

VLR 12/4/02
N/LHP 7/5/03

**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 or districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

03000628

Historic name: AL'S MOTORS
Other names/site number: (VDHR File Number 000-7381)

2. Location

Street & Number: 3910 Wilson Boulevard [] Not for Publication
City or town: [] Vicinity
State: Virginia Code: VA County: Arlington Code: 013 Zip Code: 22205

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 [] nationally [] statewide [X] locally. ([] See continuation sheet for additional comments.

[Signature] Signature of certifying official/Title 7/25/03 Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau
In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. ([] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
[] entered in the National Register. _____ Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____
() see continuation sheet
[] determined eligible for the National Register _____
() see continuation sheet
[] determined not eligible for the National Register _____
[] removed from the National Register _____
[] other, (explain:) _____

AL'S MOTORS, 3910 WILSON BOULEVARD
Name of Property

ARLINGTON COUNTY, VA
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark x in all the boxes that apply.)

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheet

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1948

Significant Dates

1948

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Mims, J. Raymond

AL'S MOTORS, 3910 WILSON BOULEVARD

ARLINGTON COUNTY, VA

Name of Property

County and State

9. Major Bibliographic References

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)

previously listed in the NR

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 SHPO office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property .78 acres

UTM References Washington West USGS Map

1) 1/8/ 13/1/7/1/7/8/ 14/3/0/5/2/7/9/
Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The property at 3910 Wilson Boulevard in Arlington County, Virginia, is located on Lots 1 through 8 as noted on Map 053-13 within the original 1 Millard F. Birch Estate.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries for the property at 3910 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, Virginia, include all of Lots 2 through 8 as noted on Map 053-13, which have been associated with Al's Motors since the building's construction in 1948 and enlargement in 1968.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Laura V. Trieschmann, Kristyna Olsen Mizelle, and Robin Weidlich
Organization EHT Traceries, Inc. Date March 2002
Street & Number 1121 5th Street, NW Telephone (202) 393-1199
City or Town Washington State D.C. Zip code 20001

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

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.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Al's Motors Inc., Health Club Investors LLC
street & number 11739 Bowman Green Drive telephone 703/481-0800
city or town Reston state Virginia zip code 20190

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. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of the Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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AL'S MOTORS, 3910 WILSON BOULEVARD, ARLINGTON COUNTY, VA (000-7381)

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SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Al's Motors is located at 3910 Wilson Boulevard in Ballston, Arlington County, Virginia. The high-style Streamline Moderne automobile dealership with service garage was built in 1948 with a one-story addition constructed at the southwest corner in 1968 (replaced in 2001). The building was designed by architect J. Raymond Mims and constructed by the firm of Roystone, Grimm, and Sammons. Rectangular in plan, the two-story masonry building is sited on a long narrow lot at the southwest corner of Wilson Boulevard and North Pollard Street. The elevations are articulated with varying finishes that correspond to the street frontage and their functions. The primary elevation along the highly traveled Wilson Boulevard has rounded corners, a metal-and-glass curtain wall opening onto the automobile showroom, overhanging aluminum cornice, and red string courses mimicking racing stripes along the parapet. Glass-block sidelights and transom surround the main entry, which is topped by a reeded metal hood extending from the curtain wall's cornice. The secondary elevation along North Pollard Street is finished with a combination of wide red brick coursing and blond brick horizontal stripes. A flat roof covers the northern end of the building and the two-story 2001 addition. A barrel-vaulted roof crowns the southern end of the building, above the service garage. The property was renovated in 2001-2002 for use as a health club.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Site

Al's Motors is located at the southwest corner of the intersection of Wilson Boulevard and North Pollard Street. The property comprises a level lot of .78 acres along the highly traveled commercial corridor of Wilson Boulevard. The commercial crossroads of Ballston is located to the north of the property and the residential community of Ashton Heights is located to the south and southeast. Immature landscaping lines the northeast corner of the property and continues along the north elevation of the building. A paved parking lot runs along the west and south elevations, while street parking lines the east elevation. No outbuildings or associated structures are located on the property.

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Exterior

Constructed in 1948 with an addition in 1968, the two-story, masonry building is set on a poured concrete foundation. A flat roof crowns the main block of the building and rear addition, while the service garage at rear is covered with a barrel-vaulted roof.

The two-story, primary elevation (north) along Wilson Boulevard is clad at the base with pre-cast concrete panels set with mortar. The panels, which step up at the west end, feature exposed aggregate. A one-and-one-half-story aluminum-and-plate glass curtain wall wraps around the curved ends of the façade to the side elevations. An overhanging aluminum cornice with copper flashing caps the curtain wall, wrapping around the rounded corners of the building. The upper portion of the facade is clad with pre-cast concrete panels of exposed aggregate. The rectangular concrete panels are accented at the top by two red string courses. The double-leaf, plate glass entry door is set within an aluminum frame at the center of the façade. Projecting sidelights and flush transom of glass blocks flank the opening, which is capped by a reeded aluminum hood. The rounded corners of the hood align with the metal cornice of the curtain wall. The illuminated "Al's Motor's" sign centered over the entrance was replaced during recent renovations with an illuminated "Gold's Gym" sign.

