

## A SHORT HISTORY OF THE KENNEDY-WARREN, ART DECO LANDMARK by Jane Loeffler, PhD

### LIVING IN A LANDMARK

The Kennedy-Warren is considered to be one of D.C.'s best examples of **Art Deco** architecture and the finest Art Deco apartment house ever built here. James Goode (1939-2019) was the noted historian who made that declaration after examining Washington's key landmarks and cataloging them in a series of well-known books. He also lived at the Kennedy-Warren for decades becoming one of its most illustrious residents. And as a consulting historian to the B.F. Saul Co., he was responsible for the splendid array of framed vintage photographs of Washington in the 1930s that adorn the hallways of the Kennedy-Warren. His book *Best Addresses* (1988) is perhaps the most familiar to residents here because it features the Kennedy-Warren on its cover.

When Goode died in 2019, he left a manuscript outlining the history of the Kennedy-Warren that remains unpublished. For the account here, I have drawn upon that manuscript and other published sources. But I am most fortunate of all to live in the building itself. Thus, I have first-hand experience afforded to few. As an architectural historian, I really do enjoy the sight of the multi-hued bricks—not just “buff-colored” as many books say, but peach, yellow, and speckled tan, variously arranged to catch the light in changing patterns—and the striking cast aluminum spandrels, so dramatic and assertive, that activate the façade and give it its sparkle and its vertical lift. Also, I am always entertained and amused by the stern Aztec-inspired eagles, the austere griffins, and the little elephants that animate the exterior and just make even passersby want to know more about the building's history and what it all means. That's what this essay is for. *(Unless otherwise noted, all photos are of the Kennedy-Warren taken by the author in 2021.)*

**Fig. 1. Decorated apartment door. (Cover: Door knocker, Historic Wing)**



If the Kennedy-Warren is such a notable example of **Art Deco**, what makes it so? Simply put, the exterior architecture, interiors, materials, and the overall grandeur of its plan and program combine to produce a landmark of national significance.

The Kennedy-Warren stands out today because it captured the Art Deco era so well and still maintains that elegance. Furthermore, it was never meant to be just a place to live. Rather, it was a “lifestyle” destination before that phrase ever existed. From the outset, its plan called for an elaborate program, an array of facilities and services to support everyday living. To understand the architecture and decor, one also has to appreciate the breadth of the program it supported. **Fig. 2. “Aztec” low-relief limestone carving on the façade.**

Seeing how the Kennedy-Warren has maintained its charm and distinction is all the more remarkable given that the building was constructed in three phases over a period of more than seventy years: 1) the North Wing was completed in 1931, when construction ceased because of the Great Depression; 2) the Northeast Wing was built in 1935; and 3) the South Wing completed the original scheme in 2004.



### WHAT IS ART DECO?

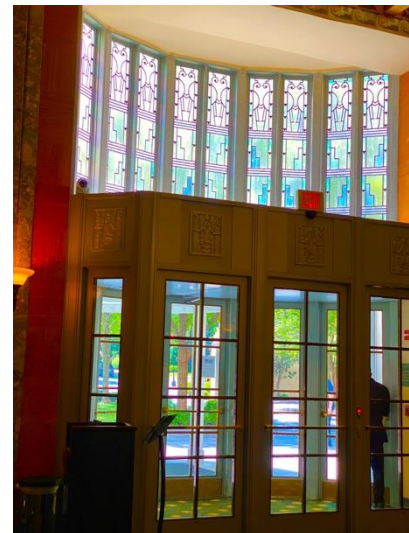
Since we are talking about an Art Deco landmark, it is good to define Art Deco. The movement known as Art Deco combined fine workmanship with an array of dazzling and often exotic materials to evoke the ultimate in luxury, glamour, and what was then considered to be the height of fashion. Its name derived from the *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes* or *Arts Décoratifs*, for short, a 1925 Paris exhibition that took the design world by storm. **Fig. 3. Lobby and lower lobby.**

In the 1920s, architects, and those who designed furniture, furnishings, graphics, theater sets, and fashions, all took inspiration from the new machines that were then capturing the popular imagination. Those included airships, ocean liners, and automobiles, all fashioned upon aerodynamic principles. Designers were also captivated by new materials, such as aluminum, first used in airplane design and later to add glitter to new buildings, inside and out.

Artists, particularly the Cubists, had already juxtaposed complementary patterns to create dynamic painting surfaces, and the Vienna Secessionists had similarly used bold geometric patterns to add visual excitement to interior décor. Art Deco built upon those precedents and also drew from historical styles associated with ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome, Asia, Central America, and those that had come to be associated with Native Americans, not only the Aztecs and Mayans.

