

Seventeenth Street Historic District

(Seventeenth Street, NW, West Side between New York and Constitution Avenues) DC listing March 7, 1968

Corcoran Gallery of Art: Built 1894-97 (Ernest Flagg, architect); addition 1925-28 (Charles Adams Platt, architect)

1700 New York Avenue, NW

Built 1894-97 (Ernest Flagg, architect); addition 1925-28 (Charles Adams Platt, architect); *DC listing November 8, 1964, NR listing May 6, 1971; NHL designation April 27, 1992; DC designation expanded April 23, 2015 to include much of the interior; see Bibliography (Goode, Washington Sculpture); within Seventeenth Street HD; see also Renwick Gallery*

Pan American Union (Organization of American States): Built 1908-10 (Paul Philippe Cret and Albert Kelsey, architects)

17th Street & Constitution Avenue, NW

Home of the world's oldest international association, founded in 1890 to foster cultural and commercial ties among the Western Hemisphere republics; focal point of Washington's diplomatic and cultural activity; widely considered among the city's most beautiful Beaux-Arts buildings; among the first major buildings implementing the McMillan Commission plans for monumental extension of the Mall; first major commission in architect's distinguished career, won in an early nationwide design competition; construction largely funded by philanthropist Andrew Carnegie; occupies former site of the Van Ness Mansion, a commanding location on the Ellipse at Constitution Avenue; square in plan, organized around tropical patio; four-story, hip-roofed main pavilion housing ceremonial rooms, flanked by two-story office wings, set amid ample lawns and gardens; marble facades exhibit symbolic blending of North and South American expression; triple arcaded main entry, classical details, terra cotta roofs, iconographic sculpture, ornamental bronzework; stately interiors with extensive artwork; originally Bureau of American Republics, established at the First International Conference of American States, held in Washington in 1889-90, renamed Pan American Union in 1910; built 1908-10, Paul Philippe Cret, and Albert P. Kelsey, architects; Gutzon Borglum and Isidore Konti, primary sculptors; Blue Aztec garden and 2-story arcaded annex pavilion completed 1912; reorganized as Secretariat of the Organization of American States in 1948; *DC designation November 8, 1964, NR listing June 4, 1969; included in designation of Seventeenth Street HD; international ownership; see Bibliography (Goode, Washington Sculpture)*

Van Ness House Stables

18th & C Streets, NW, on Pan American Union Grounds

Built 1816 (Benjamin Latrobe, architect); *DC listing March 7, 1968; on Pan American Union grounds; international ownership*

Daughters of the American Revolution, Memorial Continental Hall: Built 1910 (Edward Pearce Casey, architect)

311 18th Street, NW

The city's largest auditorium, built to accommodate the annual Continental Congresses and other activities of the National Society, DAR; served as unofficial cultural center of nation's capital for more than 40 years; use of the hall denied to singer Marian Anderson in 1939, provoking a major event in civil rights history; major work of noted architect John Russell Pope; monumental Neoclassic design in

Alabama limestone; designed 1924-24, built 1928-30; *DC listing November 8, 1964, NHL designation and NR listing September 16, 1985; see Bibliography (Goode, Washington Sculpture); see also Daughters of the American Revolution (Memorial Continental Hall)*

Daughters of the American Revolution, Memorial Continental Hall

1776 D Street, NW

Monumental headquarters of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, founded in 1890 for patriotic, historic, and educational purposes; incorporated by Congress in 1895; has made major contributions to citizenship education, historic preservation, and historical scholarship; illustrates McMillan Commission Plan ideal of monumental institutional buildings framing parks; site of the Washington Arms Limitation Conference of 1921-22, one of the most significant international attempts to reduce global tension through disarmament and mutual pledges of arbitration; meeting place for annual DAR conferences; 3 stories, Georgian Revival facades in Vermont marble with monumental Ionic porticoes; commissioned 1902, built 1904-10, Edward Pearce Casey, architect; adjacent administration building built 1923-49; *DC listing November 8, 1964, NHL designation and NR listing November 28, 1972; HABS DC-282; within Seventeenth Street HD; see Bibliography (Goode, Washington Sculpture); see also Constitution Hall*

American National Red Cross: Built 1913-17 (A.B. Trowbridge, architect)

17th, D and E Streets, NW

Monumental headquarters of the nation's largest official relief organization, founded by Clara Barton in 1881 (and chartered by Congress in 1900); memorial to the women of the Civil War, built with U.S. and private funds; exemplifies McMillan Plan development facing the Ellipse; Classical Revival facades of white marble with front and side porticoes, Corinthian columns, balustraded attic, hipped roof, tall chimneys; ample landscaped grounds; interior includes monumental stair hall, assembly hall with Tiffany stained glass, museum; built 1915-17 (A. Breck Trowbridge and Goodhue Livingston, architects); complementary north building built 1928-29, west building built 1931; *DC listing November 8, 1964, NHL designation June 23, 1965 (original building), NR listing October 15, 1966; HABS DC-347; see Bibliography (Goode, Washington Sculpture); included in Seventeenth Street HD*

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE	
COUNTY	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

Corcoran Gallery of Art

AND SIGNATURE

LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER

1701 Street at New York Avenue, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

District of Columbia

11

District of Columbia

001

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District	<input type="checkbox"/> Public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> Site	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private	<input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted
<input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted
			<input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Applicable)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious		
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

OWNER OF PROPERTY

Trustees of Corcoran Gallery of Art		STATE
STREET AND NUMBER		
Corcoran Gallery of Art		
CITY OR TOWN	STATE	
Washington	District of Columbia	CODE
		11

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

RECORDS, REGISTERS OF DEEDS, ETC.		STATE
Recorder of Deeds		
STREET AND NUMBER		
6th and D Streets, N.W.		
CITY OR TOWN	STATE	CODE
Washington	District of Columbia	11

REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

Proposed District of Columbia Additions to the National Register of Historic Places - Recommended by the Joint Committee on Landmarks			
DATE OF REPORT: March 7, 1960			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> State	<input type="checkbox"/> County	<input type="checkbox"/> Local
NATIONAL CAPITAL PLANNING COMMISSION			
726 Jackson Place, N.W.			
CITY OR TOWN	STATE	CODE	
Washington	District of Columbia	11	

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

FOR NPS USE ONLY

DESCRIPTION

COND. 1. DR.	12th St. Side				Ruins	Unexposed
	East Port	1. Old	2. New	3. Demolished		
	Street Side					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered			<input type="checkbox"/> Moved <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL APPEARANCE OF THE BUILDING

The Corcoran Gallery of Art faces east on 17th Street between E Street and New York Avenue NW overlooking the White House grounds. The 17th Street side measures approximately 263 feet (12 bays plus entrance), the New York side 112 feet (7 bays plus entrance) and the E Street side measures 280 feet (20 bays). The present building incorporates two sections of approximately equal size. The original section, designed by Ernest Flagg and erected in 1897, measures approximately 263 feet on the 17th Street side, and 113 feet on the E Street side. The second section, a U-shaped addition designed by Charles Adams Platt and opened in 1920, extended the original E Street facade 167 feet to the west. The resulting structure is thus L-shaped with a continuous facade on the E Street side. The building stands two and one-half stories above grade on the north side and almost three stories on the south side. An addition to the Art School designed by Faulkner, Fryer and Vanderpool which will extend the New York Avenue facade to the west is currently under consideration as is mechanical modernization of the existing facility.

The original section was designed in the French Beaux Arts manner with Neo-Grec details and is basically rectangular. The 17th Street and New York Avenue facades are joined by means of a hemicycle which forms the north corner of the building. The basic construction is brick with hollow tiles and steel framing. The building is faced with pink Milford granite on the basement level and the remaining structure is faced with white Georgia marble. The roof is copper and glass.

The 17th Street side is an excellent example of a clearly articulated facade in the Beaux Arts tradition. The basement is of smooth, rusticated, granite with chamfered edges. The first story, separated from the basement by a plain course with projecting, molded, string course, is faced with both wide and narrow rusticated courses of white marble. The fenestration is rectangular with plain, projecting lintels. The main entrance is located in the center, and is approached by a flight of stairs from grade level and flanked at the base by two bronze lions. Above the door is the inscription: "DEDICATED TO ART" capped by a bracketed cornice which extends above the first story string course and supports an elaborately carved crest. The second story, faced with smooth, unrusticated marble, is interrupted only by the crest over the main entrance, and is terminated on the north and south ends by ornamented pilasters. The attic, in contrast to the severity of the lower stories, is richly ornamented. A frieze of alternating metopes and medallions underscores a molding which carries a course of alternating square engaged piers and open-work marble ventilation panels. The end pilasters carry an architrave bearing the name of famous painters and sculptors above which is a projecting cornice capped by a richly carved Greek cheneau. The sharply sloping glass and copper roof is terminated by a bronze cresting with a winged Griffin at each end. The roof is hipped above the rectangular section of the 17th Street facade which is framed by pilasters and contains the attic story. The roof line is lower over the remainder of the building which does not have an attic story, specifically the E Street and New York Avenue facades and the north and south end bay sections of the 17th Street facade.

The clear articulation of story and section through fenestration, string coursing, and ornamentation is continued on the E Street and New York Avenue facades. The latter contains the Art School entrance which is crowned

(Continued on Form 10-303A)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE			
<p>1. PRESENTATION OF THE PROPERTY</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Colonial <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century</p>			
<p>2. CHECK ONE OR MORE AS APPLICABLE (Check One or More as Applicable)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> Political <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Architecture <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Art <input type="checkbox"/> Industry <input type="checkbox"/> Science _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Commerce <input type="checkbox"/> Invention <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Communications <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Human Interaction _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Conservation <input type="checkbox"/> Literature <input type="checkbox"/> Theater _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Music</p>			
<p>3. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE</p> <p>The Joint Committee on Landmarks has designated the Corcoran Gallery of Art a Category II Landmark of importance which contributes significantly to the cultural heritage and visual beauty of the District of Columbia. The Corcoran Gallery was founded by Washington philanthropist William Wilson Corcoran in 1869 and originally located at the corner of 17th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue. Rapid growth forced the relocation of the Gallery, and the present structure was the first of a group of semipublic and public buildings to be erected on the 17th Street thoroughfare between New York Avenue and West Potomac Park. An excellent example of French Beaux Arts design with Neo-Grec details, the Corcoran was designed by architect Ernest Flagg and opened in 1897; a second section, designed by John Adams Platt, opened in 1928. Throughout its history, the Corcoran Gallery has contributed significantly to the advancement of American Art through its traditional policy of exhibiting contemporary American Art and through the Corcoran Biennial of Contemporary American Painting which has been held without interruption since 1907. In addition, the Gallery has a comprehensive collection of 18th, 19th, and 20th century American Art.</p> <p>William Wilson Corcoran founded the Gallery for the purpose of "encouraging American genius" in the arts and built the first Gallery to house his notable collection of paintings and statuary. This building has been recently restored as the Renwick Museum of the Smithsonian Institution (see National Register: Renwick Museum). In 1870, the U.S. Congress approved a public act incorporating the Trustees of the Corcoran Gallery and providing it with its Charter. Mr. Corcoran gave, in addition to the original building and grounds and his personal art collection, an endowment of \$500,000 for the perpetual establishment and maintenance of the Gallery. He also stipulated that the Gallery be opened without admission charge to visitors at least two days a week. He bequeathed an additional sum of \$100,000 as an endowment for the Corcoran School of Art.</p> <p>An increase in acquisitions forced an expansion of the original gallery, and the site of the present building at 17th Street and New York Avenue was purchased in 1891. The first section, erected in 1897, was designed by architect Ernest Flagg and built at a cost of approximately \$700,000. This section is sometimes referred to as the "Flagg Wing." Ernest Flagg (1857-1947) was trained at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris in the 1880's and designed the Singer Office Building, New York and the Annapolis Naval Academy. President Cleveland attended the inauguration of the Gallery. The second section of the building (known as the "Clark Wing") was built to house the collection of Montana Senator William Andrews Clark and financed</p>			
<p>(Continued on Form 10-300A)</p>			

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
COUNTY	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number of entries)

7. Physical Appearance--Corcoran Gallery of Art

by a bracketed triangular pediment extending to the top of the first story string course. The second story contains a five-bay balustraded arcade with each bay separated by twin pilasters. The only major alteration to the facade consists of three first-story windows in the hemicycle added in 1915 which correspond in design to those of the 17th Street facade. These windows are placed directly under the second story windows (three blank tabernacle windows flanked by twin pilasters) and thus preserve a continuity of design. The E Street addition (1928) reflects the fenestration and materials of the original building.

The interior of the building is dominated by a spacious two-story atrium which rises 40 feet to the skylight ceiling. The atrium, which measures 170 x 50 feet, is surrounded and divided by 40 fluted Doric columns of Indiana limestone supporting the loggia which constitutes the upper level of the atrium. From the west side of the atrium, directly opposite the main entrance to the Gallery, a grand white marble staircase 18 feet in width, leads by way of a landing, to the upper atrium. From the latter, 38 fluted Ionic columns, also of Indiana limestone, rise to support the ceiling beams. Around the perimeter of the atrium, at both upper and lower levels, are the principal exhibition rooms of the gallery, as well as certain staff offices. The second addition contains a skylighted rotunda at the landing of the main staircase which serves, in effect, as a vestibule to the new wing. The interior of the entire gallery has been continuously reodeled throughout the 20th Century.

8. Historical Significance--Corcoran Gallery of Art

by a grant of \$700,000 from the Clark family. A small section at the west end of the new wing was built at the same time at Gallery expense. The architect for the entire section was Charles Adams Platt (1861-1933) who also designed the Freer Gallery of Art. The Clark Wing was inaugurated in 1928 with President Coolidge in attendance.

The permanent collection of the Gallery consists of well over 5,000 items, approximately four-fifths of which are American. Its collection of European art is based primarily on the Clark and Walker collections.

In addition to the Corcoran School of Art, the only truly professional art school in the District of Columbia, the Gallery also has a varied educational program which attracts about 20,000 persons a year to the Gallery. The Dupont Center of the Corcoran (formerly the Washington Gallery of Modern Art) functions as a graphics workshop. The Corcoran is a privately-endowed and privately-supported institution and receives no regular financial assistance from either Federal or city government.

10. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

H.P. ... Commission, The National Capitol, Washington, D.C. U.S.
Government Printing Office, 1961.
Corcoran Gallery, Annual Catalog of the Corcoran Art Gallery, 1897.
Faulkner, Stenhouse, Fryer, and Faulkner Architects. "Architectural Survey,
The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.," 1967.
Prester, John Cleggett. Washington Past and Present. New York: Lewis
Historical Publishing Co., 1930.
Documentation information from Miles Bond, Assistant Secretary, Board of
Trustees, Corcoran Gallery.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES			
CORNER	LATITUDE			LONGITUDE			
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	
NW	38°	53'	44"N	77°	02'	23"W	
NE							
SE							
SW							

APPROXIMATE AREA OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 62,321 sq. ft.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTY OR OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Suzanne Ganschinietz, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION: National Capital Planning Commission DATE: January 15, 1971

STREET AND NUMBER: 726 Jackson Place, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: District of Columbia CODE: 11

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665) I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is

National ☐ State ☒ Local ☐

Name _____

Title Deputy Mayor Commissioner

Date _____

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Page 1

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTYHistoric Name: **CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART AND CORCORAN SCHOOL OF ART**

Other Name/Site Number: N/A

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 1700 New York Avenue, N.W.

Not for publication:_____

City/Town: Washington

Vicinity:_____

State: District of Columbia

County: N/A

Code: 11Zip Code: 20006**3. CLASSIFICATION**

Ownership of Property

Private: X

Public-local: _____

Public-State: _____

Public-Federal:_____

Category of Property

Building(s): X

District: _____

Site: _____

Structure: _____

Object: _____

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

1

1

Noncontributing

_____ buildings

_____ sites

_____ structures

_____ objects

_____ Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of related multiple property listing: _____

CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ 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 ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official_____
Date_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official_____
Date_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau**5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION**

I, hereby certify that this property is:

____ Entered in the National Register _____

____ Determined eligible for the _____
National Register____ Determined not eligible for the _____
National Register

____ Removed from the National Register _____

____ Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper_____
Date of Action

CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Page 3

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

6. FUNCTION OR USEHistoric: Recreation and Culture
EducationSub: Museum
SchoolCurrent: Recreation and Culture
EducationSub: Museum
School**7. DESCRIPTION**Architectural Classification:
Beaux Arts with
Neo-Greco detailing

Materials:

Foundation: Concrete

Walls: Granite and marble

Roof: Glass

Other Description: Copper framing,
bronze decorative elements

CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Page 4

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Corcoran Gallery of Art faces east on 17th Street between E Street and New York Avenue, N.W. and overlooks the White House grounds. This site was purchased in 1891 by the Trustees of the Corcoran and is the second home for the Gallery. The building, which fronts the street and defines the entire block, stands three stories tall on the east and south sides and two and a half stories on the north side. The main entrance to the Gallery faces 17th Street with a secondary entrance to the School on the New York Avenue side. There has been only one exterior change to Ernest Flagg's original building since its completion in 1897. In 1928, Charles Adams Platt executed a highly sympathetic addition to the main block which ensured the architectural integrity of the Flagg plan. One interior change occurred in 1915 when Waddy B. Wood, a Washington architect, was called upon to redesign the interior of the Hemicycle at the northeast corner of the building.

The primary structure, by Flagg and set on 17th Street, is comprised of 12 bays which measure 263 feet. The E Street facade measures 280 feet (including the 167 foot set-back addition by Platt) and is comprised of 20 bays. The north facade, on New York Avenue, measures 112 feet consisting of 7 bays and an entrance. Flagg's building is basically rectangular with Platt's U-shaped addition (with an open courtyard in the center) creating an overall L-shaped plan.

An excellent example of French Beaux Arts rationality and spatial planning, the structure consists of three distinct units--Gallery, School and Hemicycle. The dynamic curve of the Hemicycle connects the Gallery and the School at the corner. This curve also addresses the urban vitality of one of the city's most prominent intersections. The slight projection of the east facade expresses, in a typically Beaux Arts manner, the importance of the interior space, which serves as gallery; this function is further emphasized by the expanse of blank wall on the second story, which houses the primary exhibition spaces. The main facade is executed in the French Beaux Arts tradition with Neo-Grec detailing and subtly indicates the different functions of the building within the divisions of the facade.

The "rear" of the building, the west facade, is of non-decorative yellow bricks. Platt, who designed this part of the building, left this facade unfinished with the idea that the Corcoran may one day again expand its galleries.

The foundation of the building is concrete and the basic construction is brick with hollow tiles and steel framing. The walls are faced with pink Milford granite and white Georgia marble. The roof is glass in copper framing, which allows for natural light inside the Gallery via a series of laylights and skylights.

A fosse or ditch was used to accommodate the building to its sloping site. The basement level is of rusticated granite with chamfered edges; here Flagg "signed" his building in the lower right hand corner, much the way an artist signs his canvas. A molded string course separates the basement level and the first story, which is constructed of alternating double, wide courses with single, narrow courses of rusticated white marble. This first story has rectangular fenestration topped by projecting lintels with decorative wrought iron screens covering the windows.

The main entrance is centered on the first story and is approached by a flight of stairs from street level; the doorway is crowned with an elaborately carved crest, a rinceaux culminating with a caduceus above the inscription "Dedicated to Art." Above the crest, a change in story is again articulated by a single string course above which rises the blank wall of the gallery (second story) level. The surface tension of the smooth, unrusticated marble and its blankness is interrupted only by the crest above the main door. This predominant feature gives the Corcoran its monumental quality. Two ornamented pilasters flank the wall at north and south and carry shields which bear the initial "C" of the founder's name, which are surmounted by the sculpted head of Athena, who in Greek mythology is the patroness of artists and architects.

A frieze of alternating metopes and modillions supports a molding on which rests the attic story, which exists only in the main block, and consists of a row of alternating marble claustra, or ventilation blocks, of rich Greek inspired star patterns and small engaged Doric piers. The elaborate decorativeness of this story directly contrasts the blank severity of the second story wall. Another frieze runs along the top of the attic story and bears the names of eleven artists: Phidias, Giotto, Durer, Michelangelo, Raphael, Velasquez, Rembrandt, Rubens, Reynolds, Ingres and Allston. The list was compiled by Flagg and included the name of one American artist--Washington Allston--who was Flagg's uncle by marriage.

A richly carved Greek cheneau caps the main block and directs one's eye to the slanting glass and copper roof. Glass plates are suspended by a framing of copper and lead which allow for the dramatic interior illumination within the Gallery through a glass ceiling of laylights, an element which Flagg may have seen in Gustave Eiffel's Bon Marchè department store (1876) in Paris. The hipped roof of the main block is crested with decorative bronze elements and flanked on north and south by acroterions in the form of winged griffins, or flying dragons. On the other sections of the building, the hipped roof is lower, as no attic story is present.

Clear articulation of story level and their functions are expressed through fenestration and the use of string courses. The Hemicycle, an auditorium for lectures and concerts, contains three blind windows crowned with triangular pediments in the second story. The north facade, which houses the School, allows for larger and more frequent fenestration. The second story of this facade contains a five bay balustraded arcade of arched openings. The entrance to the School is centered on the first floor and is approached by a flight of stairs from the street level. The doorway is marked by a triangular pediment supported by brackets and bears the inscription "Hemicycle Hall."

In 1915, the Board of Trustees commissioned Waddy B. Wood to redesign the interior of the Hemicycle. Flagg had designed a double height room, but the Board found the lighting unsuitable for the exhibition of paintings. Wood's redesign split the Hemicycle into two stories. The lower story served as an auditorium for School lectures and concerts. The room, modelled after a Greek amphitheater, accommodated over two hundred people. The upper story was converted into additional gallery space and housed special touring exhibitions. This proved especially pleasing to the Board since the public could visit the special exhibitions at night without the necessity of opening the entire Gallery building.¹

¹Annual Report by the President of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, January 1, 1915 to January 1, 1916, Washington, D.C.:12-14. This sections gives an account of the Board members involved in choosing Wood as architect and the changes he effected.

The E Street addition (Platt, 1928) retains the continuity of fenestration and articulation of story of the original Flagg building. Materials of the addition reflect those used in the original structure.

