

Wakefield Manor

Address:	1201-1203 North Courthouse Road 1215-1223 North Courthouse Road (also known as 1216-1220 North Troy Street)
RPC #:	17017003
Current Owner(s):	David B. Kinney & Ralph W. Johnson, Trustees P.O. Box 7139 4619 Lee Highway Arlington, VA 22207
Building Date:	1943
Current Zoning:	RA8-18
Existing Protections:	None
Current Development Pressure:	None
Historic Designations:	None
Significance Highlights:	Designed by Mihran Mesrobian

Significance Statement:

Wakefield Manor is a small garden-apartment complex consisting of two buildings, one with an “H” shape and one with an “I” shape. Despite the variation of massing, the buildings are very similar in form, detailing, and style, reflecting the Art Deco and Moderne styles. These modern designs were infused with traditional character-defining features of the Classical Revival style, which was more familiar to residents and promoted as the style of choice by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). This coupling was preformed with great proficiency by renowned architect Mihran Mesrobian. The buildings, together providing 67 apartment units (originally 41 units), were built by the construction company of Parreco and Von Herbulis in 1943. The property was owned and managed by Wakefield Manor, Inc., a real estate development firm that typically oversaw the construction of freestanding single-family dwellings in planned subdivisions. Wakefield Manor is one of the earliest intact examples of his work in Arlington County, and is the smallest garden-apartment complex designed by Mesrobian. It stands as the best example of his prolific skills with merging traditional- and modern-style designs into a garden-apartment complex.

Born in Turkey to Armenian parents, Mesrobian was educated at the Academie des Beaux Arts in Istanbul. He immigrated to the United States and settled in Washington, D.C. in 1921. He began working as a draftsman for Harry Wardman, one of Washington, D.C.’s most prolific and

well-known developers. His work during this period included luxury hotels such as the Carlton (1926), the Hay-Adams (1927), and the Wardman Tower (1928). In his private practice, Mesrobian's Washington, D.C. commissions included the Dupont Circle Building (1931), a rug store at 1214 18th Street, N.W. (1931), and Sedgwick Gardens (1931-1932). Mesrobian's design work during this period allow him to perfect his skill in combining distinct architectural elements under a primary style; he utilized Byzantine, Medieval, and Islamic elements and united them under a Moderne scheme. In addition to Mesrobian's residential commissions, he was also responsible for the design of several shopping centers in Arlington County and the neighboring City of Alexandria; only two of his commercial shopping centers are extant. Three of Mesrobian's other garden-apartment complexes are intact—Wakefield Manor, Lee Gardens North, and Lee Gardens South. Also surviving is a mid-rise garden apartment building, Calvert Manor.

Wakefield Manor is significant in the area of community planning and development because of its association with the early-twentieth-century rental-housing boom spurred by the establishment of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). It is also recognized in the area of architecture as a unique garden-apartment complex, which was design by noted architect Mihran Mesrobian. The architectural achievement of Wakefield Manor, despite being the smallest of Mesrobian's apartment complexes, combines the best in garden-apartment planning with FHA-insured financing guidelines.

Summary Description:

Constructed in 1943, Wakefield Manor consists of two individual buildings at the southern end of the block bounded by North Courthouse Road, North Troy Street, and North Fairfax Drive. The larger of the masonry buildings, constructed of concrete block with brick facing laid in six-course American bond, has an H-shaped plan. The I-shaped building to the immediate southwest has been designed and sited to aid in creating courtyards with paved walkways that lead to the parking in the southeast portion of the block. Open passages on the first story of the buildings allow access between the parking, pedestrian areas, and courtyards. The buildings are nearly identical in design, style, fenestration, and materials, rising two to three stories in height because of the extreme slope of the site. The intersecting roofs, now covered in replacement asphalt shingles, include flat and hipped, with short brick parapets and ornate cornices created by dog-tooth brickwork. The metal casement windows, devoid of applied surrounds and brick arches, have one-light transoms, while the double-hung windows are both single and paired. The sills are composed of rowlock brick, although some of the windows rest on the lintels of limestone surrounds framing entry openings. The walls are created by the intersection of shapes, such as the rounded bay, squared projecting bay, and hyphens. This allows the form and construction materials to act as ornamentation, which was indicative of the Art Deco and Streamline Modern styles. Classically inspired elements include the narrow brick quoins, brick dentil molding, brick water table (painted white), round windows, wood cupolas, and limestone surrounds of the primary entries with fluted pilaster, wide friezes, and squared cornices complete with ogee molding. Additionally, metal and limestone panels have been placed within the brick, illustrating classical motifs. These panels are in striking contrast to the dog-tooth brickwork that lines the

cornice and acts as panels between the second- and third-story openings. Glass block is used throughout the buildings as a contrast to the operational casement and double-hung sash.