As an aside, it is interesting to note that the same international exposition that launched Art Deco also became a launch pad of sorts for an attack on the very notion of decorative art, Le Corbusier's *L'art décoratif d'aujourd'hui*, published in 1925. Architect Le Corbusier, who was also infatuated with machines and new materials, detested decoration, calling it a "perversion." He and his modernist followers took architecture and design in a totally different direction. While Le Corbusier was designing his own iconic landmark, a private residence in Poissy, France known as the *Villa Savoye* (1928-31)—a stark white box raised above the ground on stilts, featuring a flat roof, long ribbon windows and not one ounce of decorative trim or decoration anywhere—the Deco enthusiasts, by contrast, were busy creating scores of movie palaces, ocean liners, hotels, apartments, and office buildings that made that era so richly memorable.

**Fig. 4. Stained glass over lobby entrance.**



Deco icons included: the Chrysler Building (1930), the Empire State Building (1931), and the RCA Building (30 Rockefeller Plaza) (1933)—all featuring the new glamour of Art Deco exteriors and spectacular lobbies—intended to attract visitors, boost business, and create a lasting impression of grandeur.

The Art Deco style, which peaked in popularity at the very beginning of the Depression, faded as economic conditions worsened worldwide. The fashion for opulence may have lived on in the movies, but it was replaced in the architectural realm by less flamboyant, unadorned and more utilitarian buildings. Not only as an aesthetic choice, but largely for economic reasons, designers stopped adding decorative elements to building facades and stripped interiors to their bare minimums. The results were plain, flat facades with no surface articulation, rhythm, or balance, low ceilings inside, dim lighting, easy to clean paint colors, easy to clean floor surfaces, and overall lack of graciousness and charm. The results were and still are often banal compared to those of the earlier era.



### KENNEDY & WARREN BUILD LUXURY APARTMENTS (1931)

The Kennedy-Warren sits on Connecticut Avenue on a site in Cleveland Park that abuts the National Zoo and Rock Creek Park. The area once consisted of large private estates substantially distant and elevated from the downtown area and separated from the downtown by the deep valley formed by Rock Creek. Until bridges were built over the valley and public transit arrived, the higher surrounding land was largely inaccessible to many people. The Rock Creek Railway on Connecticut Avenue, completed in 1892, made the new “suburbs” beyond the valley easily accessible for the first time. **Fig. 5. Courtyard entrance pier.**

Other luxury apartment buildings that preceded the Kennedy-Warren included: Cathedral Mansions (1923), the Broadmoor (1929), and Tilden Gardens (1930) on Connecticut Avenue; Alban Towers (1929) on Wisconsin at Massachusetts Avenue; and the Westchester (1930) on Cathedral Avenue.

Monroe Warren Sr., a general contractor, and Edgar S. Kennedy, a real estate developer who owned land fronting on Connecticut Avenue just south of the Klinge Valley Bridge, decided to build a deluxe apartment house on the large, wooded tract owned by Kennedy. In 1929, according to James Goode’s unpublished account, Kennedy and Warren imagined an apartment building with hotel services for the site. They retained the architect Joseph Younger to design the new building. Younger had previously designed the Sixth Presbyterian Church on 16<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, a handsome stone edifice with an outstanding bell tower topped with caryatids. **Fig. 6. View of the Kennedy-Warren from Klinge Valley Bridge.**



From the outset, Kennedy and Warren envisioned a special place—its program included a full-size ballroom (the only one in an apartment building in Washington), full-service dining room serving lunch and dinner and delivering meals to residents in their apartments, a large kitchen, maids’ rooms, a laundry, children’s playroom, store room, switchboard, hair salon, mail services, valet shop, concierge services, maid services, bellboy services (dog walking, etc.), a garage with parking for 220 cars and garage services, including automobile repairs and an on-site gas pump. Other features included a walk-in safe for jewelry and fur storage. As originally envisioned, the South Wing was also to include a drug store, gift shop, barber shop, and a large assembly hall. That was definitely an extensive program for any residential building.

For the proposed new apartment building, Younger came up with a number of different layouts—all of which were planned to maximize the light and air that reached each unit. As a result, the favored plan extended across the linear site in sections, bending at intervals to allow the most units the best possible orientation. Nine stories faced Connecticut Avenue. Because of the grade drop, Younger was able to fit eleven stories on the side facing the park, with additional storage and garage levels below. Thus, the third level became the main lobby.

The first phase of construction began on October 17, 1930. A year later, having lost their financing because of the Great Depression, Kennedy and Warren stopped construction. They had completed what was known as the North Wing, which consisted of 210 units, nearly all one, two, or three-room units with kitchen and bath. All the efficiency apartments and some one-bedroom units featured Murphy beds, concealed in closets to save space. There were also a small number of larger apartments with four or five rooms; some even had working fireplaces (2-7).

Throughout 1931, the owners ran a massive advertising campaign, spending some \$30,000 on direct mail, newspaper and radio advertisements promoting the new rental apartments, celebrated for being the first in D.C. to be “air-cooled.”

The apartments were readily rented to tenants culled from the many who were carefully screened both “socially and financially,” according to Goode (3-8). Goode mentions that those turned away included those from “socially undesirable neighborhoods,” those living in small apartments, those with young children, and those already paying lower rents than the Kennedy-Warren minimum.