Two large bronze lions on pedestals flank the staircase of the main entrance on 17th Street. These lions were bought in 1888 at the auction of the estate of Bill Holliday, founder of the Pony Express. Director Frederick B. McGuire acquired the bronzes for \$1,900. They were displayed at the original home of the Corcoran Gallery on 17th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue (today the Renwick Gallery, part of the Smithsonian Institute). There they faced the street, but when moved to the new building in 1897, they were placed facing each other. The lions are copies from the originals by Antonio Canova, which adorn the cenotaph of Pope Clement XIII in Rome.²

Two additional pedestals flank the doorway and were intended to support statues of allegorical figures. Here one realizes that from a distance, the scale of the building is deceptive. The doorway is 10 feet wide and 20 feet high. The two heavy bronze doors are each ornamented with a bas relief of a lion's head holding a large ring in its jaws. Entry is into a foyer from which a flight of stairs leads to the large open area of the Gallery's two storied double atria (commonly referred to as the Atrium), which runs north to south and measures 150'x 50'x 40'. The area is lit through skylights in the roof of glass and copper. The lower floor is surrounded by 40 fluted, baseless Greek Doric columns while the upper floor is surrounded by 38 fluted Greek Ionic columns; both orders are of Indiana limestone and stand 18 feet high. The Ionic columns, which support the ceiling beams, are detailed with gilt bronze necking. The columns are spaced around two open wells with circulation along the outside. The frieze that surrounds the lower southern Atrium wall is a 19th century plaster reproduction of the frieze on the Pantheon. The walls of the lower Atrium were restored to their original deep red color in 1987. Originally, the Atrium housed statuary and plaster casts. Today, statuary is still exhibited here as well as plaster and wooden busts of famous Americans, which are mounted on brackets around the room.

The floor in the lower Atrium contains glass panels that circumscribe each interior court and originally served to provide illumination for the school studios located in the basement. For evening functions, the soft glow of the bottom lit glass panels illuminates the center of the large Atrium space. Flagg may have taken his inspiration from Labrousse's Bibliothèque Nationale (1854-75) in Paris, but glass floors were also used in Ware and Van Brunt's Harvard Library (1880-81).

The main axis of the building crosses the north-south orientation of the Atrium and directs the visitor to the "grand staircase," one of the most elegant in all of Washington. Though 16 feet wide, the risers are relatively low with a midway landing to slow the pace of the visitor requiring him to pause and to contemplate the gallery space. Tiered blocks are provided along the outside of the railing for statuary or decorative foliage. The staircase rises from the main floor level to a landing, turns back on itself and continues to the upper galleries; limestone balustrades enhance the upper flights of stairs. Originally, niches at the head of the landing exhibited plaster casts of a Romanesque bas relief flanked by classical sculpture.

The main gallery rooms project off the upper and lower Atrium with museum offices and museum shop on the lower floor. The galleries are of the highest craftsmanship, outfitted with parquet floors in a herringbone pattern, sliding pocket doors and iron grill work over the windows. The sightlines of the galleries follow classical proportions.

The galleries of the Clark addition, designed by Platt, retain the elegance of the original museum, but differ greatly from Flagg's strict classical symmetry. Platt's design took into account that the collections received from Senator Clark had been exhibited in a "home" atmosphere at the Senator's Fifth Avenue mansion (now destroyed). The architect studied the collection contents to

²Melvin A. Pettit, True History of Lions at Corcoran Entrance is Revealed, Sunday Star, 21 May 1939.

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determine which exhibition spaces would best suit their display and designed an addition complimentary to Flagg's original plan. Platt discretely added the entrance to his wing at the top of the landing of the grand staircase by opening one of the sculpture niches, which placed his entrance directly on axis with the original entrance. Beyond this large, classically designed portal, and designated by the inscription "The Clark

Collection," is the Rotunda, a cylindrical room capped by a coffered ceiling, owing its inspiration to the Hadrian's Pantheon. This room, while serving as a transition from the symmetry of the older building to the newer, more humanly-scaled rooms, also refers to the Clark residence, which had a circular entrance hall in which a copy of Canova's Venus was displayed, as it is at the Corcoran.

Directly beyond the Rotunda is the staircase hall, a richly panelled room lit by a skylight and decorated with marble columns and iron railings along the staircase to the upper galleries. This area is more intimate in its atmosphere as opposed to Flagg's monumentally scaled areas.

Platt's plan also included a gallery specifically for the re-installation of an 18th century French Salon which had been dismantled and moved to Senator Clark's home. The room was removed from the Hôtel d'Orsay in Paris, housed in New York, and then moved to the Corcoran where it is the center of the European collections. Not only ceiling, walls, mantle and floors were intact, but wall length mirrors and many furnishings as well.

Flagg's building introduced not only Beaux Arts classicism to the nation's capital, but also the new building form of "the classical building of the arts."³ This design, completed by 1891, was at the forefront of the classical movement in American architecture, following fast on the heels of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago which served to showcase classical designs by such architects as Richard Morris Hunt and McKim, Mead and White.

The Corcoran, both in its original section and its addition, emphasizes Beaux Arts classicism in its overall plan and design through its massing, symmetry, spatial relationships and the use of historical style through its Neo-Grec detailing. Building type, site and program are elegantly and practically combined here. The geometry of the exterior architectural form fits the building to the street and enlivens the architectural and urban context around it. Along with Daniel Burnham's turn-of-the-century Union Station, the Corcoran Gallery of Art is one of Washington, D.C.'s best executed examples of the Beaux Arts tradition of the French Ecole.

³Donna Barnard Ari and Cynthia R. Field, "Beaux Arts Traditions at the Corcoran," Museum News LIV(1976):50.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally: X
Statewide: Locally:

Applicable National
Register Criteria:

A X B X C X D

Criteria Considerations
(Exceptions):

A B C D E F G

NHL Criteria:

1, 2, 4

NHL Theme(s):

XVI Architecture
M. Period Revivals
6. Beaux Arts

XXIV Painting and Sculpture
K. Supporting Institutions

Areas of Significance:

Architecture, Art, Education

Period(s) of Significance:

1897-1942

Significant Dates:

1897, 1928

Significant Person(s):

William Wilson Corcoran

Cultural Affiliation:

Architect/Builder:

Ernest Flagg, 1893
Waddy B. Wood, 1915
Charles Adams Platt, 1928

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State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

Adding to Washington's visual beauty and cultural heritage, the Corcoran Gallery of Art is the oldest art museum in Washington, D.C. and one of the three oldest museums in the country, the other two being the Philadelphia Museum of Fine Art and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. William Wilson Corcoran (1798-1888), native of Georgetown, merchant, businessman and philanthropist, founded the Gallery in 1869 and presented to a newly formed Board of Trustees a "Deed of Gift" of his art collection and a building in which to house the collection.¹ The Corcoran Gallery was chartered by Congress in 1870.

The first home of the Corcoran, now known as the Renwick Gallery in the northeast corner of 17th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, was designed by James Renwick in 1859 and has been listed as a National Historic Landmark since 1971. The second building to house the collection, on 17th Street and New York Avenue, has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1976. This building is a significant contribution to one of the most important architectural areas in the city. Within three blocks of the gallery are numerous prominent architectural examples, all of which are listed as National Historic Landmarks: the American National Headquarters of the Red Cross; Blair-Lee House; Octagon House; Renwick Gallery; State, War, and Navy Building [now Old Executive Office Building]; United States Department of the Treasury; and the White House. The Corcoran was the first semi-public building to be built along the western side of 17th Street. Not only its well-wrought architecture, described as "the Beaux Arts tradition at its best,"² but also its association with prominent Americans and historically important cultural events make the Corcoran an excellent candidate for landmark status.

In 1859 Corcoran commissioned James Renwick to design a building to house his rapidly growing collection of American art. Because of his Southern sympathies Corcoran left the country from 1862 until the end of the Civil War.³ In reaction to his political views, the United States government seized control of the unfinished gallery building. But, in 1869, the building was returned to Corcoran and its construction completed. It opened its doors with an exhibition of 98 paintings and sculptures in January, 1874.

By 1878 visitors had difficulty viewing the art because of the many art students who came to copy the works. Corcoran then provided funds "for the specific purpose of aiding in the establishing the school of design in connection with the Gallery."⁴ The school was initially housed in an annex to the north side of the gallery and officially opened in 1890 with forty students and two instructors. Today the Corcoran School of Art is the only four-year art college in Washington and is fully accredited. Enrollment in the BFA program reached 300 in the 1990-91 academic year in addition to over 1000 students in the Open Program, a non-degree granting educational program. There are 47 full time faculty and 40 part time faculty.

¹.Members of the 1896 Board included: James M. Carlisle, George W. Riggs, Dr. James C. Hall, Anthony Hyde, James G. Beret, James C. Kennedy, Henry D. Cooke, James C. McGuire, and W.T. Walters. Corcoran chose not to place himself on the Board of Trustees.

².Washington Metropolitan Chapter of the AIA, A Guide to the Architecture of Washington, D.C., 1965.

³.Corcoran was a great friend to General Robert E. Lee and attended a 1869 reception for him at the Greenbrier Resort in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia.

⁴Architecture: Discovery and Awareness, 3.

The Corcoran Gallery and School, though, were not Corcoran's only philanthropic endeavors and he is considered to be one of Washington's most illustrious patrons.⁵ In 1869 he donated \$550,000 for the establishment of the Louise Home, "an institution for the support and maintenance of a limited number of gentlewomen who have been reduced by misfortune."⁶ Additionally, Corcoran made contributions to several institutions of higher learning, including Columbian University (now George Washington University), the Ascension Episcopal Church, Georgetown, the University of Virginia, the College of William and Mary, the Virginia Military Institute, the Episcopal Theological Seminary, the Protestant Asylum and the Academy of Visitation both of Washington, D.C. In total, his gifts and bequests to the Corcoran Gallery and School of Art equaled \$1,600,000. For his efforts, Corcoran won the respect of many and was praised in the Morning Tribune of February 27, 1852:

There are so few among those who can afford to be patrons of the Fine Arts in this country...that every votary who feels a just pride in seeing the genius of his own country respected and encouraged cannot hesitate to pay an honorable tribute to one, who... contributes to develop the talent which neglected would languish from want...[Mr. Corcoran] has contributed his private resources to foster native merit....⁷

By the late 1880s a new building for the School and Gallery was required due to the substantial growth of both. Adjoining properties on Pennsylvania Avenue and 17th Street proved to be unavailable and the decision was made, by the Board, to buy land and construct a new building. In 1891 the Board of Trustees purchased a plot on 17th Street and New York Avenue, N.W. A design competition was held and in 1893 the Board awarded the commission to the New York architect Ernest Flagg and hired the contracting firm of Norcross Brothers, a favorite firm of Henry Hobson Richardson.⁸

Ernest Flagg (1857-1947) left formal education at the age of 15 to work as an office boy on New York's Wall Street. After dabbling in several real estate ventures, he entered the second class of the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris in 1889. He further pursued his studies at the Atelier Paul Blondel. Flagg returned to New York in the 1890s skilled in the architecture of the "French School" of Beaux Arts. He took the basic concepts of the Beaux Arts tradition--symmetry, use of classical details and forms and care for spatial relationships--and added his own mark to it by concentrating on matching the special needs of the program to the building type.⁹ In his design for the Corcoran, Flagg considered the founder's mission for the institution: "to educate through the school and to elevate public taste through the contemplation of art" and attempted to express this dual purpose through his architecture.¹⁰

In a review of Flagg's works, H. W. Desmond comments that he was "a man who has thoroughly accepted certain well-defined principles from which he proceeds logically [and exhibits] a clear

⁵Charles Moore, Washington Past and Present, (New York: The Century Co., 1929), 204.

⁶Dictionary of American Biographies, Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone, eds., (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), 440.

⁷Morning Tribune, February 27, 1852(?).

⁸Building and Grounds Report, Guide to the Corcoran Gallery Archives, 2.

⁹Mardges Bacon, Ernest Flagg: Beaux Arts Architect and Urban Reformer, (New York: Architectural History Foundation; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press: 1986), 77.

¹⁰Ari and Field, 50.

process of architectural thought."¹¹ After the completion of the Corcoran building, Flagg commented, "I have tried to make it simple and monumental and above all to give it the appearance of an art building."¹²

Flagg's design drew on the many architectural examples he saw while in Paris. The monumental structure and massing of the museum has clear relations to Henri Labrouste's Bibliotheque St. Geneviève (1838-50).¹³ In his listing of 11 artists around the cornice of the Corcoran, Flagg directly quotes Labrouste's library. Baron von Haussmann's redesign of the Paris street schemes may have influenced the way Flagg chose to address the Corcoran's site at the busy intersection of New York Avenue and 17th Street. Additionally, certain aspects of the Roman basilica form are evident in the interior of the building, including its long open center space and supported side aisles. The Beaux Arts architecture is enhanced here with Neo-Grec details, one of the many ornamental styles available to Flagg at this time. This classicism was not only timely, in that Richardsonian Romanesque was beginning to die out by the end of the 19th century, but also authentic in that Flagg spoke from the source, he had studied these monuments first hand and knew them well.¹⁴ Flagg perceived the Corcoran institution and the building it occupied to be the American Louvre.

In considering the museum as an inspirational and educational institution and using all the lessons learned in Paris, Flagg introduced a form which has today become familiar to the American museum goer--"the classical temple of the arts."¹⁵ In his design, submitted well in advance of the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago, which bolstered the use of the Beaux Arts style in America, Flagg anticipated the vogue in Beaux Arts classicism. The interior of the Corcoran reflects the clear planning and symmetry of the Ecole tradition; the location and needs for the various functions of a museum were provided for in the design. Frank Lloyd Wright, perhaps the greatest American architect, reportedly considered the Corcoran to be the best designed building in Washington.¹⁶

Like Corcoran, Flagg was deeply committed to efforts at improving conditions for the urban poor, but is generally considered to have been an architect of skyscrapers and tenements. In the 1950s a renewed interest occurred in Flagg's work and turn-of-the-century Beaux Arts design. One of Flagg's other monumental schemes, the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland (1900-1910), was listed as a National Historic Landmark in 1961. Another well known Flagg building, the Singer Tower in New York, was briefly the tallest skyscraper in the world after its completion in 1908. In 1967 it became the tallest building up to that time to be demolished.¹⁷

Professor William Jordy in his introduction to Mardges Bacon's biography of Flagg states: "Clearly here was an architect whose work exemplified to a degree matched perhaps by that of no other American the full range of what the Ecole des Beaux Arts had to teach....[Flagg is]

¹¹H.W. Desmond, "The Works of Ernest Flagg," Architectural Record XI(1902):1.

¹²Bacon, 79.

¹³Bacon, 85.

¹⁴Desmond,2.

¹⁵Ari and Field, 50.

¹⁶Benjamin Forgey, "The Best Building in Washington," The Washington Post 31 July 1982.

¹⁷Bacon, xi-xii. Introduction by William Jordy.

(possibly the) consummate exemplar of the full range of the Ecole training and ideals in the United States."¹⁸

The Corcoran's new building opened its doors in February 1897. It was immediately hailed for its elegant architecture and interiors. President and Mrs. Cleveland attended the opening with all the members of the President's Cabinet. This continued the close relationship of the Gallery and the residents of the White House.

In 1925 the Corcoran accepted Montana Senator William Andrew Clark's (1839-1925) bequest of his collections of art and artifacts. Clark's collection consisted of almost 200 paintings, drawings, watercolors, sculpture, tapestries, rugs, antiques, stained glass windows, lace, furniture and the interior decoration and furniture of a Louis XVI Hôtel Salon. The collection is noted for its Dutch, Flemish, and French Romantic paintings, which includes works by Hobbema, Cuyp, Rembrandt van Rijn, van Goyen, Daumier, Degas, Rodin, and several French Barbizon painters. The collection also consists of several pieces of Italian majolica earthenware. Clearly more space was needed in the Gallery to house this collection; accordingly, the Clark family donated \$700,000 for an addition designed by New York architect Charles Adams Platt (1861-1933) with the James Baird Company as contractors. The wing was opened in 1928.

Platt was by training a painter and printmaker and had exhibited his work at the Corcoran Gallery. Earlier, he had designed the Italianate Freer Gallery (1913-18), also in Washington, but his career flourished mostly in residential work. While he remained loyal to classical traditions, he at first leaned toward the Italianate and later to Georgian expressions. His sympathetic addition to the existing Flagg building enlarged the gallery space by 27,032 sq. feet and added such special areas to the museum as the Rotunda, the Clark Landing, the Mantle room, the Tapestry room, and the Salon Dore. Members of the Clark family, as well as President and Mrs. Coolidge, attended the opening of the Clark Wing in March, 1928.

Thomas Corcoran immigrated to Baltimore, Maryland from Limerick, Ireland in 1783. He moved to Georgetown where he served three times as mayor and was an influential merchant. William Wilson Corcoran was born December 27, 1798. He went into the dry goods business, but in 1823 filed for bankruptcy. Corcoran then managed his father's property and later worked for the Bank of the United States and the Bank of Columbia from 1828-36. In 1837 he formed a partnership with George W. Riggs and founded the brokerage firm of Corcoran and Riggs. Since 1896 this institution has operated as the Riggs National Bank. After making his fortune by selling United States bonds to defray the cost of the United States' war with Mexico, Corcoran retired in 1854, devoting his time to his many philanthropic efforts.¹⁹

Corcoran was one of the few early American collectors to value and purchase contemporary American art at a time when most collectors turned to the art of Germany and France.²⁰ Because of his firm belief in the talents of American artists, Corcoran stated that the goal of his gallery would be to "encourage American genius in the production and preservation of works pertaining to the Fine Arts."²¹ Over a period of years, the popularity and desire of the public to view his private collection influenced and persuaded Corcoran to use his collection and financial resources to open a public institution committed to American art.

¹⁸Bacon, xiii. Introduction by William Jordy.

¹⁹Architecture: Discovery and Awareness, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Education Department, unpublished manuscript, 2.

²⁰Donna Barnard Ari and Cynthia R. Field, "Beaux Arts Traditions at the Corcoran," Museum News LIV (1976):50.

²¹Deed of Gift. 1869.

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The Corcoran was founded by a man with the foresight to realize, in the middle of the nineteenth century, that American art was deserving of encouragement and its finest examples worth preserving for posterity. Further, as Corcoran stated in his original Deed of Gift, the Gallery and School were intended to "encourage American Genius," a goal pursued by the institution to this day.

Since the Corcoran's founding predated the existence of any Federal art gallery, its role as a national repository for art was recognized soon after it was established and foreign visitors often included the museum on their itinerary.²²

In 1909 the Senate Parks Commission, known as the Macmillan Commission, exhibited their models and suggestions to the public at the Corcoran. As one of the first large semi-public buildings on this stretch of 17th Street, the gallery was identified as an integral part to this City Beautiful plan.

The Museum has for more than a century collected a wide spectrum of American, as well as some European, painting, sculpture, prints, drawings, and decorative arts. However, among the more than 11,000 works in the collection, the most significant works are to be found in American art. The Corcoran's collection is recognized internationally as one of the most outstanding assemblages of American art in existence today, containing a thorough survey of American art from the mid-18th century through to 1991.

In the past innovative exhibitions, as well as single artist shows, have exhibited the works of such artists as Thomas Doughty, Albert Bierstadt, John Singer Sargent, Thomas Eakins, Andrew Wyeth and Worthington Wittredge. The 1983 exhibition A New World: Masterpieces of American Painting 1760-1910 was a landmark exhibition co-organized by the Corcoran and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and was considered by many in the field as an exhibition which helped to achieve the formal national recognition and public acclamation worthy of American art.

The excellence of the designs of the exterior and interior and the wholly compatible addition to the Corcoran make it the premier example of French Beaux Arts architecture in Washington at the turn of the century, a tribute to the Gallery's founder and its architects, all of whom made additional significant contributions to the history of America art and architecture.

²²The creation of the present National Gallery of Art did not occur until 1931 with the gift from Andrew Mellon of his art collection and a building. Mellon kept his paintings in storage at the Corcoran while he served as Secretary of the Treasury in the 1920s. (Diane Shaw Wasch, "The Evolution of 1785 Massachusetts Avenue: From Luxury Apartment House to National Trust Headquarters," unpublished manuscript, 1989, 39.)

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"Opened the Art Gallery: Five Thousand People Attend the Private View of its Treasures," The Morning Times, February 23, 1897.

"Majestic Art Palaces: Two Grand Galleries on the American Continent, The Metropolitan Museum in New York and the Corcoran at Washington," The Morning Times, October 14, 1900.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
☒ Previously Listed in the National Register.
☐ 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 Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State Agency
☐ Federal Agency
☐ Local Government
☐ University
☒ Other: Specify Repository: Corcoran Gallery of Art Archives; Library of Congress (Corcoran papers)

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: Approximately 1.7 acres

UTM References: Western Quadrant of USGS District of Columbia map
Zone Northing Easting Zone Northing Easting

A _____	B _____
C _____	D _____
E _____	F _____

Verbal Boundary Description:

Lots 1-5, 13-21, 27 and 28 on Surveyor's map (attached).

Boundary Justification:

Area is bounded to the north by New York Avenue, N.W.; to the east by 17th Street, N.W.; to the south by E Street, N.W.; and to the west by the property line adjacent to the United Nations building.

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Debra L. Alderson
Organization: University of Virginia
Street/#: 35 West Range, UVA
City/Town: Charlottesville
State: VA
ZIP: 22903
Telephone: 804/293-7389
Edited by: Carolyn Pitts, NPS

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE



HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
APPLICATION FOR HISTORIC LANDMARK OR HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION

New Designation

Amendment of a previous designation X

Please summarize any amendment(s) Interior Spaces

Property name Corcoran Gallery of Art

If any part of the interior is being nominated, it must be specifically identified and described in the narrative statements.

Address 1700 New York Avenue, NW/500 17th Street, NW / 1701 E Street, NW

Square and lot number(s) Square 0171 Lot 0034

Affected Advisory Neighborhood Commission ANC 2A

Date of construction 1897 Date of major alteration(s) 1925 (Clark Addition)

Architect(s) Ernest Flaggs; 1925 addition by Charles Platt

Architectural style(s) Beaux-Arts

Original use Museum Present use Museum

Property owner Corcoran Gallery of Art

Legal address of property owner 500 17th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006

NAME OF APPLICANT(S) DC Preservation League

If the applicant is an organization, it must submit evidence that among its purposes is the promotion of historic preservation in the District of Columbia. A copy of its charter, articles of incorporation, or by-laws, setting forth such purpose, will satisfy this requirement.

Address/Telephone of applicant(s) 401 F Street, NW, Room 324, WDC 20001, 202.783.5144

Name and title of authorized representative Rebecca Miller, Executive Director

Signature of representative Rebecca Miller Date 10/1/2012

Cover sheet continued on 2nd page.

NAME OF APPLICANT(S) Save the Corcoran

Address/Telephone of applicant(s) PO Box 26204, Washington, DC 20001, 202. 607.3804

Name and title of authorized representative Bridgette Savage

Signature of representative Bridgette Savage Date 10/1/2012

Name and telephone of author of application John DeFerrari/D. Peter Sefton 202.783.5144

Date received 10/1/12
H.P.O. staff TW

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 and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Corcoran Gallery of Art (including interior spaces)

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 500 17th Street NW

not for publication

city or town Washington, D.C.

vicinity

state District of Columbia code DC county _____ code 001 zip code 20006

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ 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 ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official _____ Date _____

Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register ___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register ___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

Corcoran Gallery of Art
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply.)

