faced granite block that provides a base for a large, finely crafted marble vase. At the extreme southeast rear corner of the property is a large rock-faced granite, brick, and concrete outdoor fireplace. Along the Shirley Street sidewalk – west side of property – is a low profile iron picket fence with a concrete and rusticated granite coping wall base. At the pedestrian entrance and the flanking driveway entrances are square yellow brick pillars with soldier course accents, flat cast stone coping, and flat bowl-shaped planters. Although no longer a part of the property, the granite coping and iron picket fence continues south along Shirley Street and wraps onto Kershaw Street, indicating the original extent of the Powell lot. Likewise, a low concrete coping continues northward along Shirley Street to the corner of Longleaf Road, where a square yellow brick pillar identical to the others is present. The original lot to the north of the house extended to Longleaf Road in a series of terraces, at least some of which remain extant.

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### Narrative Description

1. **Main House** (1919-20) - The J. Davis Powell House was built over a poured concrete basement, and its walls are veneered with yellow brick rather than stucco as specified in the original plans. The bricks are set in a running or stretcher bond pattern, with water table, door and window lintels, and a slightly-projecting stringcourse between the first and second floors all delineated as soldier courses. The front entrance is set within a recessed square portal that is accessed from the front of the property by a concrete walk stretching from the sidewalk street entrance steps, pillars, and coped pedestals. The entry is at the transition point between the house's two-story main block and the one-story wing to the south. Set off by two short yellow brick, coped pedestals, it is inset under the cantilevered eave of the one-story section as it extends to the north and wraps across a portion of the two-story main block. Two stone steps within the entry portal precede the double-leaf entrance doors.

A defining feature of the façade is the set of wooden double doors, each containing four narrow vertical beveled-glass panels that stretch from top to bottom rail. To the left (north) of the entrance is a gang of four narrow, vertical one-over-one wood sash windows with cast stone sill, set within a square brick bay that projects one-and-one-half feet forward from the wall of the two-story main block. The projecting bay rises to a coping stone at the base of a gang of six identical windows on the second floor, and is the platform for a built-in window box or planter. To the immediate left (north) of the main entrance is a small horizontal ribbon or strip window consisting of a leaded stained glass panel of buff-colored repetitive pointed arches and dark green block surround. To the right (south) of the main entrance is a slightly wider gang of four windows.

Flanking the second story gang of windows are raised horizontal brick panels with flat cast or limestone lozenge motif at each panel's center. The original diamond-pattern, green asphalt shingles on the roof were replaced in the last half of the twentieth century with rectangular, gray asphalt shingles. Those currently on the roof are light brown in color. A simple horizontal twin molding transitions from the brick-veneered walls to the house's roof structure, the soffit of which is flat, sheathed in narrow beaded board paneling, extends some four feet beyond the wall of the house, and terminates in a canted fascia.

The strong Prairie Style window design of the façade does not extend to the north elevation. The large number of windows, five on the first floor and seven on the second floor, are not connected to each other and are wider than those on the façade. The most notable feature of this elevation is a hip roofed enclosed porch that began as a pergola. Supported by two yellow brick square pillars, the wooden slats of the pergola roof engaged with the side (north) wall of the house. Historic photographs show that climbing plants were trained over the roof structure to make this a shaded porch. This pergola was converted to a porch sometime in the 1950s or 1960s, when a hipped roof of similar design as that of the main house was added, and windows were added to enclose the space into a sunporch.

A small hip-roofed addition was built to extend the one-story portion of the house on the south elevation during the early 2000s. This concrete block addition was originally covered with yellow-tinted vinyl siding; however, the current owners replaced the vinyl siding in 2011 with a yellow brick veneer closely resembling the brick on the original part of the house.

Little remains of interior features of note except for a tile-surrounded fireplace at the center of the main level and some of the open floor plan. Spaces within the house's interior reflect simplicity of line and form.

The J. Davis Powell House continues to be a cornerstone of the Melrose Heights neighborhood that was constructed around it. Some remnants of the terracing and gardens for which the home was once locally known are extant. The lot contains a mixture of mature oak, pine, crape myrtle, and Deodar Cedar. Remnant shrubs include century plant and juniper.