Despite a public relations campaign that emphasized exclusivity, from the outset the Kennedy-Warren boasted a potpourri of residents—largely because its plan provided so many smaller apartments, some very small, indeed. That aspect of the original plan has proven to be a lasting asset, assuring a diversity among residents that most comparable buildings cannot match.

Just as the Kennedy-Warren completed its first phase, architect Paul Philippe Cret and engineer Ralph Modjeski designed the new Klinge Valley bridge. Made of steel, to replace an iron bridge, the new bridge spanned the valley just north of the Kennedy-Warren. Large Art Deco lights marked each corner of the bridge, completed in 1932. **Fig. 7. Light lantern on Klinge Valley Bridge (1931-32).**



B.F. Saul Co. acquired the Kennedy-Warren in bankruptcy when its owners were unable to secure new loans in 1931. By the mid-30's, the housing market had rebounded in the Washington area as the New Deal brought government workers to the D.C. area to fill new government jobs. In 1935, B.F. Saul embarked upon the second phase of construction, the Northeast Wing. In six months, they had completed 107 additional units, and by early in 1936, all were rented. Most had views of parkland.

## THE FAÇADE

When examining a building noted for its interiors, perhaps, it is easy to overlook the exterior walls and details, but at the Kennedy-Warren, that would be a colossal mistake. The Kennedy-Warren is a steel frame building clad in unusual bricks manufactured to Younger's specifications in numerous colors of buff—peach, tan, beige, brown, and ivory. As a result, its exterior walls are anything but plain. Like a Cubist master, Younger manipulated his brick surfaces adding aluminum, limestone, and glass to create light effects that varied across those surfaces over the course of the day. The varied surfaces also minimized the mass of the imposing structure. **Fig. 8. Views of brickwork and limestone and aluminum trim on KW façades.**



Vertical rows of molded bricks, limestone medallions, window bays separated by aluminum spandrels and also by bricks inlaid as checkerboards and in other interwoven patterns, sections made up of combined bricks and limestone graphically contrasted, strong vertical accents defined by window bays, limestone columns, and brick pilasters, and counter-balanced by strong horizontal accents



of the repeated floor levels, sills, and cornices, and even gargoyles extending outward at the seventh floor level—all combine to create a lively and intricate façade that sets the tone for the whole. The brick patterns, the strong verticals and the more subtle horizontals, are all decorative features of the Art Deco style.

The tower is the most prominent feature of the Kennedy-Warren as viewed from Connecticut Avenue. Topped with a copper pyramid, the tower pavilion stands above the second most prominent feature, the striking aluminum semi-circular porch that extends out over the front entrance. It is this porch that is certainly the building's signature Art Deco motif. Some describe it as "Streamlined" Art Deco, because of the gentle curves that evoke a sense of movement, and others describe it as "Aztec" Art Deco, because of the elements that call to mind ancient Aztec geometric designs. **Fig. 9. The pyramid-topped tower.**

The spandrels that separate the vertical columns of window bays vary in width depending upon their placement. Like the porch, they feature geometric motifs, but these are based on interlaced curves splayed around a central hexagon. They also suggest Aztec precedent. The molded curves catch the light in such a way that they appear to vibrate. They are anything but static. To make a musical analogy, it is almost as if the façade of the Kennedy-Warren has a syncopated rhythm or a jazz beat, when so many other buildings just do the box step.

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The Alcoa Company of Pittsburgh produced the exterior aluminum spandrels for this building and the Jorss Iron Works of Washington, D.C. manufactured the aluminum porch. (Jorss also fabricated the interior aluminum for the project.) Younger may have seen aluminum trim on a building or buildings in New York City, but he had surely never seen anything as flamboyant and lastingly iconic as this porch or the spandrels that he designed here. **Fig. 10. Views of the Art Deco porch fabricated in aluminum.**



In addition to aluminum, the new a trendy building material in the 1930s, Younger used limestone for decorative purposes on the Kennedy-Warren façade. Specifically, he created low-relief creatures in limestone to emphasize the corners of the tower and to add further historical and decorative allusions elsewhere. Two giant winged griffins adorn either side of the tower near its top. Double eagles, in Aztec style, looking fiercely in opposite directions, are

featured at the lower level over windows and doors. Other eagles adorn the driveway gateposts. Younger also created starburst patterns in limestone to enliven the façade. And to add whimsy with no known meaning attached, he added a charming frieze of elephants that face out from around the perimeter at intervals. **Fig. 11. One segment of the elephant frieze.**



## INTO THE LOBBY

As this description reveals, the Kennedy-Warren’s exterior—with its play of materials and highly decorated interlocking surfaces, prepares guests for the unusual interiors that await them inside. Entering through the front door into the two-story lobby, one passes beneath the semi-circular stained glass that is a full story in height above the porch entrance. The glass, tinted in tones of blue, green and gold, is patterned abstractly into curved panes at the top and angular panes below. The filtered light fills the west-facing lobby, particularly in the afternoon, with a warm and pleasant glow. **Fig. 12. Lobby entrance viewed from mezzanine above.**

Light also reflects off of the two enormous mirrors that hang on either side of the lobby. The original mirrors have been replaced, but the new ones are still 10’ tall and still frame the views and extend the space to the north and south. Straight ahead is a dramatic staircase leading down to the lower lobby that once led to the grand ballroom, and still leads to facilities including the playroom, gym, swimming pool, hair salon, business center, laundry, and library, in addition to many apartments that are located below the third-floor lobby (street level) on the first and second levels that face the park to the rear.