☒ private
☐ public - Local
☐ public - State
☐ public - Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box.)

☒ building(s)
☐ District
☐ Site
☐ Structure
☐ Object

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing
1	buildings
	sites
	structures
	objects
1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

Building Exterior listed 1994

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum,
education, school

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum,
education, school

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS:
Classical Revival, Beaux Arts

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE
walls: Brick, steel, granite, marble
roof: Glass, copper
other: Bronze decorative elements

Corcoran Gallery of Art
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.
County and State

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The Corcoran Gallery of Art stands at the intersection of 17th Street and New York Avenue, NW, close to the White House and along the row of ceremonial buildings (including the Red Cross and the Pan American Union buildings) that line 17th Street along the west side of the Presidents' Park. The Gallery, which fills the western side of 17th Street NW between E Street to the south and New York Avenue to the north, is an exceptional Beaux-Arts expression of a space ideally suited for the appreciation of art, combining elegant exterior and interior features into a purposeful, exquisitely articulated structure. "I have tried to make it simple and monumental and above all to give it the appearance of an art building," architect Ernest Flagg commented after the building was completed.¹ The gallery's exterior was included in the *National Register* in 1971, but, following the practices of the time, the documentation accompanying the nomination was limited. This amendment to the nomination contains additional documentation of the building's interior, including the atrium, grand staircase, hemicycle, rotunda, Salon Doré, and other spaces highlighted in Illustrations 3, 4 & 5.

The gallery's interior spaces are divided into several major sections that reflect the uses originally intended for those spaces. The main gallery area accessed from 17th Street is dominated by the grand Atrium that fills the center of the original exhibit space, with separate galleries for individual exhibits surrounding that space on two floors. The second floor is accessed through a grand staircase at the center rear of the first floor atrium. At the stairway's landing is the doorway to the Clark Wing, designed by Charles Platt in 1925, which extends in a series of galleries behind the original gallery space and also fills two floors as well as a mezzanine. At the northern apex of the building is the "hemicycle," containing an auditorium on the ground floor and a large gallery for temporary exhibitions on the second floor. To the west of the hemicycle is a wing designed for and still occupied by the Corcoran School of Art.

Illustrations 1 and 2 present floor plans of the Flagg building prior to the construction of the Platt addition. Illustrations 3 through 5 depict the gallery after the construction of the Platt addition in 1928. Illustrations 6 through 28 depict the interior of the building as enumerated in the list of illustrations.

Narrative Description

Physical Description

The main section of the gallery building, completed in 1897, was designed by Ernest Flagg and is the second home for the Corcoran Gallery of Art, which was originally located several blocks to the north in what is now the Renwick Gallery on the northeast corner of 17th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW. The Corcoran Gallery building has had two significant structural changes since it was first constructed. First, in 1915, the large open auditorium on the northeast corner of the building, known as the Hemicycle, was modified by Washington architect Waddy B. Wood to include a second floor of gallery space above the auditorium, and windows were added to the exterior of the Hemicycle. Second, in 1925, with the aid of a major bequest from the estate of William A. Clark, the trustees of the Gallery commissioned architect Charles A. Platt to design an extension to the rear of the original building that adds a number of additional galleries as well as office and storage space. Other than the alterations to the Hemicycle and the spaces added in 1925,

¹ Debra L. Alderson, National Register of Historic Places registration form for the Corcoran Gallery of Art, 11.

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the interior spaces have not changed significantly since the building was constructed in 1897. The measurements of the spaces in the original Flagg-designed building are provided in illustrations 1 and 2.

Ernest Flagg (1857-1947) was a leading proponent of structural rationalism, and his Beaux-Arts, *Néo-Grec* design for the Corcoran is an outstanding example of the rationalist approach to architecture. The building clearly conveys its several purposes through its division into three main sections: the stately, formal art gallery along 17th Street, the multipurpose Hemicycle at the corner of 17th and New York Avenue, and the academically oriented art school along New York Avenue. The principal interior spaces likewise adhere to Flagg's structural rationalist credo as well as the *Néo-Grec* style he adopted for the building. Entering through the main gallery entrance on 17th Street, one arrives in an entry **Vestibule** designed to provide a measured transition to the stately and contemplative interior spaces. The rectangular space measures 46 feet by 15 feet. Two pairs of Doric columns frame statuary niches on either side of a short flight of eight steps that leads to the center of the Gallery's main interior space, the large Atrium that extends across the center of this section of the building, surrounded by smaller rooms for galleries and offices.

The central **Atrium** is 170 feet long and 50 feet across. It is divided into three sections, including two separate atrium spaces on either side of a columned central passage. The center section serves as a columned corridor leading from the entry vestibule to the grand staircase at the rear of the gallery. There are a total of 40 fluted Indiana limestone columns in the Atrium: four columns on either side of the central passage plus two sets of 16 that ring the two rectangular atria to the north and south. All these columns are 18 feet high. The two atrium spaces were originally designed for the display of statuary; each is illuminated by a large rectangular skylight that keeps the space brightly lit during daylight hours. This lighting was an essential aspect of the design of the gallery as not only a museum for casual observers but also a teaching space for the Corcoran School of Art. The bright natural light provides excellent illumination for students copying plaster casts of classical and Renaissance sculptures.

An array of 16 columns surrounds the perimeter of the "open" space lit by the skylight in each of the two atria. There are two sets of columns in each skylit area; Doric columns on the ground floor and Ionic columns directly above them on the second floor. The second floor columns are interspersed with neoclassical panels that serve as safety railings for the second floor; they are pierced with arrays of neoclassical *claustra* that match ventilation grilles on the interior of the building and also echo the row of *claustra* near the top of the 17th Street exterior façade. Additional space is provided for circulation around the outside of the columned area on each floor. Ringing the interior floor space of the two skylit areas are large glass panels set into the floor that serve a dual function. During daylight hours, they provide natural light to the studio spaces on the basement level. In the evenings, artificial light in the basement studios provides warm illumination up through the glass panels to the main floor, providing a temple-like glow to the Atrium. These glass floor panels as well as the skylights remain essentially unchanged from the original design, continuing the patterns of natural light that were intended by the architect for the most prominent spaces in the gallery.

The design of the Atrium embodies multiple neoclassical and Beaux Art allusions. The basic structure of an open central atrium is a standard Roman feature found in domestic architecture such as the villas at Pompeii. A Beaux Arts antecedent in Paris for the two-story atrium is Félix Duban's Palais des Études (1834-40), which Ernest Flagg may have had in mind. Henri Labrousse's Bibliothèque Nationale (1854-75) also includes glass floor panels for light and likely was the inspiration for Flagg's design. Previously the use of such panels was little known in the United States. Originally the walls surrounding the two atrium spaces were painted a dark Pompeian red with green burlap, giving them a rich, deep color that contrasted with the white marble columns. Of the two atria, the one to the south is ringed at the top of the first floor with a plaster cast of elements of the frieze from the Parthenon in Athens. This frieze marked the southern atrium as the one where classical sculptures would be exhibited, whereas the northern atrium was intended for Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque statuary.⁶

⁶ Barbara Moore, *Architecture Is Elementary*, (Washington, D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1979), 68.

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The Atrium served as both exhibit space and a central axis corridor offering access to two large and five smaller gallery rooms, originally devoted to the display of sculpture and other objects. While the first floor spaces were originally devoted to sculpture, the second floor galleries immediately above were used primarily to exhibit paintings.

A visitor crossing the central passage from the entrance vestibule would be taken to the elegant **Grand Staircase** on the west side that provides access to the second floor as well as the rear addition designed by Charles Platt. The central first flight of the staircase is 16 feet wide, with relatively low risers, making for a comfortable climb to the mid-level landing, where a visitor could turn before proceeding up to the second floor, to gain a perspective on the Atrium space. Flanking the central flight of stairs are stepped, block-like marble platforms designed to accommodate statues on pedestals as well as decorative plantings. Six statues on pedestals are currently on view on these platforms. A brass-topped railing has been added to the staircase for safety reasons; originally there was no railing. On the west wall, at the landing is a grand central doorway, now leading to the William A. Clark wing. Originally this was a niche for statuary of classical design, flanked by colonettes and topped with a pediment; Charles Platt replaced it with a larger doorway leading to the Rotunda to the west.

The original second floor is reached by two parallel flights of stairs, lined with decorative limestone balustrades, which rise on both sides of the first flight and turn back toward the second floor level of the Atrium. The second floor level of the Atrium is cut through with two open light wells, creating what is known as a "bridge" across the center of the large Atrium space. The second floor of the Atrium offered exhibit space for the display of paintings as well as providing access to eight adjoining galleries also devoted to the display of paintings. It also served as a review gallery for dignitaries at official receptions.

The first floor of the Flagg building originally contained seven **galleries** opening off the Atrium which displayed sculpture and plaster casts. Today, the three small galleries on the building's east side (Seventeenth Street) and the largest gallery on the south side appear to house administrative functions. The west wall of the space now designated as Gallery 4 has been breached to provide access to Gallery 5 in the Platt addition. There are two large galleries to the west of the Atrium, with the north space now housing the museum shop and the southern remaining exhibition space. The trapezoidal space between the north gallery and the hemicycle, originally utilized as an art school classroom, is now designated "Gallery 31," for the exhibition of work by faculty and students. The publically-accessible portion of these first floor spaces exhibits many original-appearing features that match those in other portions of the Flagg building. They include transomed doorways housing double pocket doors, each decorated with three stacked incised panels. These doorways have elaborate multi-plane moldings, and complex ceiling moldings with tiers of cornice and frieze elements.

The Flagg building's second floor contained eight galleries which originally displayed paintings and remain in use as exhibit space today. These galleries are configured differently and employ features not found in those of the first floor. The most striking difference is the glass and metal lattice ceiling found on Galleries 14 (originally H), 15 (originally I), 19 (originally E), 20 (originally F), and 21 (originally G). These ceilings rest atop complex moldings with multiple tiers of entablatures, friezes, and cornices that occupy the upper six feet of the wall. Profiled baseboards and trim surround doubled pocket doors of the same design as those of the first floor. The gallery floors as well as those of the Atrium are of wooden strips laid in a herringbone pattern, corresponding to the description of the innovative Nightingale flooring system laid down in 1898. The transition from Atrium to gallery is demarcated by a marble slab that spans each doorway, while a border of marble separates the herringbone floor strips from the wall. The upper sections of Galleries 16 (originally B), 17 (originally C), and 18 (originally D) on the east side of the building differ from the other second floor exhibition spaces. In these galleries, the glass roof rests atop a shelf-like cornice that is separated from the vertical plain of the walls by a curved frieze section, apparently to accommodate the roofline of the Seventeenth Street façade of the building. The glass and metal lattice ceilings of these galleries are divided into three sections in the approximate ratio of 1:2:1 by wooden cross-members running east-west. The upper moldings of these galleries are approximately ten feet in height, with a complex set of entablatures, frieze sections, and cornices comprising their upper six feet. Their lower

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section consists of a pattern of incised squares, whose center element is an extruded pyramid. These squared elements are separated by extruded decorative elements which suggest highly-stylized classical columns. This frieze wraps all four walls of the galleries.

The **Rotunda**, immediately west of the Grand Staircase, was designed by Charles Platt as a transition from the original Flagg galleries to the less formal galleries he added in 1925. The restrained circular Rotunda is 48 feet wide and has a coffered, domed ceiling with a large skylight oculus, recalling the design of the Pantheon in Rome. The Rotunda, which serves as the striking entranceway to the Clark wing, references the circular entrance hall of the New York City residence of Senator William A. Clark (1839-1925). The most impressive works from the Clark collection were originally displayed in this space, including paintings by Titian, Rembrandt, and Perugino. When *The Washington Post* reviewed the opening of the Clark wing in 1928 it drew special attention to the rotunda: "The round room is the 'clou' [highlight] of the collection and of the structure as well."¹⁰ Though inspired by a monumental Roman public space, Platt's rotunda is not nearly as imposing and effectively signals a transition to the more intimate spaces of the Clark wing that continue behind it.

Immediately west of the Rotunda is the Clark Wing's **Staircase Hall**, a square, wood-paneled room with a marble floor. A grand marble staircase with decorative iron railing leads in two right-angled flights up to a balcony and the Clark Wing galleries on the second floor. There is also a somewhat hidden staircase at the rear of the space that leads down to the first floor Clark Wing galleries. (The Rotunda and Staircase Hall are essentially at a mezzanine level between the two main floors defined by the original Ernest Flagg building). The Staircase Hall's dark walls contrast sharply with the whitewashed galleries surrounding it, including the walls of the landing at the top of the stairs. Dark marble Corinthian columns—very unlike the austere, white, fluted columns of the *Néo-Grec* Atrium—stand along the balustrade at the top of the staircase. The overall décor is English in style, bearing similarities to stair halls that Platt had previously designed for country houses.¹¹ Despite the dark paneling, the Staircase Hall is well-lit by the large rectangular cupola and skylight in the center of its ceiling. The walls were originally hung with three Beauvais tapestries woven after designs by François Boucher (1703-1770). The paneled Staircase Hall gracefully completes the transition from the public Atrium to galleries that seemingly could be rooms in a genteel country estate, displaying the artworks of a great private collection, as they originally did.

By returning to the first floor Atrium and heading to the northern end of the building, one arrives at the **Hemicycle**, cleverly designed by Ernest Flagg to fill the space at the angular intersection of New York Avenue and 17th Streets NW. Originally, there was no entrance from the Atrium to the Hemicycle's auditorium, which was meant to function as a lecture hall for the separate art school wing that has its entrance on New York Avenue. The auditorium is 67 feet wide and 45 feet deep and can seat about 300. Fourteen fluted Doric columns, similar to the ones on the first floor of the Atrium, ring the auditorium, supporting a classical entablature. Two pairs of Corinthian columns flank the stage. As Flagg built it, the auditorium space filled the entire Hemicycle; there was no second floor. Flagg based his design on the two-story auditorium at the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Paris. However, in 1915, the Corcoran's trustees decided to modify the Hemicycle to gain additional gallery space and to try to improve the auditorium's poor acoustics. They hired Washington architect Waddy B. Wood (1869-1944) to redesign the hemicycle with new gallery space on the second floor but retaining the auditorium on the first floor. The glass-roofed second floor Hemicycle Gallery covers a substantial 1,850 square feet of floor space. Wood also added three windows on the previously blank first-floor exterior wall of the hemicycle, matching the new windows to Flagg's originals on 17th Street.

On the opposite (south) side of the building, among the rooms designed by Platt for the Clark wing, is the **Salon Doré**, an early neoclassical room removed from one of the grand mansions, or *hôtels*, of Paris some time before 1904. The

¹⁰ Ada Rainey, "Clark Wing at the Corcoran Now is Open" in *The Washington Post*, Mar. 11, 1928, S13.

¹¹ Barbara Moore, "History in Stone: Beaux-Arts Classicism and the Corcoran Gallery of Art" in *Architecture Is Elementary*, (Washington, D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1979), 70.

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room has had several different titles. For many years it was known simply as the "French Room" and was roped off from visitors as a period room displaying French Neoclassical design and decorations. The Corcoran Gallery undertook an extensive and painstaking restoration of the room from 1989 to 1993, culminating in its reopening as the Salon Doré, a title that was found in a 1794 inventory of the original hôtel in Paris. The room contains "arguably the finest *boiserie* [carved and gilded wood paneling] in the United States."⁹

The architect for the Salon Doré was Jean-François-Thérèse Chalgrin (1734-1811), a neoclassicist who is best known as the designer of the Arc de Triomphe. The room he designed as one of his first decorative works is an early example of French Neoclassicism, matching the tastes of the Count d'Orsay. Eschewing the curves and frills of the rococo style, Chalgrin's salon is dominated by the rectilinear emphasis of a series of engaged Corinthian pilasters overtopped by an elegant classical cornice. The severity of the straight lines, however, are modulated by neoclassical garlands above the doorways and a series of elaborately carved trophy panels, as well as a typically delicate and airy ceiling mural painted by Jean-Hugues Taraval (1729-1785), which was done originally for a larger adjacent room. Originally there were four trophy panels in the room, depicting "Victory," "Love," "Music," and the "Arts and Sciences."

The salon was originally built as a room in the *Hôtel de Clermont*, an elegant mansion constructed between 1708 and 1714 for the widow of Louis de Guilhem de Castelnau de Clermont, marquis de Saissac in the aristocratic Faubourg Saint-Germain quarter of Paris. It was designed by Jean-Baptiste-Alexandre Le Blond (1679-1719), the noted French architect who also designed the *Hôtel de Vendôme* in Paris as well as palaces and parks in St. Petersburg, Russia. In 1768 the mansion was acquired by Pierre-Gaspard-Marie Grimod, Count d'Orsay, who renovated the house and constructed the Salon Doré in 1770 as a drawing room for his young bride, Marie-Louise-Albertine-Amélie, Princess de Croÿ-Molenbais.

Some time before 1904, the extraordinary paneling of the Salon Doré was dismantled and sold to Senator Clark to be installed in the grand French-style palace that he was planning to build on Fifth Avenue in New York City. Clark also purchased the Taraval ceiling mural from a larger adjoining room in the *Hôtel de Clermont* rather than the mural originally installed in the Salon Doré. The original ceiling mural was moved to a different Paris mansion, the *Hôtel Veil-Picard*, where it was destroyed with that mansion in 1970. The original Salon Doré had been a roughly square room, but, using the larger more rectangular ceiling mural from the adjoining room, Clark had the salon expanded when he installed it in his Fifth Avenue mansion. This required rearranging and adding to the original elements. Two windows were added, two additional trophy panels were created (depicting "Theater" and "Sports"), and four new pilasters, a mantelpiece, and a pair of mirror-paneled doors were also added. Also a replica cornice was created; the original was not sold to Clark and remains in place in the *Hôtel de Clermont*. After Clark's death, the Salon Doré was included in the Clark bequest that was accepted by the Corcoran Gallery. Charles Platt designed a room in the Clark Wing to the exact dimensions of the existing salon so that no further architectural changes would be necessary when the room was moved to Washington.

The design of the room's paneling leaves the lower parts of the walls undecorated because specially designed furniture, called *mobilier d'architecture*, was to be arranged in front of those areas. While most of the room's original furnishings were likely dispersed as early as the time of the French Revolution, the room's original four corner tables were kept together as a set and acquired by the Corcoran in 2001. They have now been restored to their proper places in the Salon Doré.

Studio spaces were originally located in the basement of the Flagg building, as well as on the first and second floors at the northwest corner of the building. Although they connected with the Atrium through a corridor, the school had a separate entrance from New York Avenue. The original studios were described as functional spaces with utilitarian finishes, which is how they were depicted in a *Life Magazine* photo feature in 1939.

⁹ Dare Myers Hartwell, *The Salon Doré*, (Washington, D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1998), 10.

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Description of the Historic Resource

The Corcoran Gallery and School of Art building is composed of spaces related to significant events and developments in art exhibition and education in both the District of Columbia and the United States. These aesthetically-magnificent spaces were the first modern art exhibition spaces in Washington, D.C. They were essential to carrying out W.W. Corcoran's vision for the museum, which he endowed to be "dedicated to Art, and used solely for the purpose of encouraging American genius."^{vi} They also played an important role in the broader ceremonial life of the nation's capital.

Art Exhibition in Gilded Age Washington

Until the last years of the nineteenth century, the original Corcoran Gallery at the corner of Seventeenth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW, designed by James Renwick and opened to the public in 1874, was Washington's only suitable space for the large-scale public exhibition of fine art.^{vii} The city had a few commercial galleries and spaces, such as the rooms of the Cosmos Club, that presented small-scale exhibitions of paintings and sculpture. Although Congress had authorized a national gallery as a component of the Smithsonian as early as 1842, it had never appropriated building funds. Some government-owned art was displayed in the Capitol, while other works decorated the White House and departmental offices. In 1855, much of the nation's art collection had been placed on view in the Smithsonian castle, where it was destroyed in a devastating fire in 1865. Thereafter, many surviving pieces had been loaned to the Corcoran for exhibit along with the gallery's permanent collection and works owned by private collectors.

At W.W. Corcoran's death in 1888, the Corcoran Gallery was among the nation's premiere art museums, although Rush C. Hawkins probably exaggerated when he told the readers of the *North American Review* that:

In the United States there are but two public collections of any particular value. The first and most important belongs to the New York Historical Society, and the second is in the Corcoran Gallery, at Washington.^{viii}

The Corcoran Gallery was also a popular venue during the Gilded Age. Recent writers often suggest that industrialists and financiers like Corcoran endowed monumental public cultural buildings as a form of social control, demonstrating their power to the public by the buildings' proximity to seats of government and validating their values through the display of opulence.^{ix} Whether this was Corcoran's actual motivation, the Corcoran Institution's charter required that admission be free at least two days each week to make the collection accessible to the working public. By 1877, the gallery received more than 77,000 visitors annually, more than three-quarters of whom were admitted without charge, and admitted as many as 2,200 spectators in one evening.^x

The collection was popular despite the Renwick-designed building's relatively small galleries, narrow central staircase, and cramped corridors, which hampered circulation. Plans for night exhibitions, which would have increased the collection's accessibility for the working public, were quickly abandoned because the smoke of the gas jets "so

^{vi} http://www.parrishart.org/print_past.asp?id=119

^{vii} The Renwick-designed gallery had a turbulent and brief history as a gallery. Begun in 1859, it was seized by the federal government at the outbreak of the Civil War for use by the Quartermaster's Corps. The building was not returned to Corcoran, a southern sympathizer who had spent much of the war in Europe, until 1869 and required substantial rehabilitation to function as a museum.

^{viii} Rush C. Hawkins, "The Destruction of Art in America," *The North American Review*, April 1887, 381-387.

^{ix} Robert V. Williams, "The Public Library as the Dependent Variable," *The Journal of Library History* (1974-1987), Vol. 16, No. 2, *Libraries & Culture II* (Spring, 1981), 336.

^x *Washington Post*, "City News in Brief," 2/4/1878, and "Corcoran Gallery of Art," 1/16/1878, 12.