#### **Additional Contributing Resources**

Six additional resources (two buildings and four structures) contribute to the historic and architectural character of the property.

**2. Garage Apartment** (ca. 1920, ca. 1940) - A two story stuccoed masonry and frame garage at the rear features four automobile bays with roll-up wood and glass paneled doors on the main level, a continuous pent-roof awning along the façade, weatherboard siding on the second level where there are two small single one-over-one windows flanked by sets of paired one-over-one windows, a hipped roof, and stuccoed central chimney cap. The garage's rear elevation features a slightly projecting uppermost level. Not many historic photographs exist of the garage, but it seems that the second story of the garage was added by 1940, likely for rental space during Fort Jackson's build-up before the nation entered World War II.

**3. Pool House and Pool** (ca. 1920, ca. 1935) - A one-story frame pool house with asphalt shingle-clad hipped roof, wide eaves, canted fascia, a corbel-capped yellow brick chimney at the north end, and a concrete and tile-accented pool are located to the north across the driveway from the garage. The pool is not currently in use, and although filled partially with vegetation and rubble, it is a contributing structure.

**4. Pergola** (ca. 1920) - To the west of the pool and pool house are four cast stone classically-inspired Tuscan order columns, evenly spaced as the basis for a pergola that is missing its wood roof structure. There are other remnant bases for pergola structures elsewhere on the property. In the 1920s J. Davis Powell constructed a system of pergolas to line the house's driveways, but most have either disappeared or been demolished over the years.

**5. Goldfish Pond** (ca. 1920) - Also located on the property and immediately to the east (rear) of the main house is a small circular goldfish pond or pool with square cast stone coping set within a crosswalk of flagstone leading from the house. At the center of the fishpond is a rock-faced granite block that forms the base for a finely-crafted vertical, bowl-shaped marble vase or font. The vase or font is decorated in relief with overlapping hart's-tongue fern (Species: *asplenium scolopendrium*) around the lower part of the bowl, and features a letter "P" in Old English script relief within an oval-shaped, finely-tooled field, on the upper portion of the bowl. The interior of the bowl is more roughly-tooled.

**6. Outdoor Fireplace** (post-1922) - At the extreme southeast rear corner of the property is a large rock-faced granite, brick, and concrete outdoor fireplace. The center portion contains a large segmental arched firebox with brick lining. Above the firebox is a large stack that tapers or features battered walls up to approximately twelve feet above grade. Remants of corner blocks that once likely supported a cover or chimney hood surmount the stack at its height. Rock-faced granite block supported cement slab tables splay from the central fireplace. The one to the right [south] is higher than the one to the north because the lot slopes to the north and east. The cement slab table tops are decorated with inlaid glass and shards.

**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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

**Architecture**


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**Period of Significance**

1919-20 – ca. 1940

**Significant Dates**

1919-1920

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

**Cultural Affiliation****Architect/Builder**


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**Criteria Considerations**

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

Property is:

- 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.

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The J. Davis Powell House was completed in 1920 and despite a small modern addition has remained essentially intact as a significant local example of the Prairie style since its construction. The garage apartment building to the rear, a contributing resource in this nomination, was expanded ca. 1940 to include an additional floor above the automobile garage bays. Historic and significant alterations made to the Pool House and Pool ca. 1935 and the expansion of the Garage ca. 1940 justify an end date of ca. 1940 for the property's period of significance.

### Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

#### Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

The J. Davis Powell House, begun in 1919 and completed in 1920, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion C for Architecture as a rare example of the Prairie Style in Columbia, South Carolina. No other contemporary example of the style has been identified in Columbia. The house retains the form and design characteristics of the Prairie Style with its low-pitched hipped roof, cantilevered eaves, asymmetrical footprint, and wide gangs of windows emphasizing the home's horizontal lines.