The two-story, secondary elevation (east) fronts North Pollard Street. This elevation is divided into three distinct sections that correspond to the original uses of the building. The northeastern section of the building housed the automobile showroom, and is a continuation of the Streamline Moderne ornamentation presented on the facade. This includes the aluminum-and-plate glass curtain wall, overhanging, aluminum cornice, red string courses, and parapet wall. A single recessed entry opening into the showroom is located at the southern end. The single-leaf door, accessed by a concrete path and single step, holds a flush-metal replacement door. An aluminum hood with rounded corners projects over the entry.

The second section of the east elevation, formerly housing the business offices, is clad in brick laid in six-course American bond. The brick wall is patterned with wide, horizontal stripes of blond brick within red brick. The red brick, pierced by eight unequally spaced openings, reads as a single horizontal band. A cast stone string course runs under the red-brick bands, also serving as a continuous sill for the window

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openings. The openings on the first and second stories hold metal industrial windows, each consisting of three-light fixed panes flanked by operable three-light casements and a three-light fixed transom. The window in the third bay of the first story holds three casements with a one-light transom. The southern bay of the first story has a single-leaf flush metal door with one light. The second-story window above the entry has two operable casements with three lights each and a two-light transom. All of the window openings have steel lintels.

The third section of the east elevation, formerly the service garage, is one story in height with a stepped parapet. The change in the level of ornamentation and height indicates the change in use. This section is clad in brick laid in six-course American bond. The horizontally massed red-brick cladding and the industrial windows are flanked at the top and bottom by blond brick courses. String courses of cast stone trim the red-brick band at the base and top, serving as a continuous sill and lintel. Each of the nine tripartite metal windows consists of fixed, hopper, and awning lights. A single-leaf entry opening was created during the recent renovation in the southernmost section of the first window bay. The entry has a plate glass door with a one-light transom set in a metal frame. Poured concrete, side-entry steps access the door. The eighth window bay from the south corner was converted from an overhead vehicular opening to a window opening during the recent renovations; thus, its lintel is lower than the other openings.

The south and west elevations are viewed as tertiary, reflecting the building's dual function as an automobile service garage. One story in height with a barrel-vaulted roof, the garage is constructed of red brick laid in six-course American bond. The south elevation comprises the rear of the former garage. The elevation is pierced by three large openings with patterned glass block and cast stone sills. A four-light, fixed metal window that replaced a louvered opening for an exhaust fan is centered on the vaulted end of the elevation.

To the west of the garage is the 2001 addition. It is constructed of red brick laid in six-course American bond. This addition replaces the 1948 rectangular wing, which was enlarged in 1968 to allow for a separate paint area. The south elevation has no openings. A single-leaf flush metal door accessed by a metal stair pierces the north elevation of the new addition.

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Similar to the east elevation along North Pollard Street, the west elevation of the main block is divided into three distinct sections that correspond to the building's use – showroom, parts department, and garage. The showroom on the west elevation is a continuation of the Streamline Moderne ornamentation presented on the facade. This includes the aluminum-and-plate glass curtain wall, overhanging, aluminum cornice, red string courses, and parapet wall.

The center section of the west elevation, formerly the parts department, is constructed of red brick laid in six-course American bond. Primarily symmetrically massed, the two-story section is pierced by industrial windows. The window openings, with awning and casement lights, have cast stone sills and steel lintels. A single-leaf entry door is located in the northernmost bay of the service garage. Framed by a wide metal surround, the recessed opening has a one-light flush metal door accessed by a concrete step. The southernmost bay, reading as a hyphen to the one-story service garage, has been recently altered. The large opening now holds an aluminum-and-glass curtain wall with a central double-leaf plate glass door. The second story window openings on the west elevation are generally smaller than those piercing the first story. Moving north to south, second-story openings consist of a single twelve-light metal awning window, two larger windows each with three six-light awnings and a nine-light transom, a double-leaf entry opening, and three six-light metal awning windows. The double-leaf entry, presently without exterior access, holds paneled wood doors.

A single-leaf door opening and five industrial window openings pierce the garage portion of the building, which projects the depth of a single bay from the main block. Each of the four tripartite metal windows consists of fixed, hopper, and awning lights, cast stone sills, and steel lintels. The recent renovation involved altering the southernmost bay of this elevation from an overhead vehicular door to a single-leaf door opening with a one-light flush metal door. Further, the northernmost opening was converted from an overhead vehicular opening to a window opening; thus, neither the sill nor the lintel aligns with the other four openings. The cornice consists of two stepped header courses of brick.