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imperiled art objects.^{xvii} Illumination remained insufficient after the addition of an electric light plant in 1890. Such constraints also limited the gallery's use for official receptions, an important function given its proximity to the White House and (Old) Executive Office Building. Alice Henderson expressed a common view in *Art Treasures of Washington* (1912) when she wrote that the original building "appears cumbrous and ill-adapted to the uses of a museum."^{xviii}

Major nineteenth century galleries sought to instill artistic sensibility both by exhibiting masterpieces and providing formal instruction in art. In 1887, the Corcoran began offering drawing classes under the supervision of E.F. Andrews.^{xix} In 1889, it constructed an annex at the rear of the Renwick gallery to accommodate a school of art,^{xx} whose active rivalry with the previously established Art Students League played out in sniping comments in the columns of the *Washington Post*.^{xxi} However, the Corcoran School's enrollment, which totaled approximately 150 students by 1891, and its four-class curriculum, were pinched by limited space, and there was no adjacent land available to further expand the Renwick building.^{xxii}

The Need for a Modern Gallery Building

The construction of a "new" Corcoran Gallery in the mid-1890s evidenced the evolution of the Corcoran's cultural role as well as the expansion of its functions. During the years following Corcoran's death, the United States felt the first flush of world power, making a full-blown entrance into the age of imperialism and manifest destiny by the close of the 1890s. Political and military ascendancy was echoed by aspirations for cultural dominance. Although the cultural elite remained attuned to European models, the nineties saw a stirring of nationalistic pride in American artists' accomplishments. Prominent New York City landscape painter William Merritt Chase, a judge for the Corcoran's annual Gold Medal competition,^{xxiii} captured some of this spirit when he noted in 1894:

I will not say that the best work at the Columbian Exposition was done by Americans, for that would be ungracious, but I will say that the Americans showed themselves to be the equals of any painters in the world...The merit came from the fact that they were really artists and also partially from the fact that they were Americans. There is unquestionably a distinctive Americanism in our art...^{xxiv}

While Americans advanced their claims as artistic creators and connoisseurs, a chorus of artists, sophisticates, and society figures voiced aspirations for Washington to become the nation's artistic and cultural capital.^{xxv} A *Post* editorial rather naively claimed that "Washington city is the natural art center of America," in part because "in Washington there are no groups of men to set the fashions, fix prices, and cheat the people."^{xxvi} Portraitist Robert Hinckley went so far as to

^{xvii} *Washington Post*, "Corcoran Gallery at Night," January 21, 1890, 8.

^{xviii} Alice Henderson, *Art Treasures of Washington*, (Boston: L.C. Page and Company, 1912) 37.

^{xix} Eliphalet Frazer Andrews (1835-1915), a native of Steubenville, Ohio, studied in Paris, Berlin, and Dusseldorf. A noted portraitist, he established a studio in the Corcoran Office Building on 15th Street NW after reputedly being invited to come to Washington by fellow Kenyon College alumnus Rutherford B. Hayes. He began offering instruction at the original Corcoran Gallery in 1877 and became its full-time drawing teacher in 1887, then served as the School of Art's first director until he retired in 1902. In addition to a portrait of Martha Washington that hangs in the White House, Andrews contributed portraits of Hayes, William Henry Harrison, Andrew Johnson, and several other presidents to the Corcoran collection. (See *Steubenville Herald-Star*, 4/10/1900, 2 and *Washington Post*, "E.F. Andrews Dead," 3/20/1915.

^{xx} *Washington Post*, "Corcoran School of Art," 5/18/1890, 9 and "New Gallery of Art," 2/21/1897, 20.

^{xxi} *Washington Post*, "Art in Washington," 1/28/1894, 5.

^{xxii} *Washington Post*, "A Possible Arts Center," 3/15/91, 9.

^{xxiii} 5/16/94

^{xxiv} *Washington Post*, "The Corcoran Gold Medal," May 16, 1894, 5 and "American Art to Lead," 6/3/94, 16.

^{xxv} See *Washington Post*, "Washington as an Arts Center," 5/22/1890, 6, "Art of a High Class," 6/22/1890, 9, "Art in Washington," 4/14/1889, 4, "Need for an Art School," 2/4/1891, 7, "A Possible Arts Center," 3/15/91, 9, and "A Congress of Artists," May 18, 1891, 5 as examples of Washington's claims to be an art as well as political capital.

^{xxvi} *Washington Post*, "Art in Washington," 4/14/1889, 4.

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predict that "Washington will become the Paris of America, in an artistic sense."^{xxx} An 1891 *Post* profile of Corcoran curator Dr. Francis S. Barbarin^{xxx} implied that the gallery should serve as a sort of Capitol building for this capital of the arts, as:

For years the Corcoran was the only center for artistic life here, but its interest has gradually extended, it has done much to attract the attention of the country to the Capital as the future art center of the nation.^{xxxii}

In the spring of 1891, a proposal to call a National Congress of Art into session sent excitement rippling through artistic circles across the country. Its Washington organizers felt that the Congress, ostensibly intended to lobby for a federal Department of Art and Architecture, would further advance the city's claim to be "the art as well as the social center" of the nation.^{xxxiii} As the *New York Herald* noted, it was assumed that "the Corcoran Art Gallery, as a local Washington institution, occupying in the public mind a somewhat national position" would host the Congress, as well as a gigantic exhibit of loaned works by American artists.^{xxxiv} However, Dr. Barbarin demurred because of the limited display space within the Renwick Gallery, adding that he did not think that there was any suitably spacious, properly-lighted venue in the city.^{xxxv} This lack of exhibition space and a full-fledged art school in a building with "abundant space and light," were cited as obstacles to Washington's bid to become a national and international artistic capital.^{xxxvi} When a somewhat reduced version of the Congress opened in the spring of 1892, it was centered in the Columbian College at Fifteenth and H Streets NW rather than at the Corcoran.^{xxxvii}

While the Corcoran trustees' deliberations were not public, a larger and more modern gallery was plainly required for both the institution and the city to embrace their anticipated cultural destinies. In April 1891, the trustees purchased a large portion of Square 171, and, in January 1892, they resolved to erect a new gallery building on its northeast corner. These plans, along with the selection of Ernest Flagg of New York City as architect, were not announced in the newspapers until a few months before groundbreaking in October 1893.^{xxxix}

Creator of the "New" Corcoran: Ernest Flagg (1857-1947)

A controversial figure who often had difficult relationships with patrons as well as his peers, Ernest Flagg was also an exceptionally gifted architect with visionary ideas about the role of architecture in improving people's lives. The Corcoran Gallery of Art building was one of his first major commissions, and it stands as a seminal expression of the 19th-century *Néo-Grec* style that was a hallmark of Flagg's classical, rationalist architectural training.

^{xxx} *Washington Post*, "Paris of America, 3/18/1894, 12.

^{xxxii} Francis Sinclair Barbarin (1833-1900) was a dentist from Newport, Rhode Island, who came to Washington in 1853 and married the daughter of future Corcoran trustee Anthony Hyde. After the death of his wife, he became a government clerk in 1862. Although he had no formal artistic training, Barbarin joined the gallery in 1874 as assistant to curator William McLeod. Promoted on McLeod's retirement in 1889, Barbarin proved an extremely effective curator, presiding over the founding of the Corcoran School of Art and the transition to the new gallery.

^{xxxiii} *Washington Post*, "Its Influence is Wide," 10/11/1891, 12.

^{xxxiv} *Washington Post*, "A Congress of Artists," 5/18/1891, 5.

^{xxxv} *Washington Post*, "The New York Herald: A Congress of Art," 5/17/1891, 4.

^{xxxvi} *Washington Post*, "Minerva is Worried," 5/20/1891,

^{xxxvii} *Washington Post*, "Need for an Art School," 7.

^{xxxviii} *Washington Post*, "National Arts Conference," 5/15/1892, 12.

^{xxxix} *Washington Post*, "Another Improving Section," 4/26/1891, 10; "New Site for the Gallery," 4/22/91, 8; "The Corcoran Art Gallery," 1/11/1893, 6; "It Will Be a Beauty," 7/10/1893, 5; and "Bright Outlook for Building," 10/14/1893, 6, report land purchases, building plans, and the selection of Flagg as architect.

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Flagg was born to a family of artists. His father, Jared Bradley Flagg (1820-1899), had been a portrait painter from an early age, exhibiting at the National Academy of Design in New York City in 1836, when he was only 16. Jared Flagg studied painting with his older brother, George Flagg, a genre painter, as well as his father's half brother, the well-known landscape painter Washington Allston (1779-1843). An older son, Charles Noel Flagg (1848 - 1916), became a relatively well-known academic portrait and still life painter whose oil "The Country Model's First Pose" was hung in the Corcoran Gallery's "First Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting" in 1907.^{xxx}

Upon his death, the *New York Times* summed up the elder Flagg's accomplishments: "He was chiefly known as a portrait painter, and although his work seems to-day very old-fashioned and can hardly bear the test of modern criticism, he had the faculty of catching a likeness, a fairly good sense of color, and his portraits brought, for the times, high prices."^{xxxi} At the time of Ernest Flagg's birth, Jared Flagg had given up painting to become rector of Grace (Episcopal) Church in Brooklyn, New York. He later abandoned that position, and the family moved several times after that. Ernest Flagg's mother, Louisa Hart Flagg, died when he was only 9 years old, and he and the other children were sent away to boarding school, contributing to the instability of his early years.^{xxxii}

Ernest Flagg seems to have gained fiercely individualistic instincts from his father. He was not immediately attracted to architecture in his early adult years; instead, he embarked on an assortment of entrepreneurial enterprises. After starting out as an office boy on Wall Street when he was a teenager, he moved on in 1875 to selling salted codfish with his brother at the Fulton Fish Market in New York City and after that sold oleomargarine for several years. His turn toward the building arts began in 1880 when he joined his brother and father in participating in a venture led by Philip G. Hubert to develop large, modern apartment buildings in New York City. Flagg designed the interior spaces of two of these cooperative apartment buildings, inventing a novel two-story design that made each unit seem like a small house. Flagg's design was noted for its ingenuity.^{xxxiii}

Flagg's modest success drew the attention of Cornelius Vanderbilt II, who, according to Flagg, asked him to draw up plans to modify his newly constructed residence to create large rooms and expand into adjoining space. While the plans were never executed, Vanderbilt was impressed with Flagg's talents and he offered to pay for Flagg to attend the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris.

Flagg arrived in Paris in 1888, at age 31, and spent a little over a year preparing for entry into the École and another year in studies after he passed the entrance exams. A full course of study leading to a diploma would have taken 6 to 10 years, and Flagg was too old to devote such a lengthy period to study. While at the École, Flagg chose to study in the atelier of Paul Blondel (1841-1897), an exponent of structural rationalism and the Néo-Grec architectural style, which had been exemplified by the French Romantic Rationalists of the 1830s and 1840s.^{xxxiv} While Flagg could be eclectic in borrowing from historical architectural styles, he absorbed Blondel's influence and became a proponent of structural rationalism, an approach vividly exemplified in his Corcoran Gallery of Art building.

Flagg returned to New York City in 1891 and went into architectural practice for himself, a champion of the "French School" in America. With fellow alumni of the École de Beaux-Arts, he co-founded and became treasurer of the Beaux-Arts Society of Architects in 1894. Though competition was fierce, Flagg received two important early commissions that would likely have eluded other architects with such limited experience: St. Luke's Hospital in New York City in 1892 and

^{xxx} Corcoran Gallery of Art, *First Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting: February 7, 1907 through March 9, 1907*, (Washington, DC: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1907) #355.

^{xxxi} "Jared B. Flagg" in *The New York Times*, Sept. 26, 1899.

^{xxxii} John A. Garraty, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography*, supplement four (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), 280.

^{xxxiii} Mardges Bacon, *Ernest Flagg: Beaux-Arts Architect and Urban Reformer* (New York: The Architectural History Foundation, 1986), 12.

^{xxxiv} Bacon, 18.

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the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington in 1893. He received the St. Luke's commission due to the intervention of his patron, Cornelius Vanderbilt. It was for a large, prominent building located on a hilltop on the Upper West Side of the city. Flagg responded with a palatial, richly decorated structure with a domed central tower and pavilions. His plans were praised for their "symmetrical perfectness so loyal to the French Renaissance."^{xxxv}

The new building for the Corcoran Gallery of Art was only the second major commission for Flagg. A formal competition was held to choose the building's architect, but Flagg seems to have been selected even before entries by his competitors were submitted. Family connections appear to have won him the assignment. The Corcoran building came to represent the greatest expression of Flagg's commitment to the French School and specifically the Néo-Grec style favored by his mentor, Paul Blondel. Completed in 1897, the Corcoran is the first example of a public building in the Beaux-Arts style in Washington.^{xxxvi} Moreover, it was unique for Washington buildings in adhering to the Néo-Grec style; later buildings, such as the Pan-American Union building (1908) are in a more popular Beaux-Arts style.^{xxxvii}

Flagg's Corcoran building was widely acclaimed, both by critics and the public. *The Washington Post* called it a "magnificent temple" and "one of America's most beautiful structures, as well as one of those most perfectly adapted to the purposes for which it was erected."^{xxxviii} *The Boston Herald* considered it a "noble and majestic pile" and called it "beautiful within and without."^{xxxix} For a magazine reader survey in 1899 of the ten most beautiful buildings in the United States, the Corcoran just missed being on the list, coming in at 11th place.^{xl} Frank Lloyd Wright was said to have called it "the best-designed building in Washington."^{xli} It was clearly a very popular and widely admired structure.

While no one seems to have questioned Flagg's architectural talent or the excellence of his design for the Corcoran, he was less successful from a business point of view, quarreling with the Board of Trustees over the conduct of a Board-appointed project manager. Ill will over this falling out had a chilling effect on future commissions in Washington, and Flagg failed to win other important commissions, such as the Washington Cathedral project, possibly because of intervention by displeased Corcoran trustees.

Flagg nevertheless designed an assortment of elegant and important Beaux-Arts buildings. In 1897, as the Corcoran was being completed, he began work on a ten-story headquarters building for the Singer Sewing Machine Company, followed by a similar adjacent structure, in New York City. From 1906 to 1908, Flagg then remodeled, combined, and added to these structures to produce the forty-story Singer Tower, the tallest office building in the world at the time at 612 feet and a pioneer of the needle-like skyscrapers that would come to dominate Manhattan in succeeding decades. The widely publicized Singer Tower cemented Flagg's reputation as a pioneering and even visionary architect whose ideas about skyscraper construction would influence changes in the New York City building code. Also in New York City, Flagg designed a number of notable Beaux-Arts townhouses for the wealthy as well as the headquarters building for publishers Charles Scribner's and Sons, a more reserved but still distinctly Beaux-Arts style structure. That building was completed in 1913.

Outside of New York, Flagg's most notable achievement was his set of designs for the new campus of the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, which he designed beginning in 1896 and which were constructed from 1899 to 1907. By the 1890s, the U.S. Navy was at the height of its prestige, and there was a strong desire in Congress to upgrade the Naval Academy's facilities. All of the previous buildings on the campus were razed and replaced with Flagg's carefully composed groupings of Beaux-Arts structures clustered around a majestic, domed chapel. Flagg demonstrated

^{xxxv} "St. Luke's New Hospital," in *Harper's Weekly*, Jan. 7, 1893, as quoted in Bacon, 89.

^{xxxvi} Moore, 65.

^{xxxvii} Ibid.

^{xxxviii} "New Gallery of Art" in *The Washington Post*, Feb. 21, 1897, 20.

^{xxxix} "Corcoran Gallery of Art" in *The Boston Herald*, Feb. 23, 1897, 3.

^{xl} Bacon, 89.

^{xli} Forgey, op. cit.

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great flexibility and inventiveness in adapting his rationalist Beaux-Arts canon to the requirements of individual structures. Many architectural critics praised Flagg's designs, and Flagg considered this his most prestigious commission.^{xlii}

In his later years, Flagg was very involved in building code reform and housing reform in New York City. In a return to his roots, he designed a number of smaller houses and apartment buildings for low and middle-income tenants, such as the Flagg Court Apartments for low-income families in Brooklyn, which he designed in 1933. He became a fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 1926 and died at age 90 in 1947.

Creating the New Gallery

Much discussion of the Flagg-designed gallery and its 1928 addition by Charles Platt has centered on its impressive façade and exterior ornament, whose significance has been recognized by their designation in the DC Inventory of Historic Sites and the National Register of Historic Places. Even more significant than the building's exterior presence, which is worthy of commanding its site at the center of the capital, is its interior program, which includes exhibition, educational, and ceremonial spaces that make an exquisite aesthetic impression. The importance of the interior was recognized in the earliest writings about Flagg's design. The *Washington Post's* coverage of the laying of the cornerstone of this "literal palace of art" in May 1894 devoted as much space to describing its abundant studios and galleries, special room for the photographic reproductions of paintings, colonnade, and atrium as it did to its monumental exterior.^{xliii}

The new gallery's interior was finished in stone and marble, with materials and workmanship at least comparable in quality to those of the exterior. While the foundation and lower walls were erected by contractor Joseph Fanning, the stonework of the upper stories, which included the gallery spaces, was by Norcross Brothers, the Massachusetts firm which executed many of the works of H.H. Richardson, including Boston's Trinity Church, Chicago's Marshall Field Building, and Pittsburgh's Allegheny County Courthouse, as well as buildings by such architectural masters as McKim, Mead, and White, Peabody and Stearns, Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge, Carrere & Hastings, and John Russell Pope.^{xliiv} The Corcoran Gallery's interior as well as exterior are thus a major work by one of the most distinguished American artisanal firms.^{xlv}

Although the colonnade's eighty fluted Indiana limestone columns were carved in Boston, Norcross Brothers created virtually all of the building's stonework on site. In a large wooden shed near the gallery's foundation excavation, a "fifty horsepower dynamo" powered the saws which sliced up blocks of Georgia marble weighing up to sixteen tons, while highly-skilled carvers shaped the raw stone.^{xlivi} In February, 1896, a *Post* reporter's behind-the-scenes glimpse suggested the monumental character of the gallery's construction. Although the reporter found the exterior "practically finished,"

^{xlii} Bacon, 112.

^{xliii} *Washington Post*, "New Palace of Art," 5/11/1894, 5.

^{xliiv} *Norcross Brothers of Worcester, Massachusetts* website at

http://norcross.ca/NORCROSS%20BROTHERS%20FOLDER/NB_0010_Norcross%20Brothers%20Projects.html, accessed August 12, 2012.

^{xlv} Fanning and the Norcross Brothers constructed the new gallery against the backdrop of the Panic of 1893 and a lingering recession, as well as the march of "Coxey's Army" of the unemployed on Washington in 1893 and the Pullman, Bituminous Coal, and Chicago General Strikes of 1894. However, overall, the depressed economy undoubtedly discouraged strikes. Although work rules prohibited the practice, local brick and stoneworker unions eventually tolerated their members working with non-union "scabs" on the project "on account of the hard times." A brief strike occurred in 1896, when a leader of the anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant American Protective Association charged that a Catholic foreman had fired his son for religious reasons, and Norcross Brothers refused to pay a portion of his wages for demonstrated incompetence. See *Washington Post*, "Corcoran Gallery Work: Trouble in the Bricklayers' Union," 11/9/1893, 4, "Will Not Throw Up Their Contracts," 11/10/1893, 2, and "Verdict Ends a Strike," 1/26/1896, 5.

^{xlvi} *Washington Post*, "Art's New Corcoran," 2/4/1896, 10.

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with the bronze "Lions of Canova" from the old gallery entrance lying side-by-side facing New York Avenue as they awaited their new bases, the interior was "still in a rough state, with throngs of busy workmen everywhere." The colonnade's columns remained encased in protective wooden shrouds, while workers focused on the laying of the main staircase, "one of the building's most impressive features," with its fifteen foot wide marble steps and massive balustrade. The fourteen galleries, which were open to the glass roof, "thus affording the best possible light," were in a "not very advanced state." The Hemicycle and more utilitarian office portions of the building had been finished in "plain substantial fashion."^{xiv}

Although the *Post* reporter had predicted that the "exquisitely fashioned pile of marble and stone" would be completed by August 1896, the gallery did not open until February 1897. The Renwick building had closed during the last week of January, and the transfer of art works was accomplished without mishap over the intervening weeks. The migration of school functions was more protracted, with students receiving an extra two weeks off after the new building opened.^{xv} The move's last stage, however, was not completed for several years. Then, following the sale of the original gallery to the federal government as office space, Moses Ezekiel's statues of Rubens, Rembrandt, and eight other artistic masters were "suspended by their necks from an improvised gallows" and lowered from their perches on the Renwick's façades. In a scene that "strongly resembled a lynching," the seven-foot tall statues were laid face-upward in express wagons and hauled to the new gallery.^{xvi} The statues were then installed in a courtyard area, where they remained before being sold to a museum in Norfolk in the early twentieth century.

The new gallery officially opened with a grand private reception held on the evening of February 22, 1897, despite "most inclement weather." Under more than 3,000 electric bulbs, President Grover Cleveland, cabinet officers, senators and congressmen, military officers, and the diplomatic community were greeted by the Corcoran trustees to the strains of the United States Marine Band.ⁱ On February 24, when the gallery opened to the general public without further ceremony, it received 2,400 visitors.ⁱⁱ At about the time of the dedication, the trustees and Dr. Barbarin made a somewhat controversial decision to open the new gallery on Sunday afternoons with free admission "to benefit the workers."ⁱⁱⁱ Illustration 26 presents newspaper sketch artists' illustrations of the opening.

The New Gallery as Art Exhibition Space

The response to the new gallery was nothing short of ecstatic. The *Post* banished any fears of continuing civic or cultural inadequacy by proclaiming it "one of America's most beautiful structures as well as one of those most perfectly suited to the purposes for which it was erected."^{iv} The newspaper's editorial page saw the new building as a testament to America's superior technical competence, might, and engineering know-how:

We risk nothing when we make the assertion that it is almost, if not quite, the finest building of its type in the world. Competent judges, who are familiar with all the great famous galleries of Europe, do not hesitate to say the Corcoran altogether the most suitably constructed one that they have ever entered; that it is better lighted and more scientifically arranged, and that it will remain without a rival in these respects for many years, if not forever.^v

^{xiv} Ibid.

^{xv} *Washington Post*, "Closing of Corcoran Art Gallery," 1/21/1897, 2 and "The Corcoran Art School," 3/15/1897, 7.

^{xvi} *Washington Post*, "Art Immortals Removed," 6/23/1899, 4.

ⁱ Leila Mechlin, "Art Life in Washington," in *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, Volume 24* (Washington, DC: Columbia Historical Society, 1922), 178. Mechlin's paper was originally read before the society on December 21, 1920.

ⁱⁱ *Washington Post*, "Public Opening of Art Gallery," 2/25/97, 12.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Washington Post*, "Art Gallery Crowded," 3/1/1897, 3.

^{iv} *Washington Post*, "Within the Palace of Art," 2/23/1897, 7.

^v *Washington Post*, "Editorial," 2/25/1897, 6.