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#### Narrative Statement of Significance (provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance)

##### Architecture

The J. Davis Powell House is an intact and rare example of the Prairie Style in Columbia, South Carolina. The design of the house is believed to be by Floyd A. Dernier (1879-1934), a house designer in Los Angeles, California. Dernier was born in Michigan but lived in Los Angeles from 1909 until his death. Dernier began designing homes as a side interest and then published a catalogue of house plans after moving to Los Angeles. During World War I, house design continued to be a sideline for Dernier as he operated his own lumber sales business, known as the Lumberman's Service Association of Los Angeles. He continued to publish his catalogue, and sold a number of his plans for high quality affordable housing. He designed homes in many different styles, but seemed to focus on the Colonial Revival. Dernier had more success following the war, and continued selling house plans through the 1930s.<sup>1</sup>

Much of Dernier's work remains unattributed. Although he was a successful planbook architect, the system of selling individual plans generally deemphasized individual architects. The majority of the other extant homes that have been positively identified as his designs are in Los Angeles, and they are in more traditional styles. It was not unusual, however, for Dernier's designs to be built far from his hometown. The J. Davis Powell House is second in distance from Los Angeles only to a Dernier Tudor Revival style home built in Fredonia, New York.<sup>2</sup>

By the time Dernier published his Prairie House plan, Frank Lloyd Wright had been developing the Prairie Style for decades. After years of working for the Chicago firm of Adler and Sullivan, Wright opened his office in Chicago in 1893. By the turn of the twentieth century, he broke from revivalist architectural traditions and began creating something entirely new, which some labeled as "freakish" or "insurgent."<sup>3</sup> Wright's earliest Prairie House, the Winslow House in the Chicago suburb of River Forest, Illinois, was completed in 1893 and he is considered the master of the style that flourished between 1900 and 1920.<sup>4</sup> He and many other Prairie School architects, including Walter Burley Griffin, William Purcell, George Elmslie, and George Maher, emphasized natural forms and materials in their designs. For this quality and for the importance placed on the

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<sup>1</sup> Charles J. Fisher, "Floyd Dernier, Architect," in Los Angeles Department of City Planning Recommendation Report for 5026 Rosewood Avenue, pp. 15-16, <http://cityplanning.lacity.org/StaffRpt/CHC/5-6-08/CHC-2008-1379.pdf>, accessed 2 November 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Fisher, "Floyd Dernier, Architect," p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Neil Levine, *The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Charles E. White, Jr., "Insurgent Architecture in the Middle West: The Out-of-the-Ordinary Style that has been Developed by the Chicago School of Architects – Its Meaning and its Destiny," *Country Life in America* (September 1912), 15-18.

<sup>4</sup> Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), p. 440.

relationship between the building and the landscape, Wright described it as “organic architecture.” Open interior plans, rows of windows, and large porches helped break down the divide between indoor and outdoor space.<sup>5</sup> Long, overhanging eaves balanced the rows of windows, and helped to create more privacy.<sup>6</sup>

Although the Prairie Style proved popular in the Midwest, where it was originated, and on the West coast, Wright’s commissions within the South were limited. He designed two houses in South Carolina: Old Brass or Auldbrass in Yemassee, Beaufort County, and Broad Margin in Greenville, Greenville County, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1976 and 1978, respectively.<sup>7</sup> Prairie Style homes designed by other architects are also rare in South Carolina, as the style never seemed to catch on in the state. This is due in part to architectural conservatism, but also the fact that even in the capital city of Columbia few could afford to commission architects. No Prairie Style buildings have previously been listed in the National Register of Historic Places in Columbia or Richland County.<sup>8</sup> The neighborhood histories in the City of Columbia survey contain numerous mentions of Craftsman bungalows, high style Victorians, late Victorian vernacular houses and four-square houses; there is no discussion of the Prairie Style in the city.<sup>9</sup>

A review of the design guidelines provided for each of the historic districts managed by the City of Columbia Preservation and Planning Office shows a similar trend. These guidelines offer more specific information about each neighborhood, and list the presence of Craftsman, Tudor, Colonial Revival, Queen Anne and Spanish Colonial style homes as well as vernacular housing. None of the twelve sets of guidelines, including those for Melrose Heights, mention the Prairie Style.<sup>10</sup> Whether the Powells chose not to offer Prairie Style house plans to families who bought lots in Melrose Heights or whether these buyers were uninterested in the style is unknown. The J. Davis Powell House, nevertheless, is a rare example of Prairie Style residential architecture in Columbia.