From an Art Deco perspective, the most significant part of the staircase is its aluminum railing, complemented by the balustrade that encloses the very gracious fourth-floor mezzanine used for card games and other sorts of casual gatherings. The mezzanine also serves as a place to sit and watch comings and goings since the lobby, itself,



provided relatively little seating for that purpose. The wooden beamed ceiling was originally painted in pastels and gold tones arrayed in a “zig-zag” pattern, another hallmark of the Art Deco.

**Fig.13. Beamed ceiling in lobby, hand-painted.**

Other opulent materials featured in the lobby included colored marble cladding elaborately fluted pilasters and a new product known as *Flexwood*, used on the walls. Possibly first seen in Chicago in 1928, Flexwood was a wall covering made of a thin veneer of exotic woods. At the Kennedy-Warren, it was applied in squares to the end walls of the lobby in a pattern that emphasized the natural grain of the wood.

**Fig. 14. Hand-painted “Flexwood” panels that have replaced the original Flexwood that once covered the walls.**



Designers thought that Flexwood added elegance and warmth to lobby interiors as if they were paneled in rare wood. At the same time as it was being installed at the Kennedy-Warren, it was featured at the Empire State Building, the Chrysler Building and the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, all in New York City.



Beyond the grand staircase at the rear of the lobby is the small elevator lobby where the elevator doors are obscured by being placed in the side wall, not directly facing the entrance. This increased the drama of coming upon the doors, so richly embellished with lavish inlaid Art Deco designs made of copper and black metal. (The original doors on the second, third, and fourth levels remain today and have been restored.) **Fig. 15. Inlaid elevator door in Art Deco design.**

A “meander” or Greek key pattern added a unifying horizontal element and scale to the overall design scheme of the lobby. It was incised and gilded upon the flat dark marble surfaces at about eye level and higher up, too. This geometric element had a long history associated with ancient Greek and Roman art. What is possibly unique about this Kennedy-Warren lobby art is that it appears to combine the ancient geometric motif of the wave pattern meander with a wine or champagne glass in a figure/ground illusion that can be read in two ways. This playful adaptation of an ancient motif fits well with the Art Deco aesthetic and certainly suits the “sophisticated” Kennedy-Warren. **Figs. 16 & 17. Meander pattern (with wine glasses) on lobby walls, in gold.**





What is also significant about the meander pattern on the walls is that it provides a clue to better understanding the interlocking meander pattern of the balustrade and stair rails, a design element that has caused concern to some—because when two meander patterns overlap, they produce a swastika (as shown in the Roman mosaic at Chedworth, a Roman villa in England that dates from 120 C.E.) **Fig. 18. Double meander pattern (swastika) in mosaic tiles at Chedworth.** See

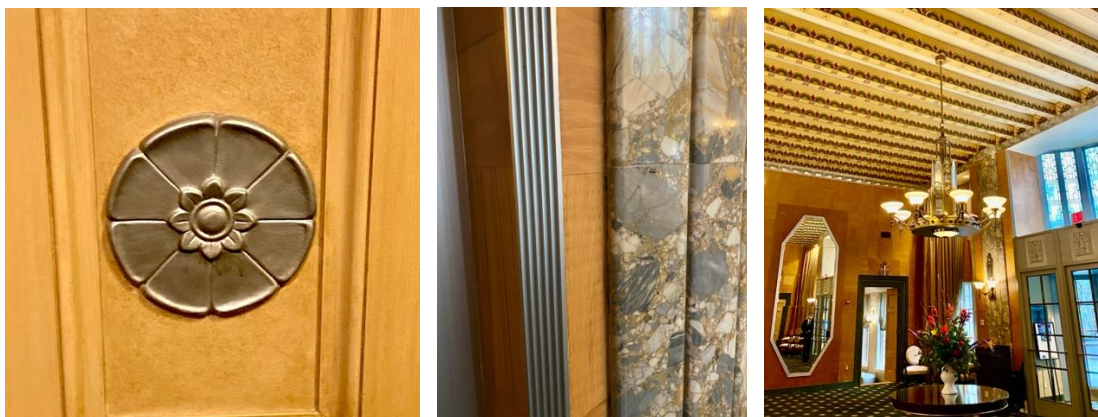
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chedworth\\_Roman\\_Villa\\_05.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chedworth_Roman_Villa_05.jpg).