Interior

The northern section of the building, formerly the automobile showroom, is an open, double-height space with a starburst-patterned terrazzo floor. The walls are painted masonry. The southernmost section of the

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wall is finished with drywall. The ceiling is painted steel decking supported by steel trusses. An interior door on the east end of the south wall opens to an enclosed concrete, straight-flight stair that leads to a second floor. A cased opening in the west end of the south wall leads to a corridor that provides the circulation to the rear of the building. The corridor is finished with drywall and has a vinyl tile floor. To the east of the corridor are rooms containing the women's fitness room and the sports medicine clinic. These rooms are finished with carpeted floors, drywall partitions, and painted exposed ceilings. To the west, massage and tanning rooms, storage areas, and restrooms run along the corridor. Accessed by a stair from the northern section of the building or from the main lobby to the south, the men's and women's locker rooms are located on the second floor above this area. They are finished with stained concrete floors, painted drywall partitions, and painted ceilings with exposed steel trusses.

Moving south in plan, through the corridor, the main lobby of the gym is located in the northern end of the former service garage. Offices line the east end of the north wall of the lobby, while a juice bar is sited at the west end. The lobby is finished with wood laminate flooring, exposed masonry walls, and an exposed ceiling of steel trusses.

Beyond the lobby, the former service garage has been split into two levels. An enclosed stair at the south edge of the lobby leads down to a large open workout room with rubber flooring and an exposed ceiling of steel trusses. A second stair from the lobby leads to the second-floor workout room. The northern end of this area is defined by a metal railing with mesh panels. The concrete slab floor is stained, the masonry walls are painted, and the original open garage ceiling is visible in this room. An aerobics room, constructed with drywall partitions, is located in the southeast corner of this space. This room has a wood laminate floor and painted walls.

The 2001 addition at the southwest corner of the building, which replaced the 1948 wing and 1968 addition, is divided into two floors, with a fitness room at the first and an aerobics room on the second. The fitness room has rubber flooring, while the aerobics room is carpeted. Both have exposed ceilings constructed of steel trusses.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The automobile showroom originally known as Al's Motors at 3910 Wilson Boulevard in Arlington County, Virginia, was constructed in 1948 to the architectural specifications of J. Raymond Mims. The property was owned and operated by Al and Bertha Wasserman, who ventured into the automobile business in the early 1920s. The two-story masonry building, prominently located at the major transportation crossroads of Ballston, housed an automobile showroom and service garage promoted as a modern scientific auto-lab. The well-executed details of Al's Motors, its rounded glass curtain walls and metal cornice, glass block sidelights and transom, and horizontal string courses and banding, make the building an excellent example of Streamline Moderne architecture. The level of stylistic ornamentation and materials presented on each of the elevations takes advantage of the property's corner site and reflects the three separate activities of the automobile dealership and service garage, resulting in a high-style façade along Wilson Boulevard, secondary façade fronting North Pollard Street, and tertiary elevations surrounded by paved lots. In 1968, the building was enlarged at the rear by the construction of a one-story addition, used as a paint shop. Al's Motors was the oldest Chrysler-Plymouth dealership in Northern Virginia at the time it closed in April 2001, thirty-seven years after the death of Al Wasserman. Despite its change in use, Al's Motors retains sufficient integrity of design, workmanship, materials, location, and feeling to reflect its original use as a mid-20th-century automobile showroom and service garage. The high-style Streamline Moderne building at 3910 Wilson Boulevard is eligible for its high-style architectural design under criterion C.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Al's Motors and the Wassermans

Al and Bertha Wasserman, the founders of Al's Motors, started in the automobile industry in the early 1920s with the purchase of the gasoline station at 322 West Wilson Boulevard in Arlington, Virginia. The service station was originally owned and operated by George Wasserman, Al's

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brother, who also used the property to sell crystal radio sets. The success of radio sets led him to sell the station and start George's Radio and Television, Inc.¹ Recognizing the future of the automobile, especially in central Arlington, the Wassermans expanded their business with the purchase of an automobile franchise from the Hupp Motor Car Company. Founded in 1908 and based in Detroit, Michigan, the Hupp Motor Car Company launched a major expansion in the late 1920s with the Hupmobile. The Hupmobile, with its low price owing to increased production, appeared to be an attractive automobile for the Arlington consumer and a wise business investment for the Wassermans.

In 1929, the Wassermans arranged to sell Chryslers and Plymouths through local distributor, H.B. Leary. H.B. Leary, Jr. & Brothers, located in Washington, D.C., was the area's leading Chrysler-Plymouth distributor. Leary received all deliveries from the Detroit-based Chrysler Corporation, which was founded in 1925 and included 3,800 dealers in the U.S. by the end of 1925.² Local dealers, like Al and Bertha Wasserman, purchased the cars and service parts from Leary for resale. In 1938, along with competitor Homer Bauserman of Bauserman's Service on Columbia Pike, the Wassermans became a Chrysler-Plymouth factory direct dealer.

