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## HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD

Historic Landmark Case No. 17-22

### Harewood Lodge

3600 Harewood Road NE  
Square 3663, Part of Lot 6

Meeting Date: May 24, 2018  
Applicant: D.C. Preservation League  
Affected ANC: 5A

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The Historic Preservation Office recommends that the Board designate Harewood Lodge a historic landmark in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites, and request that the nomination be forwarded to the National Register of Historic Places for listing as of local significance, with a period of significance of circa 1857 to 1922.

As a rare surviving estate gate lodge; as a gatehouse for the nation's first veterans' home; as one of the first examples of the Second Empire or "mansard" style constructed in the United States; and as an early work of James Renwick, Jr., one of the most important American architects of the nineteenth century, Harewood Lodge merits listing in the National Register under Criterion C, as well as designation in the District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Sites under Criteria D and F ("Architecture and Urbanism" and "Creative Masters") for embodying the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style and building type, and as a work of a master significant to the appearance and development of the District of Columbia.

The lodge also meets National Register Criterion A and District of Columbia Criterion B ("History") for its association with the first U.S. veterans' home and for its association with the broader pattern of development of Washington County, D.C., specifically its relationship to a country estate and to elite recreation.

The property merits designation, too, under National Register Criterion B and D.C. Criterion C ("Individuals") for its association with the life of William Wilson Corcoran, prominent banker, millionaire philanthropist, gentleman farmer, and patron of the arts. The building appears to be the last extant associated with his homes or estates and predates the other remaining Washington building closely associated with Corcoran, the Renwick Gallery.

Sufficient time has passed to permit professional evaluation of the property in its historical context. The property possesses sufficient integrity to convey the values for which it is judged significant, having had a compatible stone addition constructed within the period of significance—and a less compatible enclosed porch added in the 1960s.

### Background

The son of an Irish immigrant, Georgetown-born William Wilson Corcoran worked his way up from a helper in his brothers' dry-goods store to become the richest man in Washington, mostly benefitting from the premiums charged on federal bond issues sold through his bank and from

lending on federal deposits. After reaping a fortune on Mexican War bonds, he retired from banking as the Treasury ended its system of placing federal deposits in private banks.

Corcoran had already amassed a great deal of real estate in the District of Columbia and in far-flung states, from which he derived substantial rental income. He bought or built a large number of buildings in Washington. In addition to his purchase of the old Bank of the United States for a branch, he erected an office building next door for the accommodation of some of the bureaus of the overcrowded Treasury. He replaced this “old” Corcoran Building of the 1840s by another three decades later. Much of his other development was also near the White House and Treasury: the art gallery at Pennsylvania Avenue and 17<sup>th</sup> Street; the Louise Home at 15<sup>th</sup> Street and Massachusetts Avenue; a grand row of residences at 1528-1538 I Street; and the seven-story Arlington Hotel on the 800 block of Vermont Avenue. He rented out a series of commercial and residential buildings on Pennsylvania Avenue and Vermont Avenue, and had others scattered on Capitol Hill, Foggy Bottom and elsewhere. He also acquired several farms in Washington County: Trinidad, Mount Hamilton, part of Long Meadows, and his beloved country place, Harewood.

Corcoran purchased Harewood in 1852 from the estate of the Rev. John Brackenridge, founder of the First Presbyterian Church of Washington and former Congressional chaplain. The 191-acre property stretched west from the Harewood and Rock Creek Church roads almost as far as the Seventh Street Road. The land was hilly, cleft by streams and watered by a spring-fed pond near the house. It was said to have been named by Corcoran himself, for the prolific resident rabbits. It appears that the banker remodeled the Brackenridge house and soon surrounded it with new outbuildings, intending a new house later. Corcoran may have consulted Andrew Jackson Downing on the layout of the estate shortly before the great landscape architect’s death.

As Corcoran was very much the gentleman farmer, he was interested in the beautification of his lands, and he hired one of Downing’s employees, horticulturalist and nurseryman John Hennessy Saul (father of Benjamin Franklin Saul), to oversee planting at Harewood. The men retained the predominantly pine and cedar woods that covered much of the property but sculpted them to beautify the main approach from Harewood Road. This created anticipation and surprise for visitors as they cleared the tree line and spied the cultivated acreage.