That is what is seen, too, in the aluminum railings and the balustrade. Two angular “S” curves interlaced at right angles, the swastika was used for millennia as a good luck symbol and also as a reference to the sun. Its history crossed many cultures from Asia, to Europe, to Central and North America. Before the Nazis appropriated it as their official symbol in 1920, and almost until WWII, the motif was not internationally recognized for its negative connotations. **Fig. 19. Aluminum railings and trim in the lobby.**

Even noting that the Kennedy-Warren, like so many of its neighboring apartments, once excluded Jews, there is no evidence that the swastika motif here was ever anything other than a decorative “zig zag,” a fashionable feature of Art Deco. In the context of the sunbursts and/or starbursts in the lobby and on the façade, and along with other geometric abstractions of sun rays and other Aztec and Navajo motifs, it makes sense to read the simple bent line motif as one of many such ornamental statements associated with the sun.



Together with an enormous Art Deco chandelier, gold medallions mounted on the silver-colored aluminum rails, over-scaled mirrors, gold touches on the ceiling, gold rosettes, colored marble and colored glass, the Kennedy-Warren’s lobby was designed to glitter like a jewel box when it greeted residents and visitors. **Fig 20. Gold trim rosette, same as that depicted on elevator door; Fig. 21. Rich lobby surfaces, aluminum, wood and marble; Fig. 22. Art Deco chandelier and mirror in lobby.**





**LOUNGES & PROMENADES**



Both sides of the lobby originally opened onto identical step-down lounges, and two promenades extended the lobby space in both directions, as well. The most significant design feature of both promenades were their gently curved ceilings that were brilliantly covered in aluminum leaf making the tunnel-like spaces seem insubstantial and even mysterious. The promenade leading to the right (south) originally led to desk, offices, switchboard, and valet shop, and would have connected to the South Wing, envisioned at the outset to feature shops, and a large assembly room or event space. The opposite promenade led to the step-down dining room with apartments beyond. **Fig. 23. Aluminum leaf covers the barrel vaulted ceiling of South Promenade, looking toward lobby.** Note light reflection off of ceiling.

At its far end, the north promenade connects to a long residential hallway that intersects with it at a right angle. The most significant Art Deco design elements visible there are the original door knockers made of cast aluminum. Actually, there is an apartment that opens directly off of the elevator lobby, #302, and it features not only the aluminum door knocker but also the richly patterned door as it might have looked in 1931. See Cover and Fig. 1. **Fig. 24.**

*Classical elements painted silver in lobby.*

Only one of the two lounges remains today, the south lounge. The north lounge became a piano bar when the public spaces were refurbished in 2004. Still, both rooms have their original ceiling fixtures—very unusual circular fixtures comprised of glass cylinders combined playfully into brass trimmed lights. They still work, although they appear to be difficult to maintain.

Both lounges were originally used for entertainment, particularly for bridge parties. They were relatively sparsely furnished because much of the time they were filled by card tables and chairs and the larger pieces of furniture only got in the way when everything needed to be re-arranged. The most notable Art Deco features in the south lounge today, aside from the ceiling fixtures, are the enormous mirrors used to extend the space infinitely in both directions, and the various classical details, including engaged columns, fluted pilasters, and a neoclassical frieze. **Fig. 25. Views of the South Lounge with its original Deco ceiling fixtures and frieze.**



### DINING ROOM (the Warren Room)

The spacious Kennedy-Warren dining room opened off of the north promenade, like the lounges, down steps to enter. This arrangement put the level of the floor at the level of the courtyard visible through the wall of windows to the south. The dining room is divided into two spaces by a row of imposing fluted columns topped by oddly angular square Art Deco capitals. One space is the main dining area, and the other is a smaller space to the side, called the niche or alcove, but not really either one. The side space, often used for private parties, had a ceiling originally covered in silvery colored aluminum leaf. Goode describes the style of the dining room as “Greco-Deco.” (6-2). **Fig. 26. Dining Room (on Lobby level; it is often confused with the Ballroom (below) that few ever see).**



The dining room connected to a large kitchen that served the dining room, the ballroom, and also provided meals to residents who ordered them to be brought to their apartments. It served lunch and dinner daily. Residents often “dressed” for dinner. According to Goode’s manuscript, several vendors operated the dining room at different times; residents were critical of the service no matter who was in charge.

The most enchanting Art Deco detail in the entire Kennedy-Warren is found in the dining room. As one descends the stairs from the promenade entrance into the dining room, there is a stair rail and atop its newel post is a finial, and that finial was designed in the shape of an *orange juicer* because the architect, Joseph Younger, happened to spot a new mechanical device in his kitchen and it very much appealed to him. Younger had been unable to come up with a suitably new idea for the finials until he spotted the juicer. He told his metal fabricator, Jorss, to make a finial in the same shape, but slightly elongated, to sit atop all the newel posts in the dining room and also those descending to the ballroom. The finials were originally made of cast aluminum. They are still delightful to hold and admire. **Fig. 27. Dining Room details: fluted columns, unusual square capitals, mirrors, and stair rail finials.**



### BALLROOM (below the Dining Room)

The Kennedy-Warren was the only apartment building in Washington with its own ballroom. That room was an enormous two-story space accessible directly from the front courtyard and also via the lobby staircase that led to a hallway that turned to the left one level down from the street. It is accessible today only via stairs at the rear of the dining room, but it is now off limits to all but Kennedy-Warren staff. To those who can see it, it is a wonderland of lost glamour still evident through disuse. Like the other major spaces in the building, the room was originally

accessed by going down a flight of steps. Handicapped access was never a consideration when such spaces were conceived although small elevators were available to those who needed them.