With an expanding business and a growing staff, the Wassermans purchased the property at 3924 Wilson Boulevard in 1937 utilizing the building as an automobile dealership. The 1954 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map* documents that the building had a concrete and steel frame structure faced with brick on the Wilson Boulevard elevation. Following the construction of the more modern Streamline Moderne building at 3910 Wilson Boulevard, the industrial-looking building at 3924 Wilson Boulevard was used as an automobile repair facility and housed the auto greasing area, paint and parts area, and gas tanks.

In 1947, Chrysler began their "The Beautiful Chrysler" campaign. They hired fashion illustrator Frederick Siebel to create the graphics for this advertising, which focused on the elegant lines and luxurious interiors of their cars. This same theory of design, which was inspired by the automobiles Chrysler was producing at the time, was transferred to the automobile showrooms most often in the Streamline Moderne style of architecture. Accordingly, in 1948, the Wassermans commissioned architect J. Raymond Mims to design and construct a modern

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showroom and service garage that boasted the Streamline Modern elements, took advantage of the highly visible corner site, and would continue to meet the needs of the growing automobile industry. The contracting firm of Roystone, Grimm, and Sammons constructed the masonry building with high-style façade with aluminum detailing and string courses, visible showroom with rounded glass curtain wall, and red-brick service garage with barrel-vaulted ceiling and rows of industrial windows. Before construction started, the Wassermans were granted a variance from the Arlington Board of Zoning Appeals to construct their building at a setback of 35 feet from the center line of Wilson Boulevard instead of 40 feet, giving them greater exposure to Wilson Boulevard traffic.³

The location of the modern Streamline Moderne automobile showroom and service garage in central Arlington County by the Wassermans reflected the continuing commercial growth of Ballston and the advent of the automobile along such major transportation corridors as Wilson Boulevard and Glebe Road. Ballston had been the primary crossroads community in Northern Virginia since before the American Revolution (1775-1781). Known by a variety of names, including Birch's Crossroads, Thompson's Crossroads, and Ball's Crossroads, the intersection of Wilson Boulevard and Glebe Road was home to a tavern and blacksmith shop that served as the link to social as well as commercial activities. This crossroads community was a major thoroughfare for trade between riverside towns and the plantations and agricultural villages of Northern Virginia until the arrival of the railroad at the end of 19th century. An established village by 1874, the name was officially changed to Ballston in 1895. By the end of the 1800s, the Washington, Arlington and Falls Church Railroad carried commuters from Rosslyn to Ballston and Lacey Stations, traveling on to Falls Church and Fairfax Court House. The expansion of the railroad also brought about the development of planned community subdivisions and real estate sales in Ballston. An increase in the county's population, which was 6,430 in 1900 and 16,040 in 1920, was reflected in the growth of surrounding residential subdivisions like Ashton Heights and Arlington Forest.⁴

The existence of the automobile and the commercial nature of Ballston were firmly fixed by the middle part of the 20th century as automobile showrooms, gasoline stations, and repair garages soon lined Wilson Boulevard and Glebe Road. *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps* and the city

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directories document that Ballston was home to a growing number of such automobile-related buildings and structures. These included such commercial enterprises as Al's Motors at 3910 Wilson Boulevard, Bob Peck Chevrolet at 800 North Glebe Road, the American Service Center at 616 North Glebe Road, and the service stations at 849 North Lincoln Street, 904 North Kansas Street, and 3413 Wilson Boulevard. Additionally, in the years following World War II (1941-1945), the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority constructed a bus service and storage center at the intersection of North Randolph Street and Wilson Boulevard. One of the largest examples of the connection between commerce and the growth of the automobile in highly traveled crossroads of Ballston was the Parkington Shopping Center. Constructed in 1951, the Parkington was the area's first regional mall and catered to the automobile with the construction of a four-story parking facility at the rear. By 1954, the area immediately surrounding Al's Motors was home to numerous auto-related buildings including a filling station at 3902-3904 Wilson Boulevard, an auto repair facility at 3901 Wilson Boulevard, and an auto parts store at 3912 North 5th Road.

The success of the automobile business in Ballston was reflected in the advertisements of Al's Motors. Identified in the classified telephone directory as the Chrysler-Plymouth factory direct dealership, the 1950 listing boasted that Al's Motors maintained a "completely new and modern scientific auto-lab." Al's Motors, with consumer confidence in their technologically advanced facility, was able to provide new and used cars for sale, repair work, and replacement parts on-site and in a single building.

In keeping with Al's Motors' ability to do more than sell automobiles, a small rectangular wing at the southwest corner of the building was expanded in 1968. This section of the building housed a paint area, a use once relegated to the building at 3924 Wilson Boulevard. Drawings by architect Harvey L. Gordon note the installation of a "packaged" spray booth in the northwest corner of the addition. Unfortunately, owing to hazardous materials related to the use of the addition, Gordon's addition was demolished in 2001 and replaced with a new, higher structure with a similar footprint.