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#### **Developmental History/Additional Historic Context Information (if appropriate)**

Joseph Davis Powell (1881-1948), a Columbia road construction contractor, real estate developer and builder, and owner of Powell Fuel Company, supplier of coal, mule livestock, and other commodities, purchased several acres of land in the area that would later become Melrose Heights between 1872 and 1900.<sup>11</sup> He

<sup>5</sup> H. Allen Brooks, *Frank Lloyd Wright and the Prairie School* (New York: George Braziller, 1984), pp. 9-10.

<sup>6</sup> Robert C. Twombly, *Frank Lloyd Wright: His Life and His Architecture* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1979), pp. 82-83.

<sup>7</sup> Katharine N. McNulty, National Register of Historic Places Nomination for Old Brass (Auldbrass), Yemassee, Beaufort County, S.C., 1976; Roy Palmer, National Register of Historic Places Nomination for Broad Margin, Greenville, Greenville County, S.C., 1978. Available online at South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office website, at <http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/>, accessed 2 November 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Very few National Register listings to date in South Carolina include Prairie Style homes. The following previously listed districts in South Carolina include one or two homes that are not as “high style” as the J. Davis Powell House but do exhibit Prairie-influenced forms or details: North Anderson Historic District (Anderson, Anderson County, listed in 2008), East Park Historic District (Greenville, Greenville County, listed in 2005), Col. Elias Earle Historic District (Greenville, Greenville County, listed in 1982). Available online at South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office website, at <http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/>, accessed 2 November 2011.

<sup>9</sup> John M. Bryan and Associates, *City-wide Architectural Survey and Historic Preservation Plan, Columbia, South Carolina* (Columbia: The Department of Archives and History, 1993), pp. 72 -101.

<sup>10</sup> City of Columbia Preservation and Planning Department, “Design Guidelines,” available online at <http://columbia.sc.gov/index.cfm/development-gateway/planning-and-development-services/>, accessed 2 November 2011.

<sup>11</sup> City of Columbia Preservation and Planning Department, “Melrose Heights / Oak Lawn Architectural Conservation District Design Guidelines,” (Columbia: City Preservation and Planning Department, 2003), p. 3; *The State* (Columbia, S.C.), 10 March 1919, 9; *The Columbia Record* (Columbia, S.C.), 30 January 1948; J. Davis Powell's grave marker, Elmwood Cemetery, Columbia, S.C., gives his birth date as May 10, 1881, and his death date as January 29, 1948; and Edwin Tremain Powell, Jr., J. Davis Powell's grandson, stated in an undated interview by Elaine Gillespie that his

found the perfect location for his new home on a four-acre tract, and burned down an older frame house on the property in order to build there.<sup>12</sup> The Powells had an earlier home at another nearby location they called "Melrose", a Colonial Revival house built ca. 1900, that was the namesake for the future neighborhood.<sup>13</sup> When the Powells began looking for mail-order plans, they sought out popular magazines such as *Ladies Home Journal* and *House Beautiful* for design ideas. Although pattern books had existed since the mid-nineteenth century, *Ladies Home Journal* was the first popular magazine to make plans available for purchase.<sup>14</sup> The new editor of the magazine, Edward Bok, made them a recurring feature beginning in 1896 in an attempt to help improve domestic architecture in the country by providing professional plans at a minimal cost. After this aspect of the magazine had become popular, Bok required architects to submit plans with specific requirements, such as cross ventilation and a living room instead of a parlor.<sup>15</sup>

*Ladies Home Journal* was also a proponent of a new architectural style espoused by Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright, well aware of the importance of the *Journal* for contemporary architecture, unveiled the Prairie Style in the magazine in February 1901 in an article entitled "A Home in a Prairie Town." He would publish new plans again later in 1901 and in 1907.<sup>16</sup> By the time the last set of Wright plans were published, *Ladies Home Journal* was tending toward more conservative architectural styles. This was in part due to the *Journal's* new policy of printing photographs rather than sketches of the houses they included.<sup>17</sup> In 1916, the same year the plans on which the Powell House's design is based were printed, Bok proudly claimed that 30,000 houses had been built from plans distributed by the *Ladies Home Journal*.<sup>18</sup>