The decor was stripped classical with Art Deco overlay. Gigantic, fluted columns, covered in aluminum leaf or painted to dazzle in silver tones, barrel vaulted ceilings in the niches also covered in aluminum leaf, huge square pillars designed to hold full-size pressed zinc statues of the Four Seasons (never produced) in large niches, figures in classical garb cast in aluminum or carved in low relief at ceiling level, and a beamed stenciled ceiling contributed to the elegance of the interior. **Fig. 28. The Ballroom, with some gold and silver Deco details still visible.**



In 1934 alone, according to Goode, more than 100 organizations rented the Kennedy-Warren ballroom for events, including dances, card games, fraternity parties, fashion shows, and lecture/luncheons and dinners. The stage at its west end was an amenity the dining room did not provide.

## COMPLETING THE ORIGINAL (1931) SCHEME

### 1) Building the South Wing

In 1989, the Kennedy-Warren was listed as a District of Columbia Historic Landmark. In 1994, the same year that it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the B.F. Saul Co., its owners, made the decision to build out the remaining portion of the original 1931 plan.

As they studied various ways in which they might update the property to meet current standards while adding to it, they were prevented from raising rents under the D.C. 1976 rent control law and prevented from converting existing rental apartments to condos by a similar 1979 law. In 1995, to its credit, the Saul Co. decided to complete Younger's plan to his original specifications, adding some 166 rental units to the existing 317 in the North and Northeast Wings, known collectively as the Historic Building or Historic Wing. They retained the local architecture firm of Hartman-Cox to oversee the project in 1996.

The decision to follow Younger's plan (overall, if not specifically), was momentous from an historic preservation viewpoint. For far less money than the \$70 million that it was to cost them, they might have designed and built the new addition in a more contemporary style, using a steel frame and glass walls, little masonry, no decorative trim. The result, if they had been able to win approval for such plans, would have yielded far less comfortable apartments as it also would have ignored the building's Art Deco significance.

More than likely, many thought a "modern-looking" building would attract tenants more quickly than an historically appropriate addition to a landmark. But by good fortune, the Saul Co. decided to complete the building as it was originally envisioned using modern materials and modern construction methods, blending the old and the new so closely that most people can hardly tell where one ends and the other begins.



**Fig. 29. Views of South Wing details: railings, bricks, and aluminum spandrels.**

One major difference between the new South Wing and that envisioned by Younger is that current regulations prohibited the halls from joining across the floors at each level. That means that the long hallways of the older building do not connect to those in the new addition. Once the architects began to study the arrangement of the floors, they rejected the idea of more long hallways and embraced the idea of two elevator bays instead of one. This eliminated the corridors, except for the first floor, and allowed for more privacy, direct entrances for some units, and more variety in floor plans.

The idea behind the South Wing was to provide larger apartments than those in the Historic Wing because demand for larger units was so strong. In altering the layout of the floors, the architects further reduced the number of units from 166 to 114, managing to make the apartments maximally spacious. Despite an initial interest in an open plan, they also decided to opt for more formally arranged rooms. Most units have closed kitchens, or kitchens with a pass-through, and many have separate dining rooms.

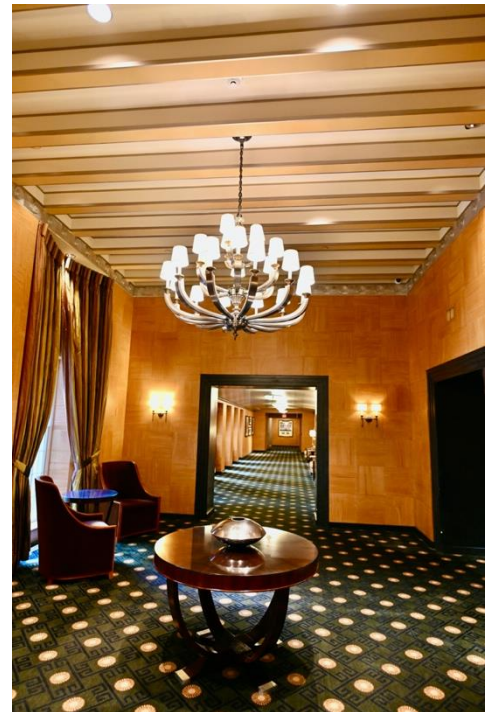
To add a sense of importance to the South Lobby, the architects made it two-stories high, but the original scheme to include shops and an assembly room was eliminated. They linked the new South Lobby to the south promenade via a new promenade, designed to look like the first. The new promenade borders the south side of the front courtyard. Along it, there is a conference center, not in the original plan, and also a door leading to the gym and pool (also accessible via the lobby stairs). **Fig. 30. South Wing lobby looking east down new promenade.**

In 2002, the Klingle Corporation, a division of the B.F. Saul Co., finally broke ground for the South Wing and also embarked upon the restoration of the public spaces in the Historic Wing. Both projects were completed in 2004. On-going renovations to the apartments in the Historic Wing continue.

