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A Rich History

The M.A. Winter Building was constructed in 1908/09 at an estimated cost of \$50,000 by “Colonel” Mahlon Adolphus Winter and George W. Faris to house Colonel Winter’s patent medicine business, which he called “proprietary medicines.” Today, we might call him a “Snake Oil Salesman” and consider his remedies of questionable medical value. In 1906 a British medical journal “The Lancet” listed his medicines under the title of “Quack Advertising” and added:

“The remedy in question, which is guaranteed by the vendors to mitigate or remove a great variety of ailments, is “composed of the choicest barks, roots, and herbs.” The absurdity of asking a medical man to sell a quack remedy of unknown composition, guaranteed to give relief in a multitude of diseases might serve a purpose in a jest- book but not elsewhere. The truth is that both the M.A. Winter Co. and its wonderful medicines are unworthy of serious consideration.”

Washington Post August 1, 1913

In 1912 Winter and Faris built an addition to the M.A. Winter Building (now known as 1438 U Street) which was built to the specifications of the US Postal Service. The estimated cost of the addition was \$46,000. It was the first substation built as a post office in Washington up to that time. It operated as Post Office Station 9 until 1940. A description of the new building appeared in a Washington Post article of April 7, 1912:

“The Post Office Department intends that this shall be a model substation and in the future the same plans will be used wherever a substation is erected.”

Washington Post April 7, 1912

WASHINGTON HERALD
August 23, 1908

PLANS NEW BUILDING
M.A. Winter Company Will Erect Office Structure

MEETS GROWTH OF BUSINESS

Designed with Special Reference to Comfort and Convenience of Employees—Will Have Emergency Hospital and Lunch-room—Richardson & Burgess Will Construct it.

Col. M.A. Winter and George W. Faris through their architect, Charles Gregg, last week awarded the contract to Richardson & Burgess of this city, for the erection of a building on a portion of their property, on the south side of U street, between Fourteenth and Fifteenth streets northwest, for the M.A. Winter Company, now located in the armory Building, Fifth and L streets northwest.

Particular attention has been paid to the requirements of the business when designing the new building.

The front of the new building faces U street, and as it is about 100 feet from that street, it will be approached by means of a broad driveway, making a very attractive and unusual feature. On either side of this driveway, the completed plans of the owners contemplate the erection of a four-story apartment house, each containing eight apartments, of five rooms and bath, which will enable certain employees to have their houses near to the business.

Open on Four Sides

The building, now under contract, will be open on all four sides, receiving an abundance of light and air, and the ventilation of the different rooms has been carefully considered.

All the exterior walls will be face selected red brick laid with a wide white mortar and the tops will be finished with a coping of terra cotta which will protect from the weather.

The main front will be simple and in design of brick and stucco. The building will have a frontage of 91 feet by 100 feet and four stories in height, with slag iron roof.

Ample fire protection will be provided as fire hose connections on each floor escapes.

The main entrance vestibule, first floor, will be finished with a terrazzo floor, set with brick, wainscot, and walls and ceiling of plaster, over this, on the second and third floors, will be located the offices of the president and other officials of the company, all to be arranged in a special and appropriate manner.

Equipped with Elevators

An electric freight elevator and an express service between the different floors will be installed.

Among the special features in the building will be an emergency hospital room on the second floor, complete with all the necessary equipment, a large and well appointed room on the fourth floor and a recreation space on the roof for the convenience of the employees, making it unnecessary for them to leave the building during business hours.

The building will be heated by steam and lighted by electricity.

The building will be finished in a few months, and the new home of the M.A. Winter Company will be a model in complete details as to comfort for the employees and arrangement for facilitating the progress of the business.

The M.A. Winter Company is engaged in the manufacture and distribution of proprietary medicines.

By 1915 other offices including the Winter Manufacturing Company, a toilet paper specialties manufacturer, the American Funding Corporation and the Freight Audit and Adjustment Company also occupied the Building.

In 1918 the Building was commandeered by the US Army for use by the War Risk Insurance organization a US Congress chartered agency established to ensure the availability of marine insurance during World War I.