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For the opening, the *Post* took its readers on a number of guided tours of this "magnificent temple," where "every detail of a perfectly-equipped art gallery is apparent and which has approximately three times the area of the original gallery."⁸⁴ The white marble vestibule, flanked with "colossal statues from antiquity" opened into "the atrium hall with 40 fluted monolithic columns, out of which the splendid marble staircase to the upper galleries deploys itself," forming a grand space which *Art Collector and Critic* magazine later described as "suggestive of the breadth and freedom of the entire construction."⁸⁵ The atrium was both the central axis of the museum and the exhibition area for its largest pieces of sculpture, several of which had not been seen in America previously. Here Vela's "massive but beautiful marble" "Last Days of Napoleon," one of the gallery's most prominent and popular works, held a place of honor.⁸⁶ To the left of the entrance, the atrium was devoted to ancient sculpture, mostly in the form of copies and casts. On its walls the reproduced frieze of the Parthenon ran in a continuous line atop the "Nymphs of the Fountain of Innocence" from the collection of the Louvre, as well as other casts and copies. The individual galleries on this floor were described as "of spacious dimensions and brilliantly lighted" by skylights, supplemented by electric fixtures as well as shrouded gas lights on dark days.⁸⁷ Five were devoted to bronzes and marbles, one to the gallery's collection of Japanese porcelain and bronzes, and another to the world's largest collection of bronzes by noted animal sculptor Antoine-Louis Barye.

At the mid-point of the grand staircase stood a marble statue of W.W. Corcoran⁸⁸, and at the top of the upper flight of stairs was the second level atrium, off which opened galleries devoted to painting. Among the most noted paintings they showcased were Emile Reucref's "Helping Hand," a sentimental and critical favorite of the day, as well as such keystones of the collection as Corot's "The Wood Gatherers," George Inness's "Afternoon in the Woods," and George Frederick Watts' "Love and Life."⁸⁹ As the *Post* reporter noted:

Light, distance, and background must each be given full consideration, as well as attention to the placing of relative canvases or schools of painting, and it is with admirable judgement and foresight that the present collection has been placed; the special requirements of each painting have been carefully studied.⁹⁰

The architecture of the new galleries, the largest of which were nearly twice as long as the main gallery in the Renwick Building, had accommodated these requirements in a fashion that could never have occurred in their original "cramped quarters." The *Post*, in fact, found the new spaces transformational, declaring that the collection as displayed "in the spacious corridors and well-lighted galleries of their new quarters present[s] an entirely different aspect than when crowded into the restricted space and poorly lighted halls of the former gallery."⁹¹

Although notices about the new building were largely enthusiastic, frequently referring to it as an art temple or palace, an embarrassing imbroglio occurred eighteen months of the opening reception. Although the Renwick building had routinely closed for the summer months in July, the directors ordered the doors shut in June 1898 while the firm of

⁸⁴ *Washington Post*, "New Gallery of Art," 2/21/1897, 20.

⁸⁵ *Art Collector and Critic*, nd, reprinted in *Washington Post*, "Corcoran Gallery of Art: How a Critic Regards Washington's Great Museum," 6/25/1899, 14.

⁸⁶ *Washington Post*, "Within the Palace of Art," 2/23/1897, 7. The reporter may have been being discrete.

⁸⁷ "New Gallery of Art," 2/21/1897, 20.

⁸⁸ According to an article from the day of the opening, a marble statue of Caesar from the collection stood in for Corcoran temporarily. This space is now the main entrance to the Clark wing. See "Within the Palace of Art," 2/23/1897, 7.

⁸⁹ The tale of Watts' painting sheds a light on the curious politics of art and "morality" in Victorian Washington. Congress accepted the painting as a gift from Watts in 1894, only to encounter complaints from the Women's Christian Temperance Union about its depiction of a nude embrace. The painting was then removed from the Cleveland White House and loaned to the Corcoran on an open-ended basis. In 1902, it was recalled to the White House by Theodore Roosevelt, then returned to the Corcoran by the Taft family in 1908. In late 1913, Ellen Wilson noticed the painting on a visit to the gallery and accomplished its restoration to the White House. See *Washington Post*, "Famous Painting Returned to White House Walls," 11/10/1913, 5.

⁹⁰ "New Gallery of Art," 2/21/1897, 20.

⁹¹ *Washington Post*, "Art Topics," 1/31/1897, 14.

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James Nightingale replaced the floors. Norcross Brothers had subcontracted with a Chicago flooring firm, which had attempted to cut corners by attaching the galleries' wooden floor blocks to the concrete sub-floors with animal by-product glue rather than asphalt adhesive. The adhesive rapidly decayed and became infested with vermin, allowing the blocks to loosen to the point that they could be "swept up." Nightingale's patented system utilized tongue-and-grooved, dovetailed, interlocked blocks in a herringbone pattern.¹⁰⁰

Within two years of its opening, major spaces within the building were programmed for distinct purposes. Many of the events and exhibitions which took place within these spaces were highly significant to the development of artistic exhibition and education in both the District of Columbia and the United States.

The Atrium and Grand Staircase

Besides the display of art, the Atrium and Grand Staircase areas became a ceremonial space which provided a magnificent setting for formal receptions, whether for openings, visits by dignitaries, or meetings of the Daughters of the American Revolution, business associations, or religious groups. The gallery provided a "fairland" backdrop for the Capital Centennial celebration, which dazzled the city in December 1900. Protected from a crowd of onlookers by a cordon of patrolmen and detectives, guests entered through the New York Avenue doorway beneath an American flag of colored incandescent bulbs which flickered in a sequence that suggested waves, to find the marble columns of the atrium shrouded in vines and its overhead incandescent fixtures garlanded with greenbrier. Women in evening dress watched from the galleries at the top of the broad staircase lined with potted palms, while the Marine Band played at the southern end of the hall. Announced by a trumpet call at 9:30 PM, President William McKinley and his cabinet entered through the Seventeenth Street entrance and ascended the staircase to a reviewing section at the south end of the atrium.¹⁰¹

In September 1904, a gallery reception honored the first visit to the United States by an Archbishop of Canterbury. Archbishop Randall Davidson, flanked for a time by J. Pierpont Morgan and religious dignitaries, received guests while standing at the head of the staircase, just to the left of Vela's Napoleon, while a line composed mainly of women stretched more than a city block from the Seventeenth Street entrance to the corner of Eighteenth Street and New York Avenue.¹⁰² The selection of the gallery for these types of prominent civic and social functions validated its claim to be one of the capital's grandest public spaces.

Another early reception in the Atrium complemented the Corcoran's role in developing the presence of women in the arts. Although men exclusively held the positions of trustees, curator, and head of the arts school well into the twentieth century, from an early date women made up the majority of students, medalists in the school's annual competitions, and gallery visitors. (See Illustration 29) Female collectors such as Phoebe Apperson Hearst lent the museum works from their private galleries, while Mary Foote Henderson, wife of a former Nevada senator and the hostess of a prominent salon at her Sixteenth Street "castle," took an active role in organizing exhibits. In 1898, Mrs. Adelaide Johnson of Washington donated marble busts of women's rights leaders Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and Susan B. Anthony, which were exhibited in the galleries.¹⁰³ On the evening of February 15, 1900, the gallery was the site of the official eightieth birthday reception for Susan B. Anthony, which coincided with the national women's suffrage conference that saw Ms. Anthony's retirement from public life. To the strains of "a colored orchestra" directed by a grandson of her Rochester neighbor Frederick Douglass, Ms. Anthony, seated in a "queen's chair" in the corridor to the right of the main entrance, headed a receiving line that included the wives of senators from two of the "emancipated" western states that permitted women to vote, Carrie Chapman Catt, her successor as

¹⁰⁰ *Washington Post*, "Held Up By Trustees," 6/26/1898, 21.

¹⁰¹ *Washington Post*, "Finale a Fairy Scene," 12/13/1900, 1.

¹⁰² *Washington Post*, "Reception for Archbishop," 9/22/1904, 7, and "Honors Paid Pirmate," 9/25/1904, 2.

¹⁰³ *Washington Post*, "Corcoran Gallery Reopened," 10/4/1898, 7.

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president of the National Woman Suffrage Association, and S.H. Kauffman, newspaper publisher and president of the Corcoran trustees. Mary Henderson donated a large oil portrait to the gallery that showed Ms. Anthony in her trademark red shawl.¹⁹⁴¹ Holding this reception in a prominent public space like the gallery signified not only the growing role of women in the arts, but also the increasing acceptance of the cause of women's rights, some two decades before women would have the right to vote nationwide.

In addition to its ceremonial functions, the Atrium and Grand Staircase have remained a major art exhibition space for over one hundred years. The walls of the grand staircase have long been a prime area for the display of large works, beginning when six large tapestries purchased from the Barberini palace in Italy by noted textile collector Charles M. Ffoulke were hung there just a few months after the gallery opening.¹⁹⁴²

By the mid-twentieth century, when the art world turned increasingly toward large, monumental works, the Atrium's unique, soaring spaces provided the backdrop for exceptional artworks that could have been effectively displayed in few other Washington galleries. For example, in 1967 the Corcoran commissioned three noted minimalist sculptors—Tony Smith (1912-1980), Ronald Bladen (1918-1988) and Barnett Newman (1905-1970)—to create monumental sculptures for its "Scale As Content" exhibition, a groundbreaking exhibition of radically new art which confirmed the Corcoran's pre-eminence in the art world. Smith's astonishing "Smoke" a jet black, asymmetric network of 43 piers, 45 feet long, 33 feet wide, and 22 feet tall, was deliberately calculated to "fight" against the staid Doric columns of the restful south atrium. The work was featured on the cover of *Time* magazine and widely acclaimed. Barbara Gold of the *Baltimore Sun* wrote that "Smoke, with power immeasurably stronger than that of the puffing wolf of the stories, pushes, heaves, thrusts, and subdues the solid stone structure of the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington."¹⁹⁴³ Bladen's "The X," an enormous black wooden X (also 22 feet tall) that strikingly overpowered the north atrium was equally admired. Barnett Newman's "Broken Obelisk" was displayed outside the museum. "There has never been a sculpture exhibition quite like this one," *Post* art critic Paul Richard observed.¹⁹⁴⁴

Sam Gilliam, one of the greatest of the Color Field painters and a key member of the Washington Color School centered on the Corcoran, is particularly noted for his "draped" paintings, which he began making in the late 1960s after being inspired by the sight of laundry drying on clothes lines. His now-famous draped painting received wide attention and acclaim at a seminal show of new works by Washington Artists at the Corcoran in 1969. Gilliam's draped paintings were arranged across several galleries, but one in particular was hung from the ceiling of the Atrium—a more-than-150-foot drape of canvas painted garishly in gold and silver. The *Washington Post's* art critic Paul Richard believed that "scores of super canvases" could be cut from this single piece, although its crowning achievement was that "Hanging there in space it begins to function as a sculpture, but it remains a painting."¹⁹⁴⁵ In 2005, the *Post's* Blake Gopnik looked back on the 1969 show as one of the "epochal moments in the history of abstract art."¹⁹⁴⁶

The dynamic spaces of the Atrium have also been used for other unique artworks that have contributed to its importance as a landmark of Washington's fine arts heritage. In 1973, artist and sculptor Robert Stackhouse created a unique 40-foot plywood pyramid on the Atrium's second floor "bridge." The deliberately flimsy materials of the pyramid gave it a delicate, transitory quality in contrast to the immovable limestone columns of the gallery. According to Paul Richard's review in the *Post*, Stackhouse spent days sitting in the Corcoran and absorbing its ambience before creating his "powerful" temporary exhibit.¹⁹⁴⁷

¹⁹⁴¹ *Washington Post*, "Women Paid Homage," 2/16/1900, 2.

¹⁹⁴² *Washington Post*, "Rare Tapestries on Show," 12/14/1897, 7.

¹⁹⁴³ Barbara Gold, "'Smoke' at Corcoran Art Gallery" in *The Baltimore Sun*, Nov. 12, 1967, D8.

¹⁹⁴⁴ Richard, "Bladen's X Is an X Is an X Is an X" in *The Washington Post*, Oct. 8, 1967, K7.

¹⁹⁴⁵ Richard, "Corcoran's Stunning Show" in *The Washington Post*, Oct. 4, 1969, F1.

¹⁹⁴⁶ Blake Gopnik, "Wrapped Attention" in *The Washington Post*, Oct. 14, 2005.

¹⁹⁴⁷ Richard, "Homage Paid to Nameless Gods" in *The Washington Post*, Nov. 13, 1973.

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The Hemicycle and Galleries

The Hemicycle has evolved through a number of different configurations, although its curving walls have long been devoted to processional exhibition space. It was originally intended to be a two-story tall auditorium, whose first presentation was a stereopticon lecture by Mary Chenoweth on "Raphael and his Madonnas" in May 1897.^{ixxi} The Hemicycle was quickly adapted as a space for special exhibitions, especially those sponsored by local groups, which frequently overflowed onto the walls of the Atrium or "loan rooms." It became the center of the annual Society of Washington Artists, Washington Water Color Club, Capital Camera Club, Washington Architectural Club, and Gold Medal competition exhibitions. These were prestigious events with hundreds of entries, judged by blue-ribbon panels of artists, that were conducted for decades.

In 1900, the Hemicycle became the site of a series of annual prize exhibitions, similar to Parisian salons, that highlighted the work of American artists. The first of these exhibitions, which featured works by Washington artists selected by Mary Foote Henderson, was intended to close the artistic gap between Washington and such major cities as New York and Boston, as "the promoters of this new institution are determined that the National Capital shall lead all American cities," sparing "neither time nor money."^{ixxii} In preparation, the Hemicycle was converted to a gallery, as tiers of seats were removed, oak flooring laid to cover the stage, and "electrical picture reflectors" installed by I.P. Frink of New York City.^{ixxiii}

In 1901, the Hemicycle and surrounding galleries played an important role in an extremely influential early urban planning project when they were the venue for the first public viewing of the models and drawings of the McMillan Commission Plan for Washington. As the staging of this exhibition shows, the gallery spaces were actors, rather than a passive backdrop, in the presentation of the plan by Commission members Charles McKim, Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr. and Edwin Abbey.

Upon seeing the hemicycle, Mr. McKim was dissatisfied with both the color of the walls and height of the ceiling. These were changed by the use of unbleached cotton, hurriedly procured. After most of the drawings were hung in accordance with the plan, he was dissatisfied and the pictures were rearranged and re-hung several times, Mr. McKim sparing neither his assistants nor himself. Not until in the early hours was the arrangement finished to his satisfaction. The next day the height of the two models was changed and the entire lighting system rearranged. The opening hour approached and the room was still littered with debris. Several prominent architects invited for a preview was commandeered as janitors, led by McKim, and finished their cleaning task just as the President and Cabinet entered [for the presentation of the plan before it was exhibited to the public].^{ixxiv}

The exhibit consisted of two clay landscape models, each about ten by fifteen feet in area, placed in the center of the Hemicycle before an elevated viewing platform. One model showed the mall and surrounding neighborhoods as they actually existed and the other as they were envisioned in the Commission's plans. On the Hemicycle's curved walls were drawings showing perspective views of the mall stretching in all directions. Maps and plans covered the walls of the gallery to the right of the main entrance. Pictures showing the parks in a variety of international cities as well as ideal designs for Washington occupied a circular stand in the center of its floor. A large rendering on its south wall showed the mall as it was envisioned to be, as well as views of this ideal mall design from the east and west. On its west wall were renderings of the redesigned Capitol grounds, while the north wall illustrated the Washington Monument grounds.

^{ixxi} *Washington Post*, "Lecture at Corcoran Art Gallery, 5/5/1897, 4.

^{ixxii} *Washington Post*, "Salon for American Art," 3/11/1900, 13.

^{ixxiii} Report of the Trustees, Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1901 (Washington, DC: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1902), 2.

^{ixxiv} Unpublished reminiscences of William Partridge, online at http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/ncr/designing-capital/sec7.html, accessed September 12, 2012.

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with sunken gardens and a canal. The east wall showed fanciful proposed designs for a Lincoln Memorial and its grounds. In the small room to the north of the main gallery was a three dimensional model of the proposed monument grounds.^{xxxx} Illustrations 30-31 depict the preparation and presentation of the plan models.)

The McMillan Plan exhibition generated substantial public interest and evoked great acclaim during its several months at the Corcoran. It remains the most famous urban design exhibition in the history of the city, and its influence remains profound one hundred and ten years later.

In January 1904, the Hemicycle was the locus of a trend-setting exhibition by the Photo-Secessionists of New York, hosted by the Capital Camera Club, whose directors included Photo-Secessionist Norman W. Carkhuff. In a manifesto of rebellion against the prevailing pictorialist school, whose photographs sought to imitate the characteristics of painting, the exhibition catalog proclaimed:

The aim of the Photo-Secession is, loosely, to hold together those Americans devoted to pictorial photography in their endeavor to compel its recognition, not as a handmaiden of art, but as a distinctive medium of individual expression.^{xxxx}

Photo-Secession founders Eduard Steichen and Alfred Steiglitz personally superintended the hanging of the exhibit's 159 photographs and attended the opening reception. The highpoint of the exhibit, to the *Post*'s reviewer, was the Steichen ensemble hung in the Hemicycle, which centered upon his portrait of Rodin in the pose of "The Thinker" set against the backdrop of his statue of Victor Hugo, and included several nudes and landscapes, as well as a portraits of Eleanor Duse and other artists. Observers noted the prominence of female photographers, whose work represented almost half the exhibit catalog. Gertrude Kasebier's "The Manger" was singled out for special praise, as were works by Rose Clark and Wade, "famous women photographers of Buffalo," and Mary Deven.^{xxx} This exhibit was the first major art gallery show dedicated to the Photo-Secessionists, coming less than two years after the Stieglitz-organized exhibition of "American Pictorial Photography" at New York's National Arts Club and less than one year after the founding of their influential magazine *Camera Work*. It was Washington's first organized exhibition devoted to what became the dominant school of photography. The event was so successful that the following year, the Hemicycle was the site of the "First American Photographic Salon," an exhibit created by the American Federation of Photographic Societies that came to the gallery directly from New York City on its way to a national tour. Selected by a jury chaired by painter and stained glassmaker John Lafarge that included William Merritt Chase, and fellow painters Child Hassam and Robert Henri, its 345 photographs included fifty-five by Photo-Secessionists, who by this time had won world acclaim.^{xxxx}

In 1915, Waddy Wood and Associates gave the Hemicycle a second floor to create more gallery space. In an exchange of letters between Flagg and Corcoran president Charles C. Glover in 1920, Flagg railed against the modifications to the hemicycle, which he claimed adhered to "improper and untruthful methods of design" resulting in a design "where the columns are not real columns and have no meaning; where the stone is not real stone, but a plaster counterfeit; and where all the most prominent features seem as if intended to deceive the beholder and lead him to think them something they are not."^{xxxx} Despite Flagg's protests, the redesigned hemicycle proved very successful in both enhancing the acoustics of the auditorium and adding the large new Hemicycle Gallery on the second floor, which art critic Paul Richards called "perhaps [the Corcoran's] grandest hall"^{xxxxx} and Benjamin Forgey has termed "a great room

^{xxxx} Washington Post, "The New Washington," 1/15/1902, 5, "Plan of New Capital," 1/15/1902, 11, and "Submitted to Senate," 1/16/1902, 11.

^{xxxx} *Exhibition of Photographs: A Collection of American Pictorial Photographs As Arranged by the Photo-Secession and Exhibited Under the Auspices of the Capital Camera Club at the Corcoran Art Galleries of Washington, January 1904*, unpagged.

^{xxx} Washington Post, "Camera Club Exhibit," 1/20/1904, 5.

^{xxxx} James Henry Moser, "The First American Photo Salon," *Washington Post*, 1/15/1905, F2.

^{xxxx} Ernest Flagg to Charles C. Glover, Esq., correspondence of May 25, 1920, in the curatorial files of the Corcoran Gallery of Art.

^{xxxxx} Paul Richard, "The Corcoran's Home Dome" in *The Washington Post*, Oct. 23, 1991, B3.

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handsomely situated at the northern end of a sequence of great rooms—the often imitated but seldom equaled parade of skylit exhibition halls on the Corcoran's second-floor front.^{xxxxv} This was despite a detour that began in 1943, when the second-floor gallery was closed to public viewing and it was used for the next half century as studio space for art students. In 1991, the gallery was restored and reopened as exhibition space, focusing once again on art by local artists and managed by the Corcoran art school.

At the building's opening in 1897, its alphabetically-designated upper story galleries were devoted to the permanent collection of paintings. During its first winter, the gallery attracted its first major bequest, a collection of eleven European works that had ornamented George B. Lemon's Shoreham Hotel apartment. Rosa Bonheur was the most famous artist represented in Lemon's collection, but he also owned paintings by Barbizon School landscape painters Felix Ziem and Jean Charles Cazin, cattle portraitist Emile von Marcke, and military artist Jean-Baptiste Édouard Detaille. Although the Corcoran already owned works by many of these artists, Lemon's collection was hung as a separate ensemble in the southwest gallery on the upper floor.^{xxxxvi}

After the opening, loaned paintings, many from the collection of Phoebe Apperson Hearst, were assigned more prominent places in a separate salon beside the Grand Staircase, whose north wall was completely taken up by "The Last Hours of Mozart" by Monkaszy, a celebrated work from the collection of Senator R.A. Alger purchased for the astounding sum of \$50,000 in 1887.^{xxxxvii} By 1901, this gallery and the salon above it were referred to as the "loan rooms." In an era when noteworthy art was more likely to be in private collections than publicly-accessible museums,^{xxxxviii} these rooms often provided the only opportunities for the public to see authentic works by old masters and acclaimed contemporary artists. They sometimes presented the first public displays of an artist's work in Washington. Frequently the displays in the Loan Rooms made news, as when "Last Hours of Mozart" moved on to New York's Metropolitan Museum and was replaced by Gainsborough's "The Cottage Door" in late 1901.^{xxxxix} In 1904, thirty-two paintings from the collection of Senator John F. Dryden, including a Monet landscape, were hung on the north wall of the upper loan room.^{xxxxx} This marked the first public exhibition of a Monet in Washington recorded in the pages of the *Washington Post*. As part of a 1905 exhibit of the collections of Senators Dryden, Clark, and Alger, seventy-eight loaned pictures occupied the two main western galleries and upper atrium. They included Rembrandt's portrait of a rabbi, as well as William Morris Hunt's noted "The Bathers."^{xc}

Shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, the role of the Corcoran Gallery began to evolve in a somewhat different direction. In 1903, Washington socialite Harriet Johnson left her art collection to the Corcoran subject to a set of idiosyncratic conditions that included its reversion to the federal government should a national art museum ever be established. The Corcoran trustees eventually turned down the offer. Disagreements among her heirs led to a lawsuit in which a court ruled that a national gallery had been established by Congress even though it lacked a physical location. The Johnson collection passed to the Smithsonian, which dedicated space in its Natural History Museum to art exhibition in 1910. In 1904, Charles Freer of Detroit had agreed to leave his large collection to the nation and endow a museum building if the government would agree to maintain it.^{xc} The Freer Gallery did not open until 1923, and John Russell Pope's National Gallery was not constructed until 1937. In the mean time, some federally-owned art continued on loan to the Corcoran; however, the Corcoran became less and less associated with its perceived role as a surrogate

^{xxxxv} Benjamin Forgey, "Corcoran, Going Full Hemicycle" in *The Washington Post*, Jan. 4, 1992, C1.

