

VIII. EASTERN COUNTY HISTORIC DISTRICTS

POLYCHROME HISTORIC DISTRICT (1934-5) NR

32/5

9900, 9904 Colesville Road; 9919, 9923, 9925 Sutherland Road

Master craftsman John Joseph Earley (1881-1945) built the five single-family dwellings that comprise the Polychrome Historic District in 1934-5. These unique houses are outstanding examples of the Art Deco style and reflect Earley's artistry and craftsmanship. Earley developed and patented a process whereby conventional wood frames were clad with pre-fabricated mosaic concrete panels. The concrete was stripped to expose brilliantly colored aggregate particles, creating an effect similar to impressionist or pointillist painting. In addition to their striking, richly ornamented appearance, these houses represent a relatively rare example of precast concrete panel construction in single-family housing for the time period. Earley's patented structural system led to widespread use of precast architectural concrete as a major exterior cladding material. The legacy of the Polychrome houses can be seen in thousands of curtain-wall buildings nationwide. In 1996, the historic district was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Polychrome houses are located on contiguous lots with adjoining back yards in a middle class suburban neighborhood in Silver Spring. Polychrome I was the prototype house, designed in collaboration with Washington architect J. R. Kennedy, and completed in 1934. Located on Colesville Road, Polychrome I (shown below) is a one-story dwelling, with a detached garage. Its immediate neighbor Polychrome II, is also one story yet has an attached garage. The houses on Sutherland Road are two stories tall with attached carports.



Constance Terry, MNCPPC, 1983

9919 Sutherland Road

32/5



Constance Terry, MNCPPC, 1983

Polychrome II, 9904 Colesville Road

Polychrome I, 9900 Colesville Road



Constance Terry, MNCPPC, 1983