Following Al Wasserman's death in 1964 at the age of 64 and Bertha Wasserman's death in

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1985, Al's Motors continued to be owned and operated by the family until April 17, 2001, when it was sold to Health Club Investors, LLC. The deed of bargain and sale to Health Club Investors documents Al and Bertha Wasserman investment in the property where Al's Motors was located and the Ballston area in general. The Wassermans began purchasing property surrounding the intersection of Wilson Boulevard and North Pollard Street in the 1930s. Not only did they own and retain the properties at 3910 and 3924 Wilson Boulevard, but the Wassermans owned part of the property known as "South Ballston" located to the east of North Pollard Street. Additionally, they had interested in the property known as Spencer Roberts Addition (to the south) and part of Cyrus G. Rees lot (to the west). Although the Wassermans sold their Streamline Moderne showroom and service garage on Wilson Boulevard, the dealership known as Al's Motors continued. Al's Motors Incorporated joined Rosenthal Chevrolet/Jeep/Chrysler at the corner of Glebe Road and Columbia Pike in Arlington, Virginia.

Architects: J. Raymond Mims and Harvey L. Gordon

J. Raymond Mims

J. Raymond Mims was active in the field of architecture from 1913 until 1955. He designed a variety of buildings, including private residences, institutions such as churches and schools, and commercial projects with examples of banks, offices, and retail. As a partner in Mims, Speake & Co., Architects and Contractors, Mims worked on commissions such as the 1914 Rappahannock National Bank Office Building in Washington, D.C.; the 1915 Christ Episcopal Church in Luray, Virginia; and a 1929 High School in Luray, Virginia. Mims worked in Luray between 1931 and 1937, before relocating to Arlington by 1940. Al's Motors was not Mims's first Streamline Moderne-style building. Mims designed the Sligo Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Takoma Park, Maryland, which was completed in 1944. According to Hans Wirz and Richard Striner in *Washington Deco: Art Deco Design in the Nation's Capital*, Mims followed a strict use of streamline design for the church "with the exception of the depressed arches of the entrance arcade and the side-door lintels." Working with contractor Roystone, Grimm, and Sammons, J. Raymond Mims applied his skill with Streamline Moderne details to his 1948 commission for Al's Motors. With its curved edges, modern materials, and sleek horizontal banding Al's Motors is a fine example of Mims's design ability.

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Harvey L. Gordon

Architect Harvey L. Gordon was commissioned in 1968 by Al's Motors to alter the existing paint area at the southwest corner of the building. From his office at 1740 N Street, N.W. in Washington, D.C., Gordon produced plans to expand the existing double-height paint area approximately 6'-0" to the west and approximately 26'-4" to the north. When originally constructed, the south elevation of the addition incorporated a relocated overhead door, the west elevation was built with a reused metal window, and the north wall had a double-leaf door opening to the west that led to the spray paint booth and a relocated overhead door to the east. The addition was built with a concrete floor and concrete block walls faced with brick on the exterior. Exposed steel joists supported the roof. According to the building plans, the interior was painted. A "packaged" spray booth was located in the northwest corner of the addition. Unfortunately, owing to hazardous materials related to the use of the addition, it was demolished in 2001 and replaced with a new, higher structure with a similar footprint.

Streamline Moderne

The automobile showroom at 3910 Wilson Boulevard is one of the most architecturally significant commercial buildings in Ballston. The building, located on a corner lot along a primary transportation corridor, was designed in the Streamline Moderne style of architecture to attract passing motorists and express its function through ornament and form. The fashionable architectural style, dominant from 1930 to about 1955, "was an essay in streamlined geometry, stripped of ornament except for an occasional frieze of horizontal grooves designed as speed lines."⁵ The style expressed an economy of lines and applied ornamentation while catering to the growing fascination of aerodynamic speed and the romance of transportation.

The Streamline Moderne style demonstrated a direct aesthetic transfer, or borrowing, of a design technique known as streamlining from automobiles and other transportation machines to the roadside buildings that served these machines. Auto part outlets, service stations, car dealerships, and tire stores were among the roadside buildings created to serve the automobile, and the streamlining of these buildings advertised their automobile-oriented function. Speed

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AL'S MOTORS, 3910 WILSON BOULEVARD, ARLINGTON COUNTY, VA (000-7381)

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lines--horizontal bands of thin parallel lines--added to the illusion of movement by accentuating the streamlined contours of the building. These lines, together with swooping, aerodynamic forms, and sleek veneers symbolized modernity, progress, and efficiency. Automobiles and the buildings that were associated with them shared a dynamic, flowing aesthetic of slick skin surfaces, rounded corners, and a sensation of movement. This was achieved not only by similar design aesthetics, but also by similar materials. Automobiles and auto-oriented buildings used the same industrial materials of steel, glass, and chrome tubing – hard, shiny, slick surfaces that were novel and modern. The well-executed details of Al's Motors, its rounded glass curtain walls and metal cornice, glass-block sidelights and transom, and horizontal string courses and banding, make it an excellent example of Streamline Moderne architecture.