What is most striking about the South Wing is how unobtrusive it is. It literally became part of the whole as soon as it was complete. This was no small feat—a tribute to Younger's original inventiveness at breaking down the scale of the massive structure and to Hartman-Cox's ability to reinterpret it again using modern materials and methods. No other contemporary building around here has such detail on it, nor has any such history layered upon it.

It is no surprise that the handsome addition to the Kennedy-Warren won accolades from the American Institute for Architects, including its 2006 Award of Excellence for Historic Resources in recognition of its sensitive and capable handling of history and context. The interiors won similar recognition.

According to Goode, brick for the South Wing was made in Ohio in five shades of tan/peach, some speckled with iron. One needs only to look at a building that has only one color of brick on its entire façade or a painted brick building (such as the one directly across from the Kennedy-Warren) to see how this multi-colored, if muted, palette animates the surface. Furthermore, the various brick patterns—sawtooth and flat block—all add more movement to what is, of course, a static planar surface.





**Fig. 31. South Wing balconies facing the zoo and Rock Creek Park.**

Like the Historic Wing, a South Wing features pre-cast concrete piers, gargoyles, limestone medallions, and reproductions of the very same cast aluminum spandrels. While there are a number of decorative balconies on the Historic Wing and only one actual balcony, there are numerous tiers of precast concrete balconies on the South Wing, all facing the park or the zoo. The balconies also feature scalloped edges and decorative finials. **Fig. 32. South Wing façades feature decorative gargoyles, two shown here.**

## 2) Renovating the public spaces

In 1960, misguided by the notion that the glamour of the original interior was somehow passé, the Kennedy-Warren's owners painted the entire lobby white, including the ceiling and the trim. According to Goode, this was supposed to make the whole place look modern to those who thought it was looking old-fashioned. (11-4) To make matters worse, they wallpapered the priceless Flexwood walls, ruining them beyond repair.

During the total refurbishing of the building's public spaces, 1997-2004, the B.F. Saul Co., did as much as possible to return the lobby and the promenades to their former grandeur. According to Goode's account, the designer in charge of the job requested real Flexwood to replace that which had been ruined by the wallpaper, but he had to settle for a faux product instead. Valley Craftsmen of Baltimore, MD, hand-painted the wood panels to simulate the look of the finely grained Flexwood. The result is still remarkable.



Artists also used gold leaf to re-stencil the beamed ceiling using a geometric Art Deco motif. B.F. Saul Co. replaced the Art Deco chandeliers and wall sconces that had been removed and restored selected elevator doors. Artisans recovered the promenade ceilings with four-inch squares of real aluminum leaf.

When designers proposed a bar for the north lounge, B.F. Saul suggested an English club motif. The space there was converted into a piano bar and two of its entrances were closed off. The one that remained was modified to include curved marble steps going down from the lobby to the bar—making a difficult entrance more difficult for many. The mirror-backed bar, however, with lights, including the original Art Deco ceiling fixtures, provides another fine appendage to the lobby.

As part of the overall improvements to the public areas, the front courtyard was also rebuilt with the addition of a limestone fountain and four Chinese elms, now illuminated at night. It was raised and repaved, as well.

**Fig. 33. Renovated courtyard with new fountain and trees.**

The East Terrace, with umbrella tables and chairs, faces Rock Creek Park and the zoo, provides access to the woods, and now features a small, fenced play area for dogs. **Fig. 34. East Terrace behind South Wing.**



### 3) Updating the Historic Wing

What provided the Kennedy-Warren's "air-cooled" feature, advertised so widely in 1931, were three huge fans that pulled cool air from Rock Creek Park into the sub-basement and then pushed the air through vents to each floor where it entered individual apartments through operable vents built into the doors. This "forced natural air" system supposedly provided air to the units that was 10 degrees cooler than the air coming in from Connecticut Avenue. At a time when mechanical refrigeration was practically unknown, this was, indeed, a major innovation. Not really until well after WWII did air-conditioning become widespread here.

As part of the improvements to the building, B.F. Saul spent \$30 million to install central air-conditioning in the Historic Wing and to replace all front the existing windows there with insulated windows. The original door vents were closed off as a fire prevention measure and later eliminated.

### 4) Adding photographs of the '30s

As part of refurbishing the public spaces of the historic building, adding the South Wing, and visually tying the two together, James Goode, living at the time in Apartment #202, put together the collection of historic photographs for the building. That collection now hangs on the walls of the promenades, the South Lobby, along the first floor of the South Wing, and in elevator lobbies on all floors of the Historic Wing. Featuring scenes from the 1930s, when the Kennedy-Warren first opened for business, the collection is among the building's most entertaining and admired attractions.