^{xxxxvi} *Washington Post*, "Art Notes," 9/19/1897, 17 and "Changes at the Art Gallery," 9/19/1897, 2.

^{xxxxvii} *Washington Post*, "Art Notes," 9/19/1897.

^{xxxxviii} For example, the city's privately-held paintings in 1894 included a Rembrandt with an anonymous owner, two Botticellis belonging to a Colonel Hays, a Murrillo, a Van Dyke, and several Reynolds portraits owned by Mrs. Hearst, and Henry Adams' collection of Turners. *Washington Post*, "Art in Washington," 1/28/1894, 5.

^{xxxxix} James Henry Moser, "Art Topics," *Washington Post*, 11/10/1901, 28.

^{xxxxx} James Henry Moser, "Dryden Collection at Corcoran," *Washington Post*, 5/22/1904, e4.

^{xc} *Washington Post*, "Rembrandt at Corcoran," 6/11/1905, TP10.

^{xc} Mechlin, 182-186 provides a detailed account of these events.

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National Gallery. Perhaps Washington watercolorist and journalist James Henry Moser was prophetic when, in 1906, he wrote that, although:

the Corcoran may, indeed, in time be overshadowed by a national institution of wider scope, capable of unlimited expansion under government control...the fact remains that the Corcoran, for so long occupying the field alone, can never cease to exercise an influence peculiarly its own. The influence must grow in importance and the gallery occupy a position of distinction independent of any mere matter of the size of its building or its catalogue.⁸²²

Indeed the Corcoran continued to expand its collection and staged numerous influential exhibitions over the next hundred and six years.

On February 7, 1907, the Corcoran opened the first of what came to be known as its Biennial Exhibitions of Contemporary American Painting. Restricted to oil paintings by living Americans, the show offered gold and silver medals, with a \$1,000 first honors award endowed by Senator Clark.⁸²³ The Biennials grew out of earlier American art-focused exhibitions like Mary Henderson's "First American Salon" of 1900. Their early iterations, and particularly the 1907 exhibition, came to be important battlegrounds in a conflict which completely revolutionized American art in a half-dozen years.

For the 1907 exhibition, a blue-ribbon jury of artists from New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Washington selected 397 entries.⁸²⁴ At the time, the American art world was rent by cross-cutting conflicts. The Corcoran exhibit was itself a salvo in the continuing struggle to win recognition and patronage for American artists and included works by the "American Ten," whose annual New York show was dedicated to this aim. Most American galleries, salons, and museum collections, as well as the National Academy of Design, had been dominated by conservative artistic values, featuring painters who favored the aping of approved European styles, such as the Barbizon or Munich schools, or idealized, brightly-colored versions of French Impressionist landscapes. They created unemotional academic portraits and still lifes, and their infrequent nudes were of stylized, classical form. One study of this period offers William Merritt Chase's "An English Cod" (1904), a dim still life of dead fish beside a plate that was later in the Corcoran collection, as representative of the academic work of the time.⁸²⁵ Some conservative artists, including Chase, brought remarkable technique to their painting, but much academic art was mannered, derivative, and vapid.

The artistic conservatives were opposed on several fronts. The uncompromising realist Thomas Eakins, who had his students dissect corpses to study anatomy and championed the drawing of nudes from life rather than casts, persevered, despite being forced out of his professorship at the Pennsylvania Academy of Art and having what are today undisputed masterpieces rejected at academic exhibitions. A new and vital force was a group of transplanted Philadelphia artists who coalesced in New York City around a charismatic teacher named Robert Henri. Henri, who preached immediacy and the authentic depiction of the artist's experience, famously implored his students to "stop studying water pitchers and bananas and paint everyday life."⁸²⁶ It was this perspective that came to define the group of painters later known as the "New York Eight." Although "the Eight" (who later became "the Ten") varied widely in technique, their work typically featured urban scenes involving ordinary people. Because some of the artists favored

⁸²² James Henry Moser, "Art and Artists," *Washington Post*, 1/21/1906, f12.

⁸²³ *First Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting February-March 1907*, (Washington, DC: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1907), 6. Republished in *Biennial Exhibition of American Painting, Volume 1-3*, Google e-book. Unless otherwise noted, detailed information about each Biennial is drawn from the catalogue for that exhibition.

⁸²⁴ *Ibid*, 11.

⁸²⁵ Bennard R. Periman, *Painters of the Ashcan School: The Immortal Eight*, (New York: Dover Press, 1988 reprint of 1979 original edition), 91.

⁸²⁶ *Ibid*, 91.

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working-class streetscapes, the entire group was somewhat misleadingly labeled "the Ashcan School" by their detractors.

In January 1907, just a few weeks before the Corcoran exhibit opened, the jury of the National Academy of Design met in New York City to judge the entries for its prestigious spring show. Dominated by conservatives, the jury reacted derisively to the many submissions by the members of the Eight, and, in the end, only a single painting by Henri represented the group in the exhibition. The rejection of the modernist artists was reported in the press and generated much controversy in art circles. The Academy retaliated by similar rejections at its summer, fall, and winter shows. The Henri group responded by organizing a famous show at the MacBeth Gallery in New York City in February, 1908, which gave them the title of the "New York Eight," resulted in the total defeat of the academicians, and gave birth to a new, realistic school of American painting. As art historian Bennard Perlman wrote, "No single exhibition of American art has ever produced such widespread consequences."^{xcvii}

A visitor to the February 1907 Corcoran exhibit could view works by artists prominent at the time as well as today. In Gallery B, Winslow Homer's "Beach at Long Branch," "Moonlight-Woods Hole Light," and "A Light on the Sea" hung in proximity to an ensemble of six portraits by John Singer Sargent. Gallery F had Mary Cassatt's "Mother and Child" as well as four paintings by the rising American Ten Impressionist Childe Hassam. The Atrium included Frederick Remington's "An Assault on His Dignity."

The Academy and traditionalist painting comprised perhaps the bulk of the entries in the show. William Meritt Chase alone had three entries. However, unlike New York's National Academy of Design show that opened in March, artistic revolutionaries were well-represented at the Corcoran. The indefatigable Thomas Eakins had a pair of portraits in the Atrium, "Cowboys on the Range" hung in Gallery E, and another portrait in Gallery C. Six of the New York Eight had paintings in the show. Robert Henri's "Spanish Girl" and several of his portraits were neighbors of the Eakins in Gallery C and the Atrium. John Sloan, whose work most clearly typified the Ashcan School, had a "A Girl in White" in the Atrium as well. Maurice Prendergast's "The Willows" and Ernest Lawson's "Early Morning" and "Aqueduct at Little Falls" hung in Gallery G. Arthur B. Davies' "In the High Sierras" was exhibited in Gallery B with the Homers. Everett Shinn's "Hippodrome, London 1902," one of the canvasses in the Macbeth Gallery show, was displayed in Gallery D. Jerome Myers and Walter Shirlaw, close associates of Henri and Sloan who did not participate in the "New York Eight" exhibit, had paintings in Gallery C.

The 1907 exhibit was not a triumph for the Henri group on the scale of the MacBeth Gallery show a year later. The winners of cash prizes and gold and silver Corcoran medals were traditionalist paintings by Willard L. Metcalf and Frank W. Benson. The modernist force's closest brush with victory was the third place medal won by "New Hope Impressionist" Edwin W. Redfield, a friend and roommate of Henri as a student in Paris. However, being display in the galleries of the Corcoran while they were excluded from other prominent venues boosted the status of "the Eight" and advanced the modernist rebellion. It also confronted Washington's artists and art-going public with the latest trends in modernist painting.^{xcviii}

In 1907, more than 62,000 persons attended the Contemporary American Painting Exhibition, which was next held in December 1908 with the added proviso that entries previously exhibited in Washington were ineligible for the four prizes.^{xcix} Gallery A held a stellar array of canvasses, including Winslow Homer's "Early Evening" and "Flight of the Wild Geese," John Singer Sargent's noted "Portrait of James Whitcomb Riley," Albert Pinkham Ryder's "Mending the Harness," Robert Henri's "Young Woman in Black," and Thomas Eakins' "Ruth." "Father and Child" by George Luks, a

^{xcvii} Ibid, 182.

^{xcviii} First Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting. Catalogue of paintings not paginated.

^{xcix} Second Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting December 1908-January 1909, (Washington, DC: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1909), 7-8. Republished in Biennial Exhibition of American Painting, Volume 1-3, Google e-book.

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member of "the Eight" missing from the 1907 exhibition, hung in Gallery B, along with canvasses by Sargent and Hassam, as well as Mary Cassatt's "Caresse Enfantine." Gallery C held Homer's "Clouds Shadow," Eakins' "The Vicar General," George Inness' "After the Shower," as well as three Sargent portraits, three canvasses by painter-stained glassmaker John LaFarge, and Arthur B. Davies' "Canyon Undertones." Everett Shinn's "Leader of the Orchestra," Eakins' "Portrait of Whitman," and Ryder's "With Sloping Mast" were displayed in Gallery E. Gallery F included Maurice Prendergast's "Study Decorative," and Gallery G Cassatt's "La Femme au Chien" as well as Ernest Lawson's "Morningside Heights" and Hassam's "Aphrodite." The Atrium held Davies' "Lake and Island, Sierra Nevada," Louis Comfort Tiffany's "A Market at Nuremberg," Frederick Remington's "The Lost Warrior" and "Fired On," John Sloan's "Night Madison Square," and young Rockwell Kent's "Toiler on the Sea."⁵

Once again, the Gold Medal, now accompanied by a \$2,000 prize, eluded "the Eight."⁶ However, the mingling of the modernists' work with that of the nation's most celebrated artists in a major art museum was evidence of the revolution they had wrought in American art. Virtually all the major paintings enumerated above were exhibited in Washington for the first time when they were hung in the Corcoran's galleries.⁷

The early Biennials also provided a transition to the next revolutionary current in American art. The movement toward abstraction that had been evolving in Europe over a decade burst into America's consciousness with New York's Armory Show in 1913. This show, which included a massive number of both abstract and non-abstract pieces by European as well as American artists, was directed by Arthur B. Davies, a member of "the Eight" whose works were included in the early Biennials. A partial list of the artists who were represented in both the early Biennials and the Armory Show include Gifford Beal, George Bellows, Robert Henri, Maurice Prendergast, Childe Hassam, Ernest Lawson, George Luks, John Sloan, and Albert Pinkham Ryder. This relationship evidences the importance of the gallery spaces of the Corcoran in connecting Washington with the most modern currents in international cultural life.⁸

By 1920, the Gallery had held five more Biennials, which included numerous Sargents, Henris, Eakins, and Hassams, usually at least one Cassatt. Arthur Wesley Dow's "The Mowing Lot"; Eduard Steichen's "In Our Garden"; George Bellows' "Winter Afternoon," "Portrait of Dr. Thompson," "In A Row Boat," "Lillian," "On the Porch," and "Portrait of Geraldine Lee"; John Sloan's "Saturday Night," "Spring Planting," and "The Town Steps"; and Rockwell Kent's "Burial of a Young Man" were notable paintings by important artists which received their first Washington exposure in these gallery rooms. The Biennial has continued until the present day, with paintings as diverse as Edward Hopper's "Cape Cod Sunday" (1937) and Robert Rauschenberg's "Axle" (1965) winning the Gold Medal.

Although most press articles in 1897 focused on the new building's grand galleries and exhibition rooms, its educational spaces did not escape journalists' notice. Even during construction, it was noted that "so large are the rooms of the new building that the little school now in use could be almost placed entire in one of the new classrooms."⁹ A month before the opening reception, a critic observed that:

The portion of the structure which is to be devoted to the art school is entirely finished, and the different ateliers with their inlaid floors, massive white pillars, and gray draped walls are in every particular ideal studios, one of their most striking features being an elaborate system for electric illumination, rendering work in the night classes quite as desirable as those in classes held during the day.¹⁰

⁵ Ibid, catalog section not paginated.

⁶ First prize went to Redfield, who was oddly on the selection jury.

⁷ The Homers, Sargents, and Henri's "Young Woman in Black," were the most notable paintings not eligible for prizes. See *Second Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting* for other entries.

⁸ Participant list for Armory Show from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armory_Show. Biennial participants from catalogues.

⁹ *Washington Post*, "Midsummer Art Notes," 7/15/1894, 14.

¹⁰ *Washington Post*, "Art Topics," 1/31/1897, 19.

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In 1898, with director E.F. Andrews as its guide, the *Washington Post* took a behind-the-scenes look at these modern studios, which had allowed the school to virtually double its enrollment. In the basement, classes practiced sketching plaster casts of statue fragments. The second floor studio, "a big spacious room full of light and warmth," accommodated the "life class," which was devoted to the drawing of nudes in the morning and portraits in the afternoon. In the "roof studio," "light flashes slantwise, walls bare brick and mortar; ceiling attic fashion, rough timbers laid across; corners running deep into black recesses, cut by tiny windows which give dungeon effects." Here "an old Irishman, hobble de hoy, beaming face" was being sketched in a corner with "Rembrandt-like shadows." Elsewhere, watercolor classes sketched a pumpkin with cabbages and peppers or rotting apples. After the Hemicycle was converted from an auditorium to exhibition space in 1900, the classroom beneath it was used for lecture programs as well as sculpting classes.^{cv} The entries in the first Corcoran Gold Medal competition, all by female students, were hung in the lecture hall, lower classrooms, and the second story "life drawing" room.^{cvi}

Charles A. Platt and the William A. Clark Wing

In 1925, in response to a major bequest from the estate of Senator William A. Clark, the trustees of the Gallery commissioned architect Charles A. Platt to design an extension to the rear of the original building that added a significant number of galleries as well as office and storage space.

Charles Adams Platt (1861-1933) was uniquely positioned to design the 1925-28 extension of the Corcoran Gallery of Art to accommodate the William A. Clark collection. He was one of the few architects of his generation to be trained principally as an artist, and his architectural work consistently showed special attention to space and proportion. For the Corcoran, he designed an extension with unique spaces that powerfully relate to and interact with Ernest Flagg's original design, creating a richer and grander composition.

Platt was born in 1861 to John Platt, a corporate lawyer in New York City who had extensive connections to the world of fine arts and letters.^{cvi} Platt had an early interest in art and enrolled in the National Academy of Design in 1878. He became friends with Philadelphia painter and printmaker Stephen Parrish, father of Maxfield Parrish, who encouraged him to take up etching. Platt focused heavily on landscape scenes both in his etchings and his paintings. In the 1880s he moved to Paris to further his art education, studying under Jules Joseph Lefebvre. After marrying in Europe in 1886 and tragically losing his wife the following year when she died in childbirth, Platt returned to the U.S. and joined an artists' colony in Cornish, New Hampshire. He increasingly focused not just on landscape painting but on landscape design as well as the design and placement of country houses in his landscapes.

Though Platt had no formal training as an architect, he received a number of important commissions for country estate houses, which he executed in a variety of architectural styles, including the popular Colonial Revival and Georgian styles as well as Italian Renaissance Revival. His houses were uniformly restrained and dignified and were always carefully placed in their landscape settings.^{cix}

^{cv} *Washington Post*, "Sketches of Art Life," 11/27/1898, 26. The basement level also presented a human interest story that escaped the reporters covering the opening. Benjamin V. Darrell (1838-1922), the longtime janitor of the Renwick-designed gallery, was known for his genealogy. Appointed "Doorkeeper for Life" by W.W. Corcoran, Darrell lived in a "handsome suite of apartments" constructed for him in the new gallery, which he shared with his sister Marie (1845-1908), a Corcoran Gallery employee since its beginnings in 1874. He was listed as a watchman at the gallery as late as the 1920 Census. See *Washington Post*, "Midsummer Art Notes," 7/15/1894, 14 and "Funeral of Miss Darrell," 5/31/1908, e1.

^{cvi} 5/28/97

^{cvi} Much of the detail about Charles Platt's early life is from Keith N. Morgan, "Charles A. Platt and the Promise of American Art" in *Shaping An American Landscape: The Art and Architecture of Charles A. Platt*, (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1995).

^{cix} Morgan, 8-12.

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Through the patronage of William Astor, Platt designed a number of large apartment houses in New York City, and in the 1910s he began to receive institutional commissions, including museums. Most notably in 1913 he produced the Italian Renaissance Revival design for the Freer Gallery of Art on the National Mall, completed in 1923. Freer had visited the artists in Cornish, New Hampshire, and had come to admire Platt's work as many wealthy patrons did. Platt's widely admired design for the Freer was typically restrained, with a large, open atrium in the center that contributes to the museum's sense of restfulness. The result is the "quietest, most contemplative stop on the Mall."^{ca} At the behest of the Smithsonian, Platt also created a design for the National Gallery of Art in 1924, although it was never built.

When William A. Clark bequeathed his art collection to the Corcoran in 1925, requiring that it be displayed in its entirety, Charles Platt was the logical choice to design the museum's new addition. Platt's Freer Gallery and commission for the National Gallery had established him as a premier museum designer. In addition, his own artistic talents and close association with other prominent artists added to his credentials.

Platt created a design that was at once respectful of Flagg's original gallery spaces yet provided appropriate and distinctive spaces for the Clark collection. Writing in *The New York Times* at the time of the new addition's opening, Leia Mechlin, secretary of the American Federation of Arts, observed, "Rarely do works of art find more felicitous setting than those in the W.A. Clark collection placed on public view today in the lately completed addition to the Corcoran Gallery of Art." *The Post* called the new addition "the last word in museum structure."^{ca}

Platt also designed many buildings for schools and colleges. Paralleling Flagg's work at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Platt designed a number of structures for the modernized campus of the Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts. He also consulted on buildings for Dartmouth College, Johns Hopkins University, and the University of Rochester, New York.^{ca} The Corcoran addition would be one of Platt's last major works. He retired from active practice in 1928 to retreat to his Cornish, New Hampshire, summer home, where he died in 1933.

The Clark Wing as Art Space

The Clark Wing's Rotunda is a unique space that can be both vexing and challenging for art installations. Through the years it has been the setting for distinctive art installations designed specifically for the space by artists who have sometimes had deep ties to the Washington cultural landscape. For the Corcoran's 32nd Biennial Exhibition in 1971, California artist Robert Irwin installed "a vast, nearly invisible, work of transparent nylon scrim" beneath the Rotunda's dome, a delicate piece that Paul Richard found "beautiful and subtle."^{ca} For the 34th Biennial in 1975, all the 19th century paintings that were normally displayed in the Rotunda were moved out, and Washington Color School luminary Gene Davis (1920-1985) painted one of his famous stripe paintings around the entire space, creating one of the most powerful and effective pieces of his career. In 1982, the Corcoran exhibited a show of works by Sam Gilliam that included a special installation for the Rotunda dubbed "Rondo," consisting of 13 separate geometric panels hung as a group around the Rotunda, their colors, shadows, and intersections creating a unique work of art. And in 1985, Mississippi-born artist Bill Dunlap, who would continue a long association with the Corcoran, painted a "cyclorama" of the Civil War Battle of Antietam for the Rotunda, emulating the painting done in the 19th century to commemorate the battle of Gettysburg. The Rotunda's walls provided a unique surface for the monumental work.

Not only have the Rotunda's walls and saucer-shaped dome been used as platforms for unique pieces of Washington art. So has its floor. In 1987, Alex Castro's 'Platform,' a covering of fitted sheets of weathered steel, was installed in the

^{ca} Benjamin Forgey, "Charles Platt's Perfect Palaces" in *The Washington Post*, Jul. 29, 1995, C1.

^{ca} Ada Rainey, "Clark Wing at the Corcoran Now is Open" in *The Washington Post*, Mar. 11, 1928, S13.

^{ca} Withey, 475-76.

^{ca} Richard, "Corcoran's Suggestive Thought-Fields" in *The Washington Post*, Feb. 27, 1971, C1.

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Rotunda. Castro was an established Washington artist, and his unique installation drew special attention to the Rotunda space with a "beauty so subtle that inattentive viewers don't even notice it's there," Paul Richard commented.¹²⁹

The Corcoran Gallery as Cultural Center

While the Corcoran has continued as a leading art gallery, it has also been the site of numerous special events of historic and cultural significance, both for Washington, D.C. and the nation at large. Most U.S. presidents, for example, have visited the Corcoran on at least one occasion. The Democratic National Committee held a reception for President Jimmy Carter at the Corcoran upon his inauguration in 1977. The annual Corcoran Ball held at the Gallery has been one of the city's most distinguished social events for many years, attended by numerous distinguished members of Washington society.

Notable in particular is the supporting role the Corcoran played as a venue for détente between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. In 1972, the Soviet Union sent some 2,000 objects to the Corcoran for a massive temporary exhibition called "Soviet Union: Arts and Crafts in Ancient Times and Today," a show that drew immense popular interest as evidenced by the long lines of visitors waiting to get inside. The objects had never been let out of the Soviet Union previously, and the show was seen as a goodwill gesture in advance of a planned trip by President Nixon to Moscow. The Corcoran, as a large, distinguished, private arts institution in the nation's capital, played a unique role in hosting the exhibit, which the National Gallery of Art, being the nation's official fine arts institution, could not have done. Despite demonstrations and even a bomb threat, the show was a landmark in demonstrating the effectiveness of cultural exchanges in promoting diplomacy among nations. It was again at the Corcoran that noted philanthropist Armand Hammer (1898-1990), who had donated funds to cover the cost of free admission at the museum, spoke at a dinner at his honor in 1985 urging then President Reagan to hold a summit with Soviet President Konstantin Chernenko to discuss peace and disarmament.¹³⁰ While Chernenko would die only two months later, Reagan's summits with Chernenko's successor, Mikhail Gorbachev, would lead to the end of the Cold War.

¹²⁹ Paul Richard, "Compelling 'Platform'" in *The Washington Post*, May 25, 1987, C1.

¹³⁰ Sarah Booth Conroy, "Hammer Urges Summit" in *The Washington Post*, Jan. 19, 1985, G3.

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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.)

Property is:

- ☐ 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Period of Significance

1897, 1928

1897-1987

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Ernest Flagg (original gallery)

Charles Platt (addition)

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Period of Significance (justification)

The Corcoran Gallery's period of significance under criterion A begins with the opening of the building in 1897 and continues through Alex Castro's 1987 exhibition. Evolving critical assessments of subsequent exhibitions may determine that the period of significance extends further toward the present.