Original Floor Plan Design of Al's Motors

The interior of Al's Motors as originally designed was arranged according to function. The automobile showroom was sited at the north end of the building to take advantage of the property's prominent location on Wilson Boulevard. Office space and the parts department were located at the center of the building with the service garage at the rear.

The automobile showroom was an open, double-height space with a starburst-patterned terrazzo floor. The glass curtain wall wrapped around from the north façade to the west and east walls allowing a 180-degree view of Wilson Boulevard from the interior of the showroom. The south wall was finished with plaster and pierced at the west end with two door openings that led to closing offices. Large glass openings in the offices kept the salesmen in close contact with the customers. To the east of the closing offices along the south wall, a showcase was recessed into the wall, followed by a curved wall forming the information area with a rectangular counter.

The main corridor, lined with showcases and large glass openings, led to the parts department, business offices, and garage. The parts department was located on the west side of the building and the business offices were to the east. The parts department was housed in a large room with a counter at the south end, open to the garage. The cashier, aided by a safe, was located in the business office behind a glass wall with a waiting room accessible from a single-leaf door

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opening. Both the cashier and the waiting room had a view through large glass windows to the garage. A storage room for parts was located on the second floor, with the manager's office and segregated restrooms to the south. The second floor was also home to the president's office, lounge, conference room and kitchen.

The service garage was originally constructed as a double-height space with a concrete floor and exposed, arched steel trusses supporting the roof. Pneumatic and hydraulic lifts for vehicles were located along the east side of the garage. The addition was constructed in 1968 as a paint area. The double-height space was built with a concrete floor with concrete block walls faced with brick on the exterior and a roof supported by exposed steel joists. According to the building plans, the interior was painted. A "packaged" spray booth was located in the northwest corner of the addition.

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Chain of Title:

Lots 1 through 8 of the Subdivision of the Easterly Part of Lot 1 of the M.F. Birch Estate

April 17 th , 2001	Adolph Schick and Dorothy Schick to Health Club Investors, LLC Land Records of Arlington County Liber 3135 Folio 2196
April 22, 1988:	Adolph Schick and Dorothy Schick and Al's Motors, Incorporated (Deed of Partition) Land Records of Arlington County Liber 2324 Folio 1685
June 17, 1985:	Beverly Wasserman Talpalar and Jay Talpalar to Al's Motors and Dorothy Wasserman Schick and Adolph Schick Land Records of Arlington County Liber 2324 Folio 1673
June 13, 1985:	Will of Bertha Wasserman to Beverly Talpalar and Dorothy Schick Probate Records of Arlington County Liber 110 Folio 870

Lots 2 through 8 of the Subdivision of the Easterly Part of Lot 1 of the M.F. Birch Estate

April 6, 1945:	Nathan Miskin and Sarah Miskin to Albert Wasserman and Bertha Wasserman Land Records of Arlington County Liber 666 Folio 160
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June 6, 1938: Morgan W. Wayson, Mary E. Wayson, Henry C. Hopkins, and Marie E. Hopkins to Nathan Miskin
Land Records of Arlington County
Liber 436 Folio 423

February 11, 1937: George L. Birch and Alice Lavenia Birch to Morgan W. Wayson and Henry C. Hopkins
Land Records of Arlington County
Liber 406 Folio 148

Lot 1 of the Subdivision of the Easterly Part of Lot 1 of the M.F. Birch Estate

June 17, 1985: Beverly Talpalar and Jay Talpalar to Al's Motors and Dorothy Schick and Adolph Schick
Land Records of Arlington County
Liber 2324 Folio 1678

June 13, 1985: Will of Bertha Wasserman to Beverly Talpalar and Dorothy Schick
Probate Records of Arlington County
Liber 110 Folio 870

April 10, 1937: Albert Wasserman and Bertha Wasserman to Al's Motors, Incorporated
Land Records of Arlington County
Liber 409 Folio 575

August 21, 1934: George L. Birch and Lavenia Birch to Albert Wasserman and Bertha Wasserman
Land Records of Arlington County
Liber 356 Folio 102

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Endnotes

- ¹ Elizabeth Roach, "Virginia Dealership: A Long Way from Crystal Sets," *The Star*, November 22, 1975.
- ² Chrysler Heritage, located on the internet at <http://www.chrysler.com/inside/heritage/index.html> on March 22, 2002.
- ³ "5 Pleas Granted by Zoning Board," *The Sun* (Arlington, VA), January 23, 1948.
- ⁴ Nan & Ross Netherton. *Arlington County in Virginia: A Pictorial History*. (Norfolk, VA: The Donning Co., 1987), p. 106.
- ⁵ Rachael Carley. *The Visual Dictionary of American Domestic Architecture*. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994) p. 226.