By the beginning of World War I, revival styles, particularly American revival styles had become very popular. *House Beautiful* published its last Prairie Style plan in 1914, but the style survived, if only minimally in the magazine that had premiered it, *Ladies Home Journal*.<sup>19</sup> On the architecture page in the March 1916 issue, *Ladies Home Journal* featured a lone Prairie Style home on a page full of bungalows. The short description given says as much about the home as the increasing architectural conservatism of the magazine: "On the right is a house that will appeal to the builder who is looking for an unusual design but one which at the same time is not freakish. The exterior is of stucco over metal laths. There are four rooms on the first floor and four bedrooms and a bath above." For the cost of a two-cent stamp, the Powells obtained a small sketch plan and more construction details.<sup>20</sup>

After receiving information about the home from *Ladies Home Journal* in about 1917, J. Davis Powell contacted Floyd A. Dernier and paid a small fee for the detailed plans. The Powells hired a local contractor to build the house, and deviated from the original specifications only in the finishes they chose. In some cases, such as the green ceramic tile specified for the roof, this was because the materials were unavailable in

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grandfather's first name was Joseph, and that his grandmother, whose family was originally from Mientz, Germany, was raised in orphanages in New York City, educated as a nurse, came to Columbia to work in the Columbia Hospital, and met J. Davis Powell in 1906. Mrs. Powell's grave marker in Elmwood Cemetery is inscribed "Catherine Kellar Piez, Wife of J. Davis Powell, April 10, 1879 - Dec. 23, 1952."

<sup>12</sup> Walter G. Powell, Sr., Columbia, S.C., interviewed by Elaine Gillespie, undated notes in the possession of Kandie Wright, 1410 Shirley Street, Columbia, S.C., 2011 (hereafter cited as Powell House Papers), p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Historic Columbia Foundation, "Melrose Heights: Self-Guided Architectural Walking Tour" (Columbia, SC: Historic Columbia Foundation, 2010).

<sup>14</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 127, 186.

<sup>15</sup> Leland Roth, "Getting the Houses to the People: Edward Bok, the Ladies' Home Journal, and the Ideal House" *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* (1991), 187-189.

<sup>16</sup> Dixie Legler, *Prairie Style: Houses and Gardens by Frank Lloyd Wright and the Prairie School* (New York: Stewart, Tabori and Chang, 1999), pp. 16-20; Levine, p. 30.

<sup>17</sup> Roth, "Getting the Houses to the People," 192-194.

<sup>18</sup> Roth, "Getting the Houses to the People," 196.

<sup>19</sup> Legler, p. 21.

<sup>20</sup> Carey Edmunds, "The Other Woman's House," *Ladies Home Journal* (March 1916), 24.

Columbia. Instead, they chose green, diamond-patterned asphalt shingles.<sup>21</sup> Also, instead of the stucco specified, the home's distinctive light yellow brick was chosen. It is unclear how familiar the Powells were with Wright's work, but the use of light-colored masonry is in keeping with many of his early Prairie Style houses. The house was begun in 1919 and completed for occupancy in 1920.<sup>22</sup>

The Powells did not stop seeking inspiration in magazines when their home was finally built. Through these sources, they were able to follow popular trends for middle and upper class country homes in the northeast and had a series of pergolas built over the driveway and an in-ground swimming pool built on the property. Pergolas, trellage, and other garden ornament became very popular after the turn of the twentieth century, and popular home magazines featured numerous advertisements and even full-length articles especially promoting pergolas. Pergolas were praised for their adaptability to any climate, attractive lines, and the shade that they provided when covered in vines.<sup>23</sup> Photographic evidence shows that Mrs. Powell trained vines to grow over the pergola immediately adjacent to the house, but seems to have left the driveway pergolas bare.<sup>24</sup> Though there is no definite date of construction for the swimming pool on the property, in the years when the Powells were beginning construction upon their home a number of publications began to feature outdoor pools. Private swimming pools were becoming increasingly popular, and were praised for the health benefits they afforded.<sup>25</sup> Although it was not uncommon to build pools entirely from concrete, the use of ceramic tile was also common, whether to cover the entirety of the pool or just as a decorative border as the Powells did. Tiles were easier to clean than concrete, more beautiful, and certainly more effective for impressing the neighbors. Small "garden pools" like the one the Powells installed were common enough to deserve specific mention in a tile advertising booklet.<sup>26</sup> In 1930, Mrs. Powell lamented that the pool and poolhouse were rarely used now that her children had grown.<sup>27</sup> Based on the simple arts-and-crafts design of the tiles and historic photographs of people using the pool, it is likely that it was constructed within a decade of the house and is the earliest extant private swimming pool in Columbia.