The Corcoran Gallery's periods of significance under Criterion C are 1897, when the Flagg building opened, and 1928, when the Platt addition opened.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The interior spaces of the Corcoran Gallery are significant under National Register criteria A and C. They also meet National Register Criterion G, which does not explicitly apply to listings on the DC Inventory of Historic Sites.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Corcoran Gallery interior is significant under Criterion A for its "association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history." The Corcoran Gallery is associated with major developments in art exhibition and art education both locally in Washington, D.C., as well as in the nation as a whole. For decades, the Flagg-designed portion of the building was the leading venue for the exhibition of visual art in the nation's capital. The Atrium, Hemicycle, Rotunda, and gallery spaces are associated with the exhibition of works of by major artists which in some cases had never before been publically shown in Washington, D.C., and in key instances were designed specifically for these spaces. These spaces are associated with major exhibitions of local and national significance, such as the Corcoran biennials, which attracted wide attention to Washington as an arts center and connected the capital to world cultural trends. The Platt addition housed the Clark Collection, Washington's finest assemblage of old masters before the building of the National Gallery of Art and the accession of the Mellon Collection, and still a major artistic resource.

The Corcoran School of Art has been the pre-eminent visual arts school in Washington, D.C., for virtually the entire span of the building's existence. The building's studio spaces are the oldest extant purpose-built art instruction rooms in the District of Columbia and facilitated instruction in life drawing as well as the traditional practice of sketching from casts. Today the Corcoran School of Art is the only four-year art college in the city and is fully accredited. Enrollment in the BFA program reached 300 in the 1990-91 academic year in addition to over 1,000 students in the Open Program, a non-degree granting educational program. There are 47 full time faculty and 40 part time faculty.

The Corcoran Gallery interior is significant under Criterion C, as it embodies "the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, [and] possesses high artistic values." The original gallery is the work of an acknowledged architectural master, Ernest Flagg, while the addition is a highly significant work by a prominent architect, Charles Platt.

The central Atrium with its magnificent staircase is significant for its distinctive architectural elegance. "The atrium, with its rhythmic march of fluted columns on two levels interrupted by the planned pause of the atrium bridge, is indeed the

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best part of the building, its heart," art critic Benjamin Forgey has written.⁶⁹¹ Paul Richards has commented that "the bridged and skylit atrium, with its floors of glass and travertine and its forest of gray columns, takes one's breath away."⁶⁹² The Atrium is restrained in design, following the precepts of the *Néo-Grec* style that Flagg had learned in Paris and that he believed were uniquely suited to public buildings like the Corcoran. It avoids the over-wrought decorative embellishment of much Beaux Arts public architecture, focusing on making the structure itself dramatically suited to its unique function. In contrast, Hornblower and Marshall's National Museum of Natural History (1901-1911)—the Washington museum building closest in age to the Corcoran—seems chiefly concerned with creating massive and dominating spaces that do little to provide a restful atmosphere for contemplating the museum's artifacts. The Hornblower and Marshall design, based like Union Station on the Baths of Diocletian, represents the mainstream of Beaux Arts design tendencies at the beginning of the 20th century. Flagg's Corcoran building, in contrast, is unique for Washington in its spare approach. Not until Charles Platt's Freer Gallery of Art was completed in 1923 would another major Washington museum achieve the same contemplative, art-focused atmosphere. Platt, of course, also relied on a neoclassical atrium as a central design element, and it would be Platt who would design the extension to the Corcoran in 1925. In addition to its distinctive architecture, the Atrium has been the site of unique art installations that have been seminal for the development of the visual arts in Washington and for the careers of notable Washington artists (Criteria A and B).

The combined heritage of the many unique works of art exhibited in the Atrium and the Rotunda, including exceptional pieces designed specifically for those spaces by renowned artists, establishes a unique cultural significance to these spaces that is unmatched in the history of any other Washington structure.

The inclusion of the rare and exceptional Salon Doré within the Clark Wing is highly significant, not just because this is one of the few such rooms to be installed in a Washington gallery but because of the custom design of the space within the neoclassical Clark Wing, which displays the historic room to great effect. The placement of the Salon within the Corcoran highlights the gallery's role in bringing great European art—particularly through the Clark Collection—to Washingtonians who had little other access to such works prior to construction of the National Gallery of Art.

The Flagg-designed portion of the building is significant for its role in the development of artistic exhibition space in Washington, as well as the United States. The design was at the forefront of the neoclassical movement in American architecture, following fast on the heels of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, which showcased classical designs by such architects as Richard Morris Hunt and McKim, Mead, and White. The building embraces natural lighting with its network of glass-roofed skylights and the glass panels in the Atrium floor, as well as technological innovations such as electric lighting, which also use the Atrium's glass panels for exceptional effect when lit in the basement studios at night. The gallery spaces were among the first designed for electrical illumination. At its opening, the building was compared to New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art as an exceptional venue for the visual arts.

What was written of the exterior of the building to support its designation as an historic landmark is equally true of its interior: "The excellence of the designs of the exterior and interior and the wholly compatible addition to the Corcoran make it the premier example of French Beaux Arts architecture in Washington at the turn of the century, a tribute to the Gallery's founder and its architects, all of whom made additional significant contributions to the history of American art and architecture."

The National Park Service (NPS) requires that properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years be of "exceptional importance...to a community, a state, a region, or the nation" to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This 50-year threshold is not an arbitrary arithmetic standard. The NPS specifically states that:

⁶⁹¹ Benjamin Forgey, "The Best Building in Washington" in *The Washington Post*, Jul. 31, 1982.

⁶⁹² Richard, "A Cornerstone of Beauty" in *The Washington Post*, May 11, 1994, C6.

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It is not designed to prohibit the consideration of properties whose unusual contribution to the development of American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture can clearly be demonstrated.

Among the specific criteria for determining that a resource possesses extraordinary importance are that "it may reflect the extraordinary impact of a political or social event" or that its "developmental or design value is quickly recognized as historically significant by the architectural or engineering profession." The Corcoran Gallery plainly meets this test. Its extraordinary contributions to the development of modern art in Washington during the post-1962 period are undisputed in critical circles. Sufficient time has passed to determine the historical importance of Abstract Expressionism, the Washington Color School, and other modernist movements as artistic landmarks, and the Corcoran Gallery's role in developing an appreciation for them in the capital city has been clearly documented.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Bacon, Mardges, *Ernest Flagg: Beaux-Arts Architect and Urban Reformer*. New York: The Architectural History Foundation, 1986.

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Withey, Henry F., and Elsie Rathburn Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects*, reprint. Los Angeles, CA: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1970.

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Exhibition of Photographs: A Collection of American Pictorial Photographs As Arranged by the Photo-Secession and Exhibited Under the Auspices of the Capital Camera Club at the Corcoran Art Galleries of Washington, January 1904, unpagd.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property _____

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 _____
Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

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Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Peter Sefton, John DeFerrari/Trustees

organization D.C. Preservation League

date

street & number 401 F Street, NW, Room 324

telephone (202) 783-5144

city or town Washington

state DC

zip code 20001

e-mail info@dcpreservation.org

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form.

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property:

City or Vicinity:

County:

State:

Photographer:

Date Photographed:

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1 of ____

Corcoran Gallery of Art
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.
County and State

Property Owner:

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

name Corcoran Gallery of Art

street & number 1700 New York Avenue, NW/500 17th Street, NW telephone 202.639.1700

city or town Washington state DC zip code 20006

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. 460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Attachment 1: Illustration List

ILLUSTRATION	TITLE	SOURCE	PHOTOGRAPHED
1	Plan of First Floor	<i>Corcoran Gallery of Art General Catalogue, (Washington, D.C.: 1897), 6-7</i>	
2	Plan of Second Floor	<i>Corcoran Gallery of Art General Catalogue, (Washington, D.C.: 1897), 6-7</i>	
3	Plan of Basement Floor after construction of the Clark Wing	<i>Corcoran Gallery of Art Annual Reports, Vol. 3, 1924-1934</i>	
4	Plan of First Floor after construction of the Clark Wing	<i>Corcoran Gallery of Art Annual Reports, Vol. 3, 1924-1934</i>	
5	Plan of Second Floor after construction of the Clark Wing	<i>Corcoran Gallery of Art Annual Reports, Vol. 3, 1924-1934</i>	
6	Sectional diagram of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, designed by Ernest Flagg.	<i>Corcoran Gallery of Art General Catalogue, (Washington, D.C.: 1897)</i>	
7	Main Vestibule, looking toward Seventeenth Street NW	John De Ferrari	29-Jun-12
8	Corcoran Gallery North Atrium	John De Ferrari	3-Jul-12
9	Corcoran Gallery, Historic View of North Atrium	Library of Congress, Detroit Publishing Company Collection, 1905-1915	
10	South Atrium	John De Ferrari	15-Sep-12
11	Historic View of South Atrium	Library of Congress, Detroit Publishing Company Collection, 1905-1915	
12	Historic View of Second-Story Painting Gallery With Glass Ceiling	Library of Congress, Detroit Publishing Company Collection, 1905-1915	
13	Atrium Central Passage	John De Ferrari	29-Jun-12
14	Balcony, Central Gallery in Historic View	Library of Congress, Detroit Publishing Company Collection, 1905-1915	
15	Atrium, Second Floor	John De Ferrari	15-Sep-12
16	Atrium, Looking South from Second Floor	John De Ferrari	15-Sep-12
17	South Atrium from Second Floor	John De Ferrari	15-Sep-12
18	Main Staircase, showing entry to Clark Collection	John De Ferrari	15-Sep-12

19	Main Staircase, Historic View Showing Statue, Prior to Construction of Platt Addition	John de Ferrari Collection, Detroit Publishing Company Collection, 1905-1915	
20	Main Staircase, From Second Floor	John De Ferrari	15-Sep-12
21	Platt Addition (Clark Collection) Rotunda Dome Oculus Detail	John De Ferrari	15-Sep-12
22	Detail of Gallery-to-Atrium Pocket Door, With Herringbone Pattern Wooden Floor and Marble Border.	Peter Sefton	23-Sep-12
23	Detail of floor, Upper Atrium Upper door, Atrium to Gallery Doors	Peter Sefton	23-Sep-12
24	Platt Addition (Clark Wing), Rotunda	John De Ferrari	29-Jun-12
25	Platt Addition (Clark Wing), Rotunda Dome Detail	John De Ferrari	15-Sep-12
26	Platt Addition (Clark Wing), Staircase Hall	John De Ferrari	29-Jun-12
27	Platt Addition (Clark Wing), Staircase Detail	John De Ferrari	15-Sep-12
28	Platt Addition (Clark Wing), Salon Dore	John De Ferrari	15-Sep-12
29	Corcoran Gallery Visitors, Showing High Representation of Women	Culver Pictures, circa 1900	
30	Refining the McMillan Commission Models in the Hemicycle, 1902.	Sue Kohler and Pamela Scott, eds., <i>Designing The Nation's Capital: The 1901 Plan for Washington, D.C.</i> (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, 2006). 2306. Photo by Frances Benjamin Johnston, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.	
31	Sketches from the Presentation of the McMillan Plan	<i>Washington Post</i> , January 15, 1902	

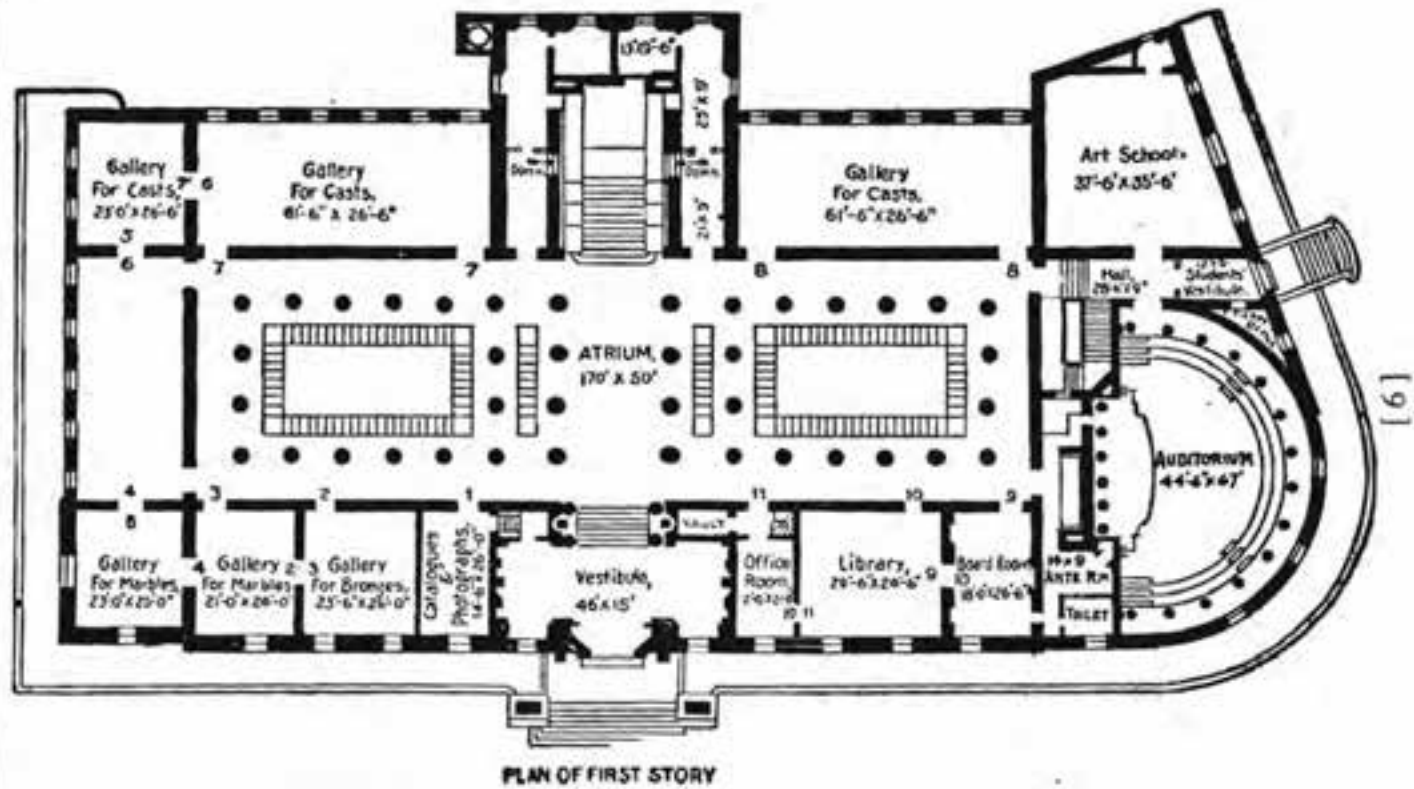
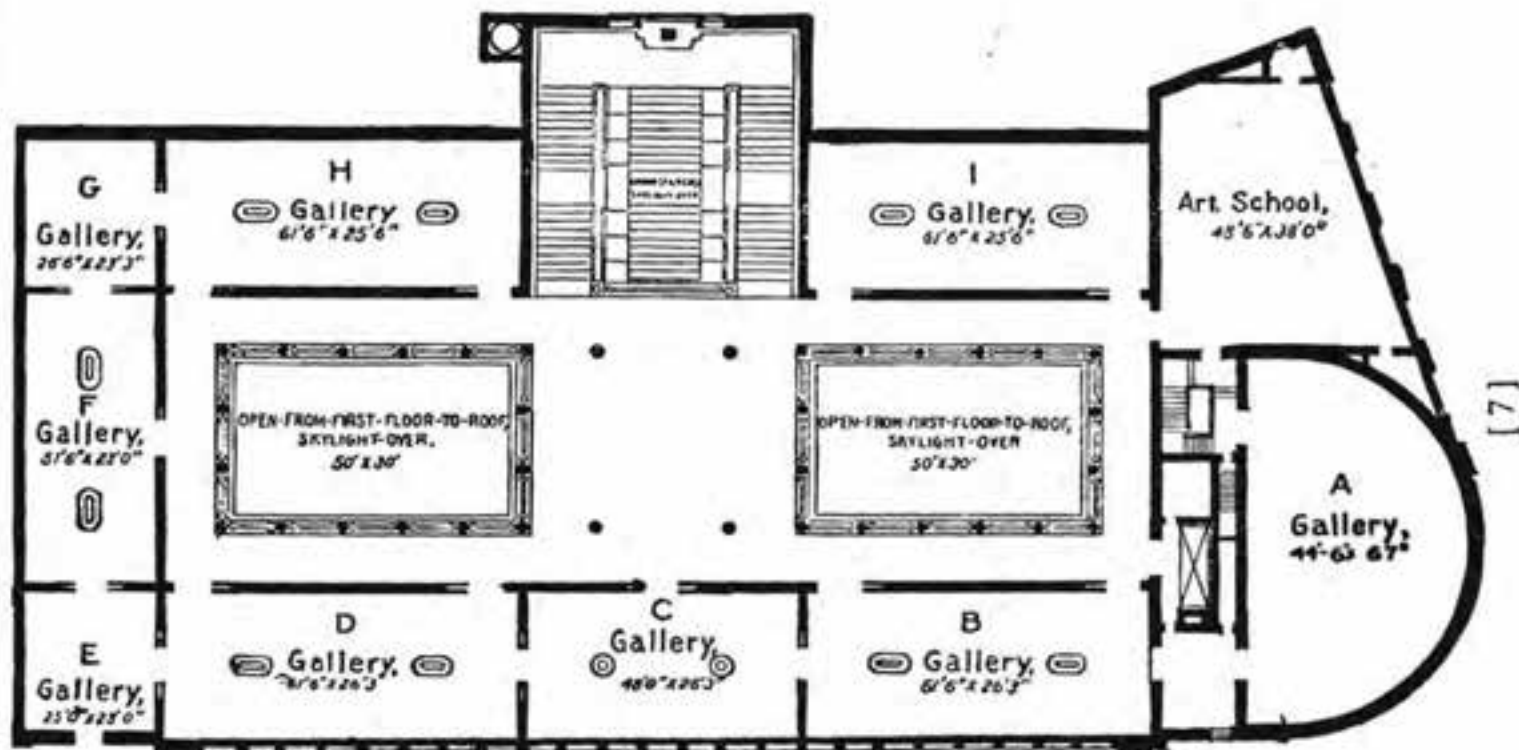


Illustration 1: Plan of First Floor, *Corcoran Gallery of Art General Catalogue*, (Washington, D.C.: 1897), 6-7.



PLAN OF SECOND STORY

Illustration 2: Plan of Second Floor, *Corcoran Gallery of Art General Catalogue*, (Washington, D.C.: 1897), 6-7.



Areas proposed for interior designation



Illustration 7: Corcoran Gallery Main Vestibule, looking toward Seventeenth Street NW



Illustration 8: Corcoran Gallery North Atrium



Illustration 9: Corcoran Gallery, Historic View of North Atrium





Illustration 11: Corcoran Gallery, Historic View of South Atrium



Figure 12: Historic View of Second-Story Painting Gallery With Glass Ceiling.



Illustration 13: Atrium Central Passage



Illustration 14: Balcony, Central Gallery in Historic View



Illustration 15: Atrium, Second Floor



Illustration 16: Atrium, Looking South from Second Floor

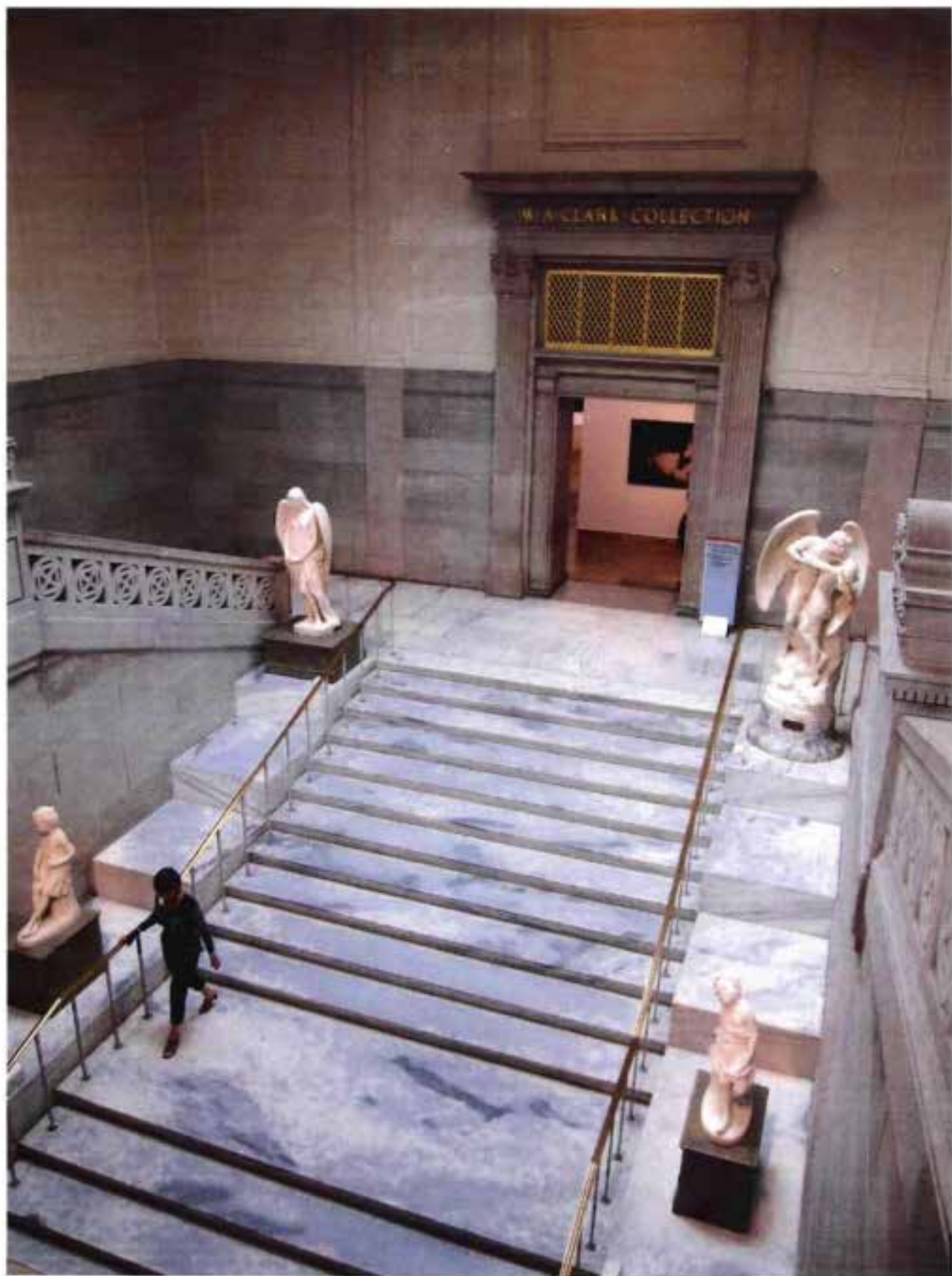




Figure 18: Main Staircase, showing entry to Clark Collection



Illustration 19: Main Staircase, Historic View Showing Statue, Prior to Construction of Platt Addition