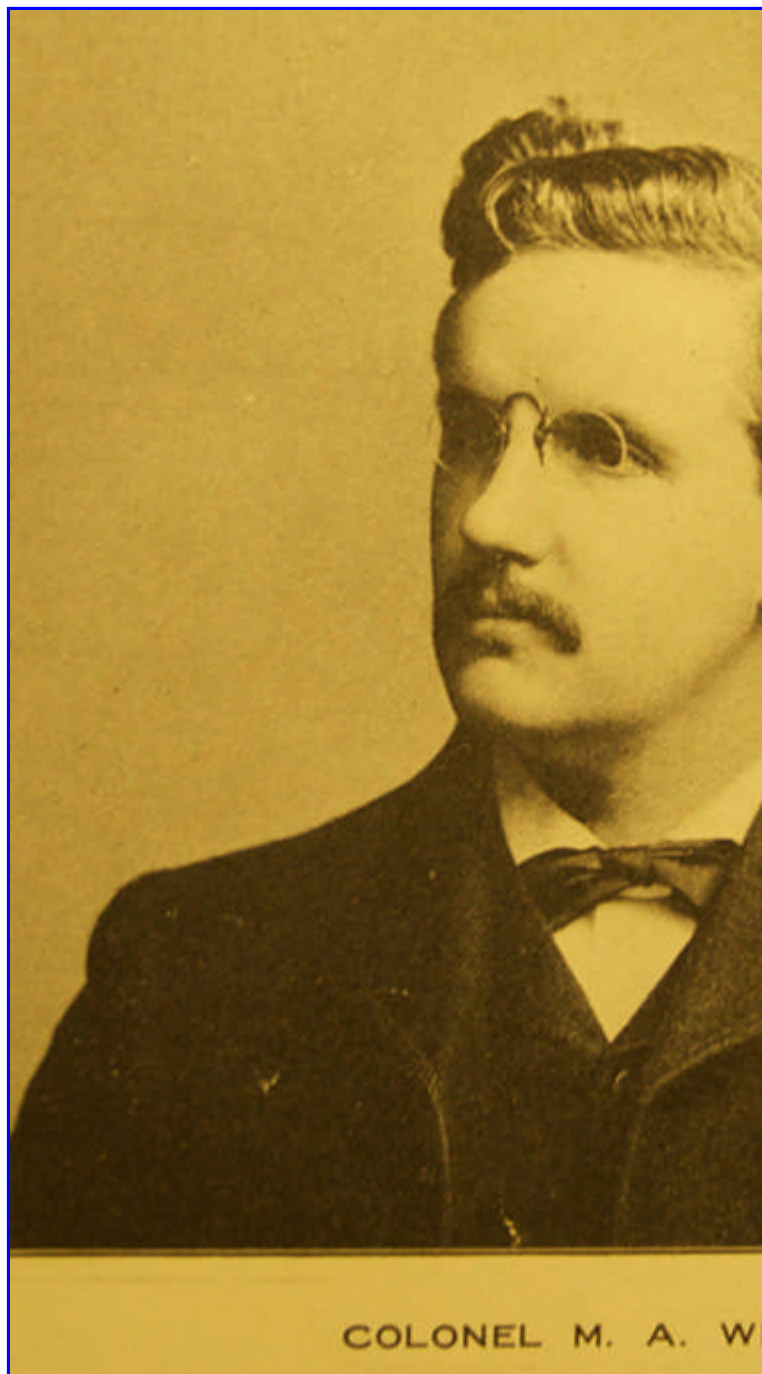
In 1920 the Building was the home a several storage companies: first, Winter Building Storage and in 1923 the National Capital Storage and Moving Company.

Col Winter sold the Building in 1936 to Freda Levy who owned it until 1943. During her ownership the Building was occupied by the Railroad Route Board.

From 1936 through 1942 the Building was leased to the U.S. Postal Commission as a part of the U Street Station. In 1943 the US Maritime Commission was listed as an occupant of the Building.

In the 1960ies records show conflicting information regarding the occupants of the Building. Both the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the Veteran's Administration Supply Department are listed as occupants.

The last known use of the Building was as a retail outlet for the St Vincent de Paul Catholic Charity in the early 1970ies. It was an abandoned shell when, in 1985, it was purchased by its current owners and renovated into the office building that it is today.



COLONEL M. A. WI

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