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AL'S MOTORS, 3910 WILSON BOULEVARD, ARLINGTON COUNTY, VA (000-7381)

Section number Photographs Page 19

All photographs are of:

AL'S MOTORS
3910 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, Virginia
VDHR File Number: 000-7381
E.H.T. Tracerics, Inc., photographer

All negatives are stored with the Department of Historic Resources:

DATE: February 2002
VIEW OF: North elevation looking SE
NEG. NO.: 19833
PHOTO: 1 of 7

DATE: February 2002
VIEW OF: East elevation looking NW
NEG. NO.: 19833
PHOTO: 5 of 7

DATE: February 2002
VIEW OF: North elevation looking SE
NEG. NO.: 19833
PHOTO: 2 of 7

DATE: February 2002
VIEW OF: South elevation looking NE
NEG. NO.: 19833
PHOTO: 6 of 7

DATE: February 2002
VIEW OF: North elevation looking SW
NEG. NO.: 19833
PHOTO: 3 of 7

DATE: February 2002
VIEW OF: West elevation looking NE
NEG. NO.: 19833
PHOTO: 7 of 7

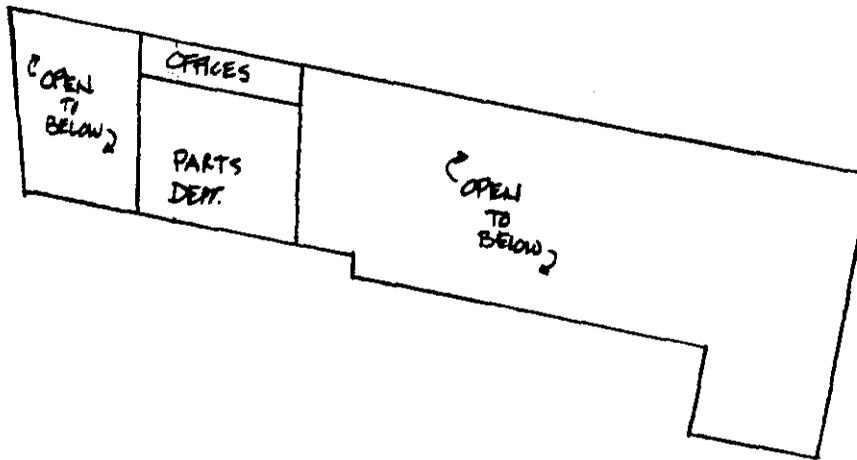
DATE: February 2002
VIEW OF: East elevation looking SW
NEG. NO.: 19833
PHOTO: 4 of 7

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Continuation Sheet

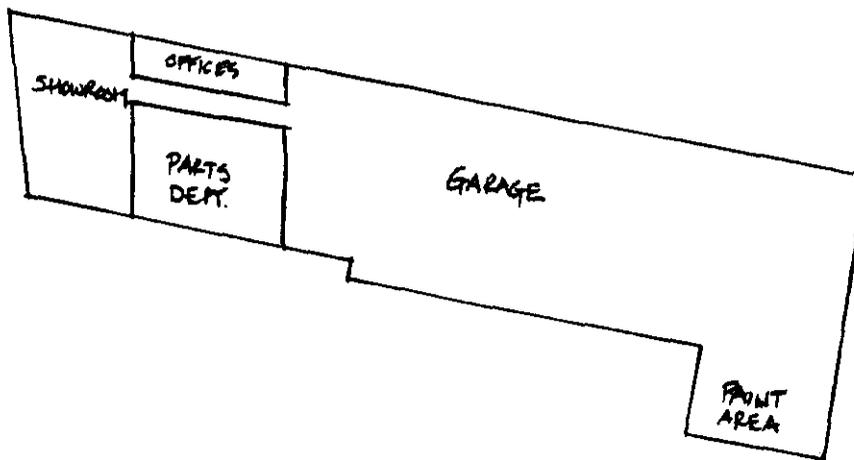
AL'S MOTORS, 3910 WILSON BOULEVARD, ARLINGTON COUNTY, VA (000-7381)

Section number 1948 Floor Plans Page 20



Second Floor Plan (1948)