J. Davis Powell and his family began selling lots on their land privately in the early 1920s, but by 1929 the Melrose Heights Development Company, of which Powell was president, was overextended. By that time, though, forty houses had been built in the neighborhood. Melrose Realty, successor to Melrose Heights Development Company, began selling lots beginning in 1937 and continued through the mid-1950s.<sup>28</sup> The Melrose Heights Development Company's stationery letterhead made the aesthetic for the neighborhood very clear. It pictured six homes, presumably all of which were built in the neighborhood, flanked by two phrases: "Each Home a Model in Itself" and "No Two Alike." The Company ordered plans from *House and Garden*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Town and Country* and others to have built on the lots in the neighborhood.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Edwin Tremain Powell, Jr., Columbia, S.C., interviewed by Elaine Gillespie, undated notes, p 4, Powell House Papers; "H. MacA. W.", "Powell Home in Melrose Heights One of Loveliest in Columbia," *The State* (Columbia, S.C.), undated post-1922 clipping in possession of Kandie Wright, 1410 Shirley Street, Columbia, S.C., Powell House Papers.

<sup>22</sup> Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *In the Nature of Materials: The Buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright, 1887-1941* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), pp. 39-42; completion dates on the house vary. The Historic Columbia Foundation offers 1917 in its brochure on the neighborhood. Walter G. Powell Sr. states it was built in 1919. Edwin Tremain Powell, Jr. says the plans were bought from magazine about 1917, and the family occupied the house in 1920. Depending on how quickly the Powells obtained the plans and began construction, it is possible that they could have finished in 1917 but 1919-1920 are more likely; Historic Columbia Foundation, "Melrose Heights: Self-Guided Architectural Walking Tour" (Columbia: Historic Columbia Foundation, 2010), 3; Walter G. Powell Sr., undated interview notes, p. 2, and Edwin Tremain Powell, Jr., undated interview notes, p. 4, Powell House Papers.

<sup>23</sup> Mary H. Northend, "Practical Pergolas" *House and Garden* (April 1908), 113-116.

<sup>24</sup> "H. MacA. W.", "Powell Home;" Historic Photographs of the J. Davis Powell House, Powell House Papers.

<sup>25</sup> Charles Alma Byers, "The Swimming Pool in the Garden" *House Beautiful* (July 1915), 59-60; Robert Van Court, "The Bathing Pool at the Country House" *House and Garden* (August 1914), 79-81.

<sup>26</sup> Associated Tile Manufacturers, *Swimming Pools* (Beaver Falls, PA: Associated Tile Manufacturers, 1917), pp. 30-31.

<sup>27</sup> "H. MacA. W.", "Powell Home."

<sup>28</sup> City of Columbia, "Melrose Heights," pp. 3-4; Walter Powell Sr., undated interview notes, p. 2, Powell House Papers.

<sup>29</sup> Letterhead, Melrose Heights Development Company, undated; Edwin Tremain Powell, Jr., undated interview notes, p. 4, Powell House Papers.

During this period, the Powell House was in active use as the model home and showpiece of the neighborhood. For pleasure, and to help draw attention to the growing neighborhood, Mrs. Powell developed elaborate, terraced gardens and five garden pools on the property. The men in the family worked on a series of building projects to help attract prospective buyers as well as remind current residents of the work their company might do, even at a completed home. One example of this work is the extant stone and concrete outdoor fireplace which was built to the north of the house sometime after 1922.<sup>30</sup> Business boomed for the Melrose Heights Development Company after World War II, but by the mid-1950s, all or nearly all of their lots had been sold.<sup>31</sup>

The Powell House and grounds have remained remarkably intact through the years. Aside from the relatively recent south addition, the original lines and plan of the home remain undisturbed. An early Prairie Style home in a city where perhaps a handful of homes in this style were ever built, the Powell House represents an important phase in the development of the history of Columbia and its suburbs.