In advancing over the fine, firm road which leads from the gate toward the dwelling house and its surroundings, one is instantly reminded by the careful cultivation, skillful laying out of the grounds and extreme neatness of everything, of the country residences of the English gentry. As you approach the family mansion... the impression is by no means diminished, and the various buildings might be taken for a tasteful little village, harmonious, though varying in style. The imagination has to be quite active to devise uses for all these tenements, for after enumerating farm-house, gardener’s lodge, stable, barn, dairy and corn-crib, there would still be room to spare.... The most ornamental building on the place is the corn crib, which is probably the only extant specimen of the florid Gothic used for this same purpose.

The estate’s outbuildings were largely complete before the Civil War, and many appear in wartime illustrations. Among them was a two-story lodge for a gatekeeper at the Harewood Road entrance. Corcoran had retained this entrance from his predecessors, not only for its

pleasant drive through the woods, but also because it was at the farm's only frontage on a public thoroughfare.

Consistent with his philanthropy, W.W. permitted the use of his estate's lanes as a drive for carriages, and it was through this gate that they arrived. Postwar, "Corcoran's Farm" was described as "the famous drive about Washington still," but carriage-riding remained an elite activity. It required access to a vehicle and team, a place to keep them and, preferably, a driver. In Victorian style, one drove out as much to be seen as to see. One also needed the leisure time to spend an hour or so on the grounds—while the average laborer was just trudging home from a twelve-hour work day. On one hand, a gate and lodge were simply the proper way to signal and bound the entrance to such an estate. On the other, a gatekeeper provided security, admitting through the gates only those who were welcome, and denying access when Corcoran was away or wishing complete privacy. The resident porter could direct visitors and accept deliveries.

W.W. Corcoran was aware that the lodge itself would become something of a landmark, the most prominent building of his estate as seen from the public realm. It also had to be commodious enough to accommodate the family of its caretaker and be suited to its rural setting. It is significant that it was erected before the philanthropist began a new mansion on the estate. One of Corcoran's letters places construction after September 1856, and the Albert Boschke map of the District, compiled from surveys taken in 1857 to 1859, already depicts the roughly L- or T-plan gatehouse. An 1867 map by Nathaniel Michler identifies the structure as "Lodge."

Just as Corcoran had sought the best landscape architects for his projects so, too, did he engage one of the most prominent architects of the day for his construction commissions. James Renwick, Jr. is best known for St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York and the Smithsonian "Castle," and he was probably acquainted with Corcoran through the latter's association with the museum. A prominent practitioner of the Gothic Revival, Renwick turned to emulating French Renaissance and post-Renaissance styles after seeing Napoleon III's Paris. Corcoran, also recently returned from Europe, set Renwick to work on a mansard-roofed gate lodge for Harewood, a rustic test run for the more ambitious and urbane Corcoran Gallery of Art (today's Renwick Gallery), begun in 1859 across Lafayette Square from the White House.

The French "Second Empire" style is distinguished by several characteristic features often found in combination, such as the mansard roof, paired windows, complex massing of pavilions, towers and dormers, and decorative features such as iron roof cresting. Eclectic, it frequently incorporated and mixed Renaissance, Baroque, Rococo and Neoclassical detail. While the massing and decorative treatments are similar to the Italianate style, the Second Empire is distinguished by its more vertical and elaborate elements, but most characteristically by the ubiquitous steep, slated mansard roof. The style first appeared in the United States in Boston in 1846, in the suburban villa "Deacon Hill" by French architect Jean Lemoulnier. By the early 1860s, it was fashionable for new "cottages" and suburban villas around Boston and Newport. By then, the style had also been employed at several public buildings. At least three such prominent edifices of the pre-war era were designed by Renwick: the Charity Hospital of New York (1858-1860; demolished), Old Main at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie (1861-64), and the original Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. While it is commonly believed that Renwick introduced the Second Empire style to Washington with his designs for the Corcoran Gallery, he had already experimented with it in his design for Corcoran's Harewood Lodge, probably drawn in 1856 and erected about 1857, two years before the gallery was begun.

Of Southern sympathies, W.W. Corcoran spent the Civil War years in Europe, while the federal government seized many of his properties for wartime use. That froze his plans for a new house at Harewood. By 1872, the “public benefactor” had sufficiently reconciled with the federal government to accept the nominal price of \$225,000 for his Harewood estate, to satisfy Congress’s interest in expanding the Old Soldiers’ Home as a quasi-public park. The Home added another farm and began construction of a perimeter fence around the entire tract, enclosing miles of lanes as well as cropland and cow pastures to support the inmates.