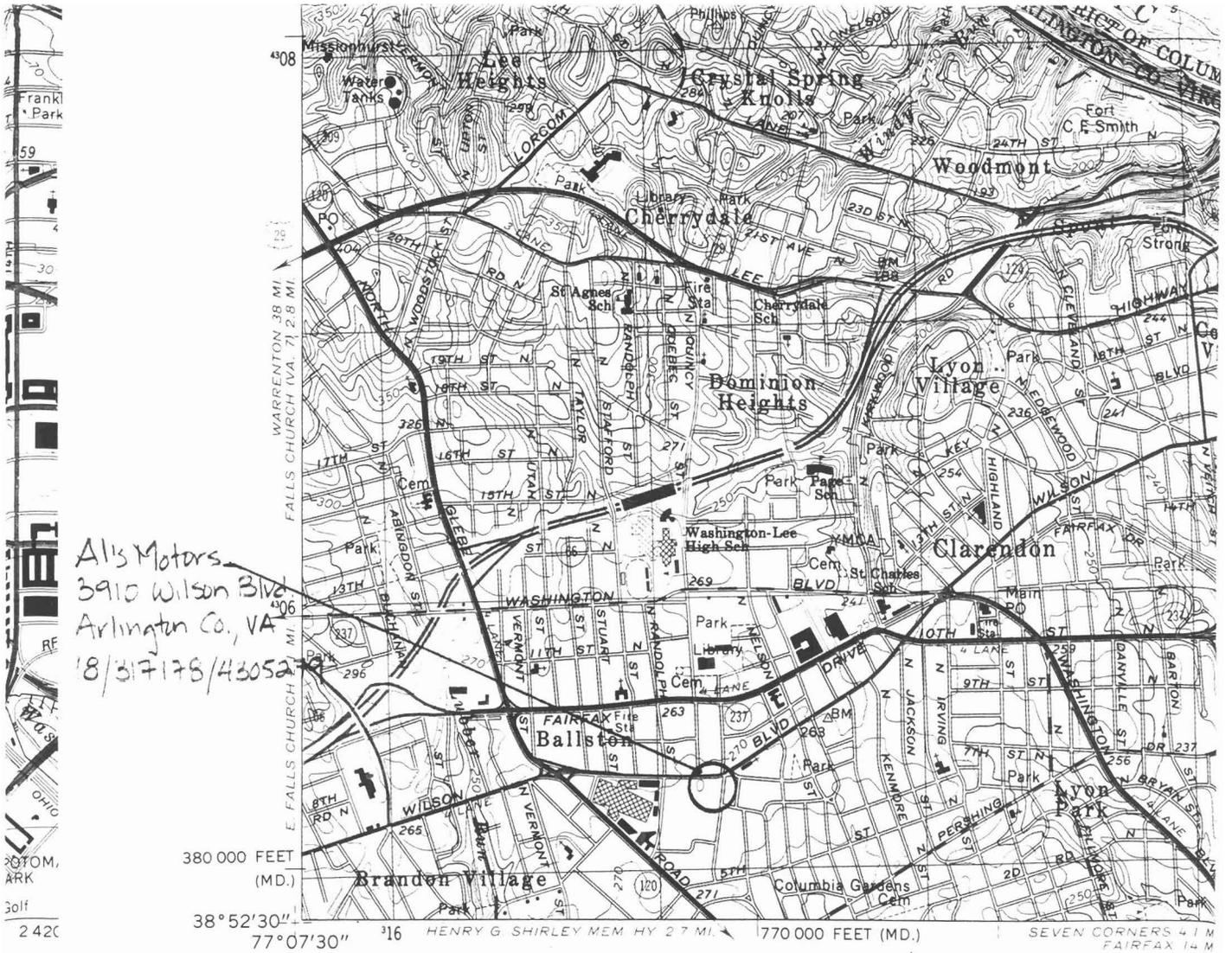
Not to Scale



First Floor Plan (1948)

Not to Scale





All's Motors
3910 Wilson Blvd
Arlington Co., VA
18/317178/43052

(ANNANDALE)
5561 SW

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey and the National Ocean Service

Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA, NCPS, and WSSC

Compiled by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1955. Field checked 1956. Revised 1965

Bathymetry compiled by the National Ocean Service from tide-coordinated hydrographic surveys. This information is not intended for navigational purposes

Mean low water (dotted) line and mean high water (heavy solid) line compiled by NOS from tide-coordinated aerial photographs. Apparent shoreline (outer edge of vegetation) shown by light solid line

Polyconic projection. 10,000-foot grid ticks based on Maryland coordinate system, and Virginia coordinate system, north zone 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 18 1927 North American Datum

To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983 move the projection lines 8 meters south and 26 meters west as shown by dashed corner ticks

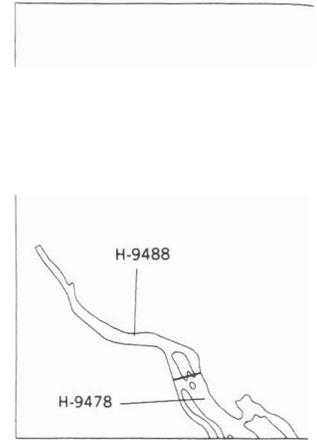
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown

There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map

Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled in cooperation with Commonwealth of Virginia agencies from aerial photographs taken 1981 and other sources. This information not field checked
Map edited 1983

Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas

NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE
HYDROGRAPHIC SURVEY INDEX



HYDROGRAPHIC SURVEY
INFORMATION

Survey Number	Survey Date	Survey Scale
H-9478	1977	1:5,000
H-9488	1976	1:5,000



1"=18'
3 MILS

MAGNETIC
ENTER O

WASHINGTON WEST QUAD