#### Additional Information

In the years following the Civil War, the Powell family began purchasing a series of parcels of land in the fork between Millwood Avenue and Gervais Street. They obtained one of the largest of these, a sixty seven and one-half acre tract, in 1872 at a state tax sale for \$29.00. By the turn of the twentieth century, the Powells built a family seat on their new holdings. They named the Colonial Revival house "Melrose." As early as 1900, the eastern section of the Powell land was commonly known as Melrose Heights.<sup>32</sup> This land, just on the outskirts of downtown Columbia and the older suburb of Shandon, was ideally suited for development. Although limited biographical information is available for J. Davis Powell, he seems to have been much more interested in the land's moneymaking potential rather than the creation of a family estate. He was a prominent man in the paving and contracting business in Columbia. One isolated example of his ambition, and the notoriety he gained from it, is the 1917 completion of a railroad into Camp Jackson (now Fort Jackson) in only seventeen days.<sup>33</sup> Powell also won contracts to build sidetracks along the Southern Railway between Spartanburg and Charleston and to construct Two Notch Road from the Columbia city limits to the Kershaw County line.<sup>34</sup> By 1910, the Powells had laid out the Fairview neighborhood on the eastern portion of their land. Only five years later, plats within the Melrose Heights neighborhood were registered as well. Both were laid out in a grid pattern with wide streets. To help promote and manage these neighborhoods, J. Davis Powell created the Melrose Heights Development Company and the Fairview Realty Company during the 1920s.<sup>35</sup>

The two companies were relatively successful, but were hit hard by the stock market crash of October 1929. The Melrose Heights Development Company overextended and failed in 1929. It was reborn as Melrose Realty in 1937 under Mrs. Powell's name.<sup>36</sup> Under this name, the Powells began selling lots and building houses once again. J. Davis Powell's dedication to the company was unflagging – according to family lore he was busily digging and pouring foundations the Monday after Thanksgiving in 1941. The attack on Pearl

<sup>30</sup> "H. MacA. W.", "Powell Home."

<sup>31</sup> Walter G. Powell, Sr., undated interview notes, p. 2; Edwin T. Powell, Jr., undated interview notes, p. 5, Powell House Papers.

<sup>32</sup> John M. Bryan and Associates. "Neighborhood History VI. Melrose Heights and Fairview, Columbia, S.C.," in *City-wide Architectural Survey and Historic Preservation Plan, Columbia, South Carolina* (Columbia: South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1993), p. 1; Historic Columbia Foundation, "Melrose Heights," p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> "J. Davis Powell Dies Suddenly," photocopy of undated newspaper article [January 1948], in "Melrose Heights" vertical file at the Richland County Public Library; see also obituary, *The State* (Columbia, S.C.), 30 January 1948, and *The Columbia Record* (Columbia, S.C.), 30 January 1948.

<sup>34</sup> "To Build Sidetracks; J. Davis Powell of Columbia Gets Contract," *The State*, (Columbia, S.C.), 28 January 1915, 9; "Two Notch Road Now Being Built, Powell Paving and Construction Company in Charge," *The State* (Columbia, S.C.), 16 September 1920, 5.

<sup>35</sup> Bryan, "Neighborhood History VI," pp. 1-2.

<sup>36</sup> Walter G. Powell, Sr., undated interview notes, p. 2, Powell House Papers.

Harbor and the United States' entry into World War II marked the end of all construction in the neighborhood, but work quickly resumed at the end of the war. By the mid-1950s, nearly all of the lots in the neighborhood had been sold.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Walter G. Powell, Sr., undated interview notes, p. 2; Edwin Tremain Powell, Jr., undated interview notes, p. 5, Powell House Papers.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

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

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

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: S.C. Dept. of Archives & History

### Sources

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Northend, Mary H. "Practical Pergolas." *House and Garden* (April 1908).

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Powell, Edwin Tremain, Jr., Columbia, S.C. Interview by Elaine Gillespie, Columbia, S.C. Undated Notes in the possession of Kandie Wright, 1410 Shirley Street, Columbia, S.C.