After earning his doctorate in American studies at George Washington University in 1995, Goode joined the B.F. Saul Co. as it readied plans to expand the Kennedy-Warren, its flagship rental property. Previously, Goode had been curator of the Smithsonian's "Castle," and had authored major reference works on Washington's lost landmarks, its outdoor sculpture, and its finest apartment houses. Goode selected scores of photos from the Library of Congress, the Historical Society of Washington, D.C., and other collections here in D.C. He took those that were the sharpest and most evocative of the era and had them blown up as gigantic prints. An expert calligrapher carefully composed the captions, and a framer matted and framed them.

Some of the photographs are iconic views of the Mall, the Capitol, and the monuments, while others capture local scenes, such as the opening of the Uptown Theater on Connecticut Avenue in 1936. There are views of the Manhattan Laundry Building (also Art Deco), and the Mayflower Hotel, streetcars criss-crossing city streets, bathers at Glen Echo amusement park, and views of the Southwest waterfront, now unrecognizable. The overall



effect amplifies the building's historic significance. The photos also appeal immensely to visitors who always ask about them and pause to examine them. **Fig. 34. Photograph in hallway shows Adams-Morgan neighborhood in 1934 with streetcar (at right) on its way to Chevy Chase via Connecticut Avenue, past the Kennedy-Warren.**

Later, in 2017, Goode brought an additional trove of art to adorn more of the Kennedy-Warren walls. The Saul Co. had owned the Chevy Chase Bank but sold it in 2009, retaining the art that hung in the more than 250 branch banks. The collection consisted of framed art posters, photographic reproductions of works by well-known photographers and artists, museum exhibition posters, and historical maps.

Assisted by Kennedy-Warren residents, Goode selected the best of the items from that cache and had them hung along the hallways of the

Historic Wing and also on the walls of the South Wing enlivening those spaces. For those who walk the halls for exercise, it is almost like going to a museum— running across a favorite Milton Avery painting while heading to the mailbox, spotting a prized photograph by Ansel Adams on the way to the elevator, or just stopping to stare at that elevator door!

In some ways it's better!

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:**

*I have written this essay on behalf of the Kennedy-Warren Resident' Association (KWRA) so that all residents, and visitors, too, might share in the delight of the Art Deco landmark in which we reside. It is too easy to walk past the very elements that give this landmark its extraordinary meaning and not even notice them! The purpose of this essay is to provide an introduction to what we see every day and may little understand or appreciate. On a walking tour of the building, this should provide much explanation for why this building so conspicuously differs from others around it—and help us know why it is featured on the cover of James Goode's "Best Addresses." (Goode in his curatorial office in 2017, at right.)*



*To James Goode, my friend and colleague, I dedicate the project of sharing this story. I also owe a debt of gratitude to many neighbors here, including Jane Schubert, president of the KWRA, for championing the project, Mark Batslaw, the KWRA board member who first suggested the idea of building tours, and Susan Nathan, our former KWRA newsletter editor, who encouraged me to write about the photographs in the hallways, the first step in my research. I also thank Charlene Longnecker for sharing with me the distinctive experience of working with James on the second phase of the photo project, and Bern Smith for sharing James's invaluable manuscript, entrusted to him. Thanks to my husband, Bob, for finding us an apartment here. And to everyone who loves the building, as we do, many thanks for your enthusiasm. The building evidently knows it is appreciated. JL*

**BIO NOTE:**

*Jane Loeffler, MCP, PhD, is an architectural historian who has written and taught widely on the history of modern architecture with special emphasis on the history of U.S. embassies. Her book, The Architecture of Diplomacy: Building America's Embassies (1998), revised and updated in 2011, continues to define its field. She is a graduate of Wellesley College and holds a master's in city and regional planning from the Harvard Graduate School of Design. She earned her doctorate in American civilization from George Washington University. Until 2011, she was visiting associate professor in the honors college at the University of Maryland, College Park. She has lectured widely, including at the National Building Museum, at Columbia University, and on behalf of the U.S. State Department at U.S. embassies abroad, and she has testified before Congress on embassy security and design. While she continues to write on history and architecture, she focuses most of her time now on her painting. By good fortune, she and her husband live at the Kennedy-Warren.*

**SOURCES:**

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Goode, James M. *The Kennedy-Warren, Past and Present: The History of a Washington, D.C. Landmark*: unpublished manuscript by the author (produced in full or in part with support from the B.F. Saul Company), 2006. **All citations in text refer to chapters/pages in this document.** Several copies of the manuscript exist, I am told, but I know only of one. Dr. Goode once asked me to assist him in preparing it for publication. I know he was working at that task before he died. It dismayed him that this story remained untold. I am glad that I have been able to use his work and remedy that situation, at least in part, with my own contribution here. JL

National Register of Historic Places Listing @ <https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/AssetDetail?assetID=c8f2ac86-f8d5-4990-ac86-8370f2382915>

Regarding Chedworth Villa (UK) and borrowed photograph, see: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chedworth\\_Roman\\_Villa\\_05.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chedworth_Roman_Villa_05.jpg)

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