As in Harewood’s heyday, the initial public use of the Soldiers’ Home was evening carriage-driving. An 1886 *Harper’s Weekly* item limns the scene in word and engraving:

There are two drives... which are always spoken of first by the sight-seer as well as the resident, and both possess charms for the lover of fine scenery as well as for the student of history. One... [crosses the Potomac] to Arlington; the other is the drive north to the Soldiers’ Home. The Soldiers’ Home Drive is the most popular, as it is the most accessible, and it bears repeated visiting... The popular driving hour... is just at sundown, after the dinner hour... The carriages [ultimately] turn into a shaded lane [Harewood Road], where the roadway is bowered by the trees on each side, the visitor sees that the city he has left is spread out before him far to the east and west... The drive by the east winds gracefully through field and forest until it reaches the immediate neighborhood of the Home....

It was not until 1883 that the *hoi polloi* was regularly welcomed through the gates.

Opening the grounds on Sunday is greatly to be commended. Many of our citizens cannot spare an hour for enjoyment or recreation during the week, and the privilege of enjoying the beauties of the Home on Sunday, which is now accorded them, is particularly gratifying. The inmates of the Home are greatly pleased with the new rule. They have nothing in common with the occupants of stylish carriages which roll through the grounds on pleasant evenings. On Sundays, however, many people of their own station in life drive out to the grounds, and with them the old soldiers delight to chat.

The gatehouses still admitted and directed visitors, dispensed refreshing water, and checked the passes for the coming-and-going veterans. The Home was forced to impose new regulations on hours and speed when automobiles replaced carriages. The new mobility of Washington’s population posed increased security threats for the quiet Home. The administration exerted more control over the property’s perimeter by sealing a couple of gates in 1922, including the Southeast Gate, Harewood’s former entrance. Three years later, the entire grounds were closed to public recreational use.

### **Evaluation**

Constructed sometime between 1856 and 1859, and likely in 1857, Harewood Lodge was the gatehouse or porter’s lodge for the “Harewood” country estate and farm of William Wilson Corcoran in rural Washington County, D.C. until 1872. Then, for a half century, the building served a similar function as one of several gatehouses of the National-Register-listed “U.S.

Soldiers' Home" (now the Armed Forces Retirement Home-Washington), which had acquired Harewood and another farm to the north.

The lodge is a rare building type in Washington, an extant private-estate gatehouse, and one that subsequently went into institutional use. It represents a transition among the earliest phases of development and use in the county, from farms to country estates and from country estates to institutions. In addition to other, later gatehouses at the Soldiers' Home, there are only a couple such lodges remaining from the District of Columbia's rural estates, but these are early twentieth-century ones. Harewood Lodge is also an example of a broader, yet still tiny, class of structures, extant rural outbuildings of Washington, and one of a scarcer handful that predate the Civil War. Only the Peirce mill-barn-springhouse complex and the Springland springhouse are older county outbuildings; the antebellum Fenwick springhouse is of comparable age.

Harewood Lodge is locally significant as the last standing structure from the four District of Columbia farms or estates of prominent Washington banker and philanthropist William Wilson Corcoran, and one of a few remaining from his considerable real estate holdings throughout the District. With the exception of today's Renwick Gallery, Corcoran's downtown buildings were lost to redevelopment. His farms, too, disappeared beneath the close-in suburbs; it was the institutional reuse of his Harewood estate that preserved his gatehouse alone.

Of his rural tracts, the Harewood estate is the most closely identified with Corcoran, as he lavished considerable attention on the construction of its outbuildings and the shaping of the landscape. Harewood and its gatehouse were both well-known to Washingtonians during the second half of the nineteenth century, as the property was accessible to carriage-borne visitors, a practice that would continue under Soldier's Home stewardship into the twentieth century. The lodge is representative of the appurtenances of elite country estates and of large institutions in the county, but it also served as the humbler home and post of Corcoran's and the Home's gatekeepers, porters and groundskeepers.

The two-story stone structure is one of the first Second-Empire-style buildings erected in North America, and the first within the District of Columbia. It was designed by one of the first American proponents of the style and one of the most prominent American architects of the era, James Renwick, Jr.

Harewood Lodge's period of significance commences about 1857, the building's likely completion date, and ends in 1922, the year the Soldiers' Home discontinued use of the former Harewood gate.

The proposed landmark boundary was drawn to take in the entirety of the lodge and three associated contributing features: the stone gateway/wall, the remnant of the lanes inside the gate, and a portion of the former Soldiers' Home perimeter fence. A noncontributing frame maintenance shed stands north of the lodge. The parcel's north boundary reaches a stand of trees that bounds the lodge's yard, providing a potential buffer from future development and evoking the woods that visitors passed before approaching the Corcoran house.