Powell, Walter G., Sr., Columbia, S.C. Interview by Elaine Gillespie, Columbia, S.C. Undated Notes In the possession of Kandie Wright, 1410 Shirley Street, Columbia, S.C.

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## 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of Property** 1.051 acres  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1 17      500014      3762744  
Zone      Easting      Northing

3                     
Zone      Easting      Northing

2                   

4

J. Davis Powell House

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**Name of Property**

Richland County, SC

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### County and State

Zone      Easting      Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (describe the boundaries of the property)

The boundary of the nominated property is shown as the black line marked "J. Davis Powell House, 1410 Shirley St., Columbia, Richland County, SC" on the accompanying portion of a Richland County GIS map, dated 2009 and drawn at a scale of  $5/8" = 60'$  or  $1" = \text{approx. } 100'$ .

**Boundary Justification** (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The boundary is restricted to the historic house, two outbuildings, one structure, and one object, and their immediate settings that make up the 1.051-acre parcel.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Jennifer Betsworth (with assistance of the SHPO staff)

organization Public History Program, University of South Carolina date 6 August 2012

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone (812) 568-3280

city or town Columbia state SC zip code 29208

e-mail      [betswort@email.sc.edu](mailto:betswort@email.sc.edu)

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## **Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
  - **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Owner of Property: Patrick M. and Kandie A. Wright  
1410 Shirley Street  
Columbia, SC 29205

**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: J. Davis Powell House  
 City or Vicinity: 1410 Shirley Street, Columbia  
 County: Richland  
 State: South Carolina  
 Photographer: Kandie Wright (photos 1-10, 12, 15-16), Andrew W. Chandler (photos 11, 13-14, 17-23)  
 Date Photographed: September 2, 2011 (photos 1-10, 12, 15-16), and November 1, 2011 (photos 11, 13-14, 17-23)

**Description of Photograph(s) and Number:**

- 1 of 23. West (façade) elevation, camera facing east.
- 2 of 23. West (façade) elevation, original brick pillars at sidewalk in foreground, camera facing east.
- 3 of 23. Oblique view of west (façade) and north elevations, original brick pier in foreground, garage partially visible behind house, camera facing southeast.
- 4 of 23. Oblique view of west (façade) elevation, camera facing northeast.
- 5 of 23. Oblique view of west (façade) elevation, showing 2000s addition on south end of house that is set back from the front of the house, camera facing southeast.
- 6 of 23. Interior view of first floor living room, camera facing east.
- 7 of 23. Close up view of 2000s addition on south end of house, camera facing southeast.
- 8 of 23. Oblique view of south elevation of 2000s addition, camera facing northeast.
- 9 of 23. East (rear) elevation, camera facing west.
- 10 of 23. Garage Apartment, camera facing southeast (pre-rehabilitation).
- 11 of 23. Garage Apartment, camera facing east (post-rehabilitation).
- 12 of 23. Pool House with swimming pool in foreground, camera facing east (pre-rehabilitation).
- 13 of 23. Pool House with swimming pool in foreground, camera facing east (post-rehabilitation).
- 14 of 23. Pool House, oblique view of rear (east) elevation, camera facing northwest (post-rehabilitation).
- 15 of 23. Oblique view of west (façade) and north elevations, driveway in foreground, camera facing southeast.
- 16 of 23. Driveway, with north elevation of house and garage, camera facing east.
- 17 of 23. Oblique view of east elevations of Main House (left), Garage Apartment (center), and Pool House (right), camera facing northwest.
- 18 of 23. Southwest oblique view of Garage Apartment and Retaining wall for original circular driveway (pergola missing); Deodar cedar, camera facing northeast.
- 19 of 23. Cast stone columns remaining from pergola in front of Pool House and Pool, camera facing southwest.
- 20 of 23. Circular Goldfish Pond with cast stone coping and central marble vase/font
- 21 of 23. Marble Vase/Font with initial "P" and fern leaf carvings.
- 22 of 23. Outdoor Fireplace with flanking tables, camera facing southeast.
- 23 of 23. Outdoor Fireplace (rear) with flanking walls, camera facing southwest.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

J. Davis Powell House

Name of Property

Richland County, SC

County and State

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, DC.