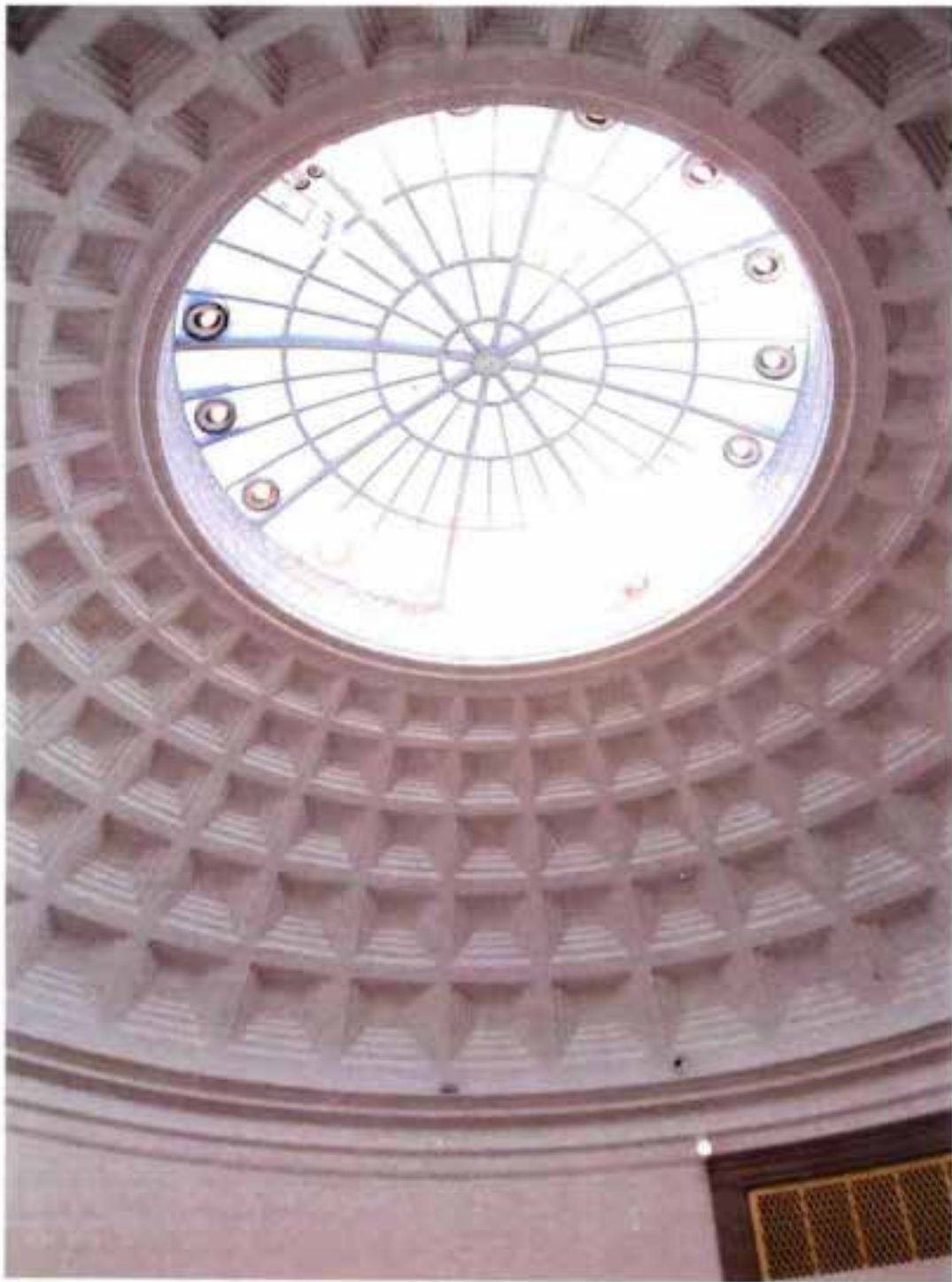


Illustration 21: Platt Addition (Clark Collection) Rotunda Dome Oculus Detail

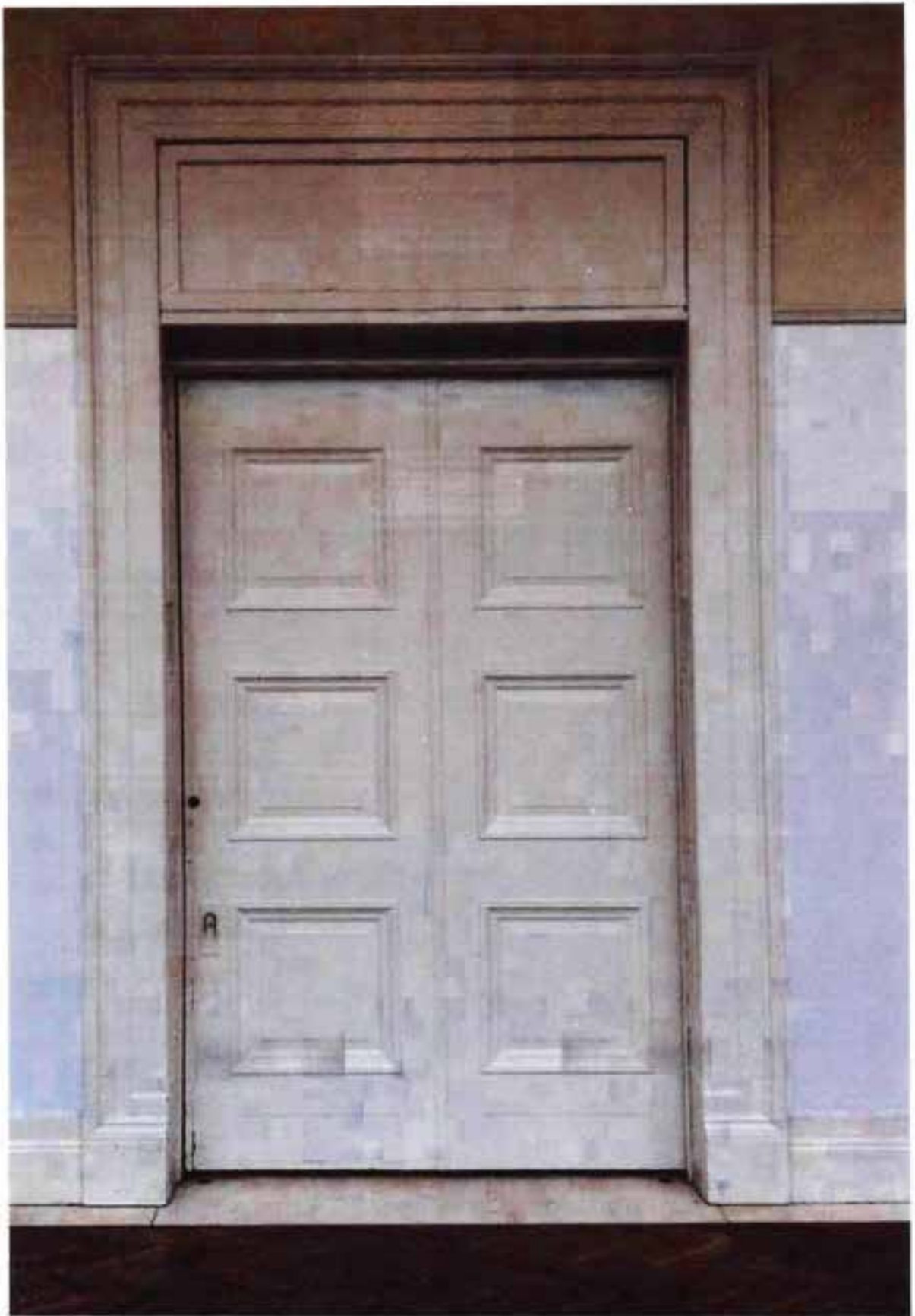


Illustration 22: Detail of Gallery-to-Atrium Pocket Door, With Herringbone Pattern Wooden Floor and Marble Border.



Illustration 23: Detail floor, Upper Atrium (above) Upper door, Atrium to Gallery Doors (below)



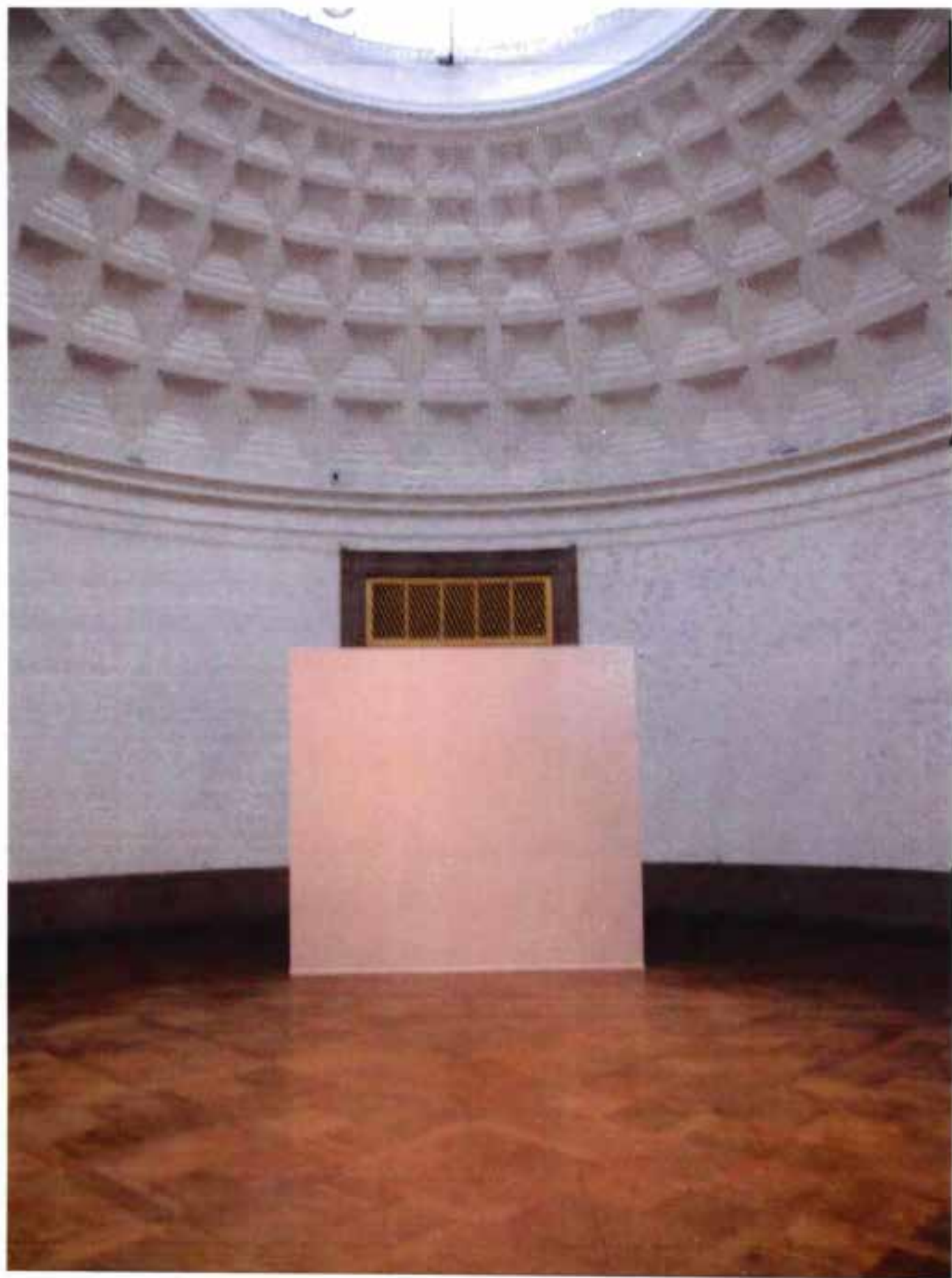




Illustration 25: Platt Addition (Clark Wing), Rotunda Dome Detail



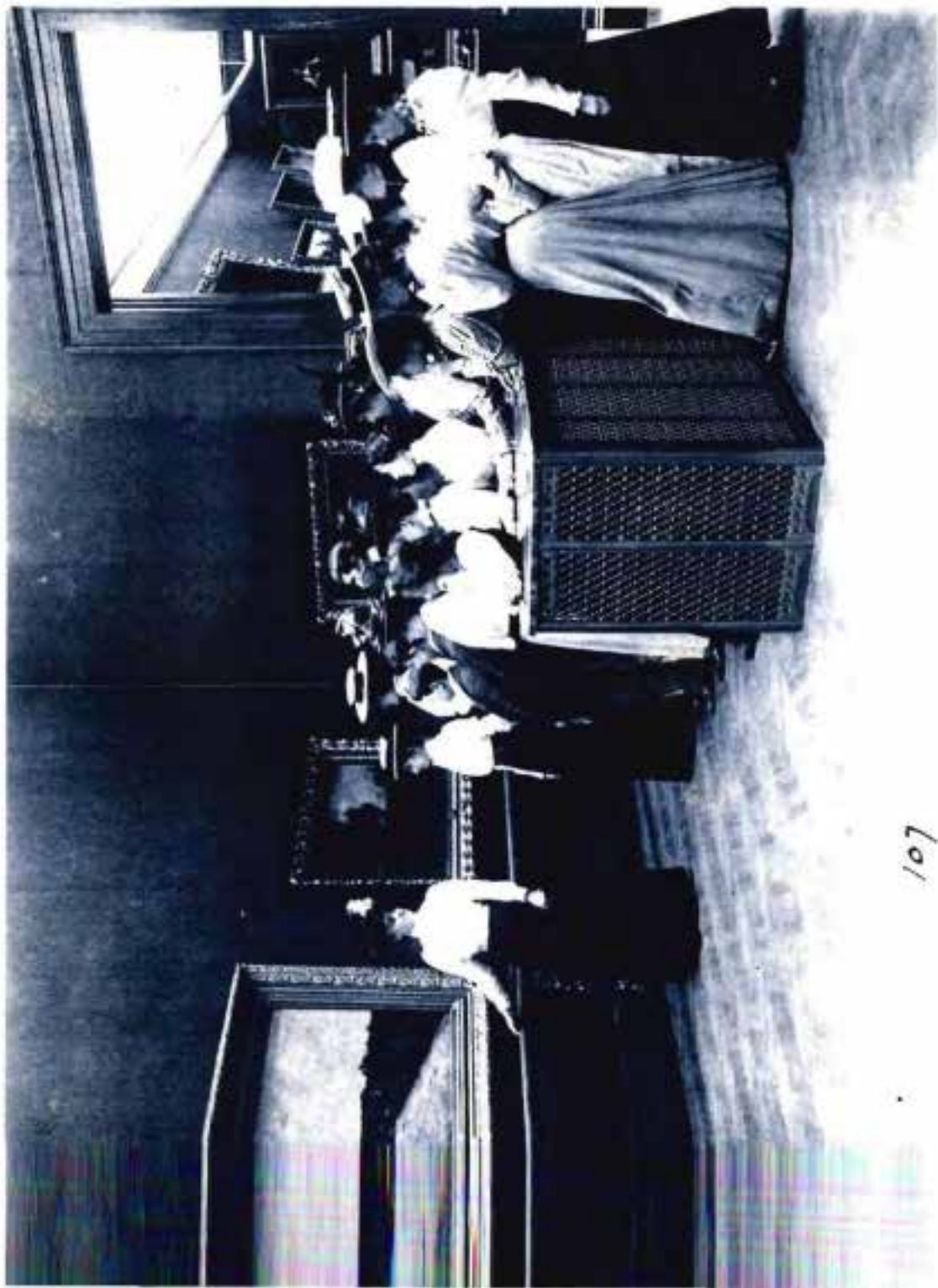
Illustration 26: Platt Addition (Clark Wing), Staircase Hall



Illustration 27: Platt Addition (Clark Wing), Staircase Detail



Illustration 28: Platt Addition (Clark Wing), Salon Dore



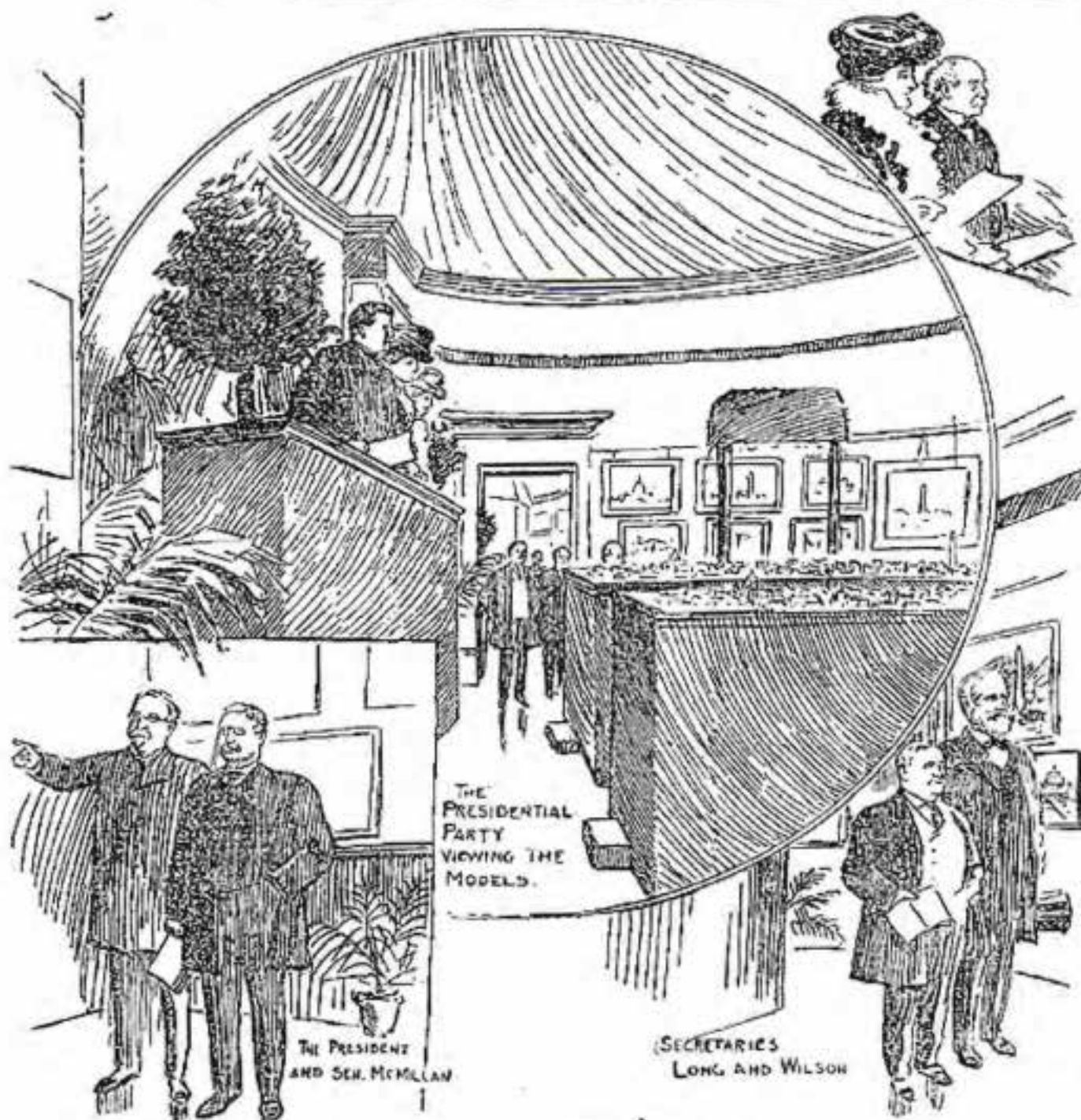
107

Figure 29: Corcoran Gallery Visitors, Showing High Representation of Women



Fig. 10 Designers working on Senate Park Commission model already installed in the Corcoran Gallery of Art. Photograph by Frances Benjamin Johnston, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division

Illustration 30: Refining the McMillan Commission Models in the Hemicycle, 1902.



Viewing the Exhibit in the Hemicycle.

Illustration 31: Sketches from the Presentation of the McMillan Plan, *Washington Post*, January 15, 1902

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	Excellent <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Fair <input type="checkbox"/>	Deteriorated <input type="checkbox"/>	Ruins <input type="checkbox"/>	Unexposed <input type="checkbox"/>
INTEGRITY	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	Altered <input type="checkbox"/>	Unaltered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Moved <input type="checkbox"/>	Original Size <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If Known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Pan American Union is located on a five-acre tract bounded by Constitution Avenue, C Street, 17th and 18th Streets, N. W. The main building, set back 120' from the sidewalk facing 17th Street and the Ellipse, is constructed largely of marble and measures approximately 150' x 160'. Behind this building, the "Blue Aztec" garden and reflecting pool lead to a smaller (approximately 36' x 98') structure which was the residence of the Secretary General of the OAS. On the N. W. corner of the block, Latrobe's 1816 Van Ness House Stables is the only reminder of the site's distinguished 19th century tenants.

The principal 17th Street facade consists of a three-arched central portico flanked by high pylons and two-story end pavilions. A circular drive and low flight of steps lead up to the three entrance arches with their bronze gates and monumental glass and bronze doors. Between the entrance arches, Corinthian pilasters, two on each end and one in front of each arch supporting pier, are crowned by a panelled frieze which originally carried the inscription INTERNATIONAL UNION OF THE AMERICAN REPUBLICS, but now reads PAN AMERICAN UNION. Above the frieze a sloping corrugated tile roof is surmounted by a balustrade which extends around the pylons and was derived from the Chihuahua Cathedral. Against the simple masses of the flanking pylons two fountain pedestals support marble sculptural groups, each of a mother instructing a youth. The group on the north by Gutzon Borglum typifies North America; the southern group representing South America is by Isidore Konti. On the pylons above these sculptures are bas-reliefs depicting Washington's farewell to his generals (north), and the meeting of San Martin and Bolivar (south). Over these panels are a North American eagle and a South American condor sculpted by Solon Borglum. Flanking the pylons, the lower, two-story end pavilions, which contain the working offices of the building, have rusticated quoins, French doors, second floor balconies with ornamental bronze railings and a low crowning parapet derived from the fountain of the Salto del Agua in Mexico City.

Inside the arcaded portico the vaulted two-story white marble entrance hall, which extends across the full width of the pavilion, leads into the inner patio enclosed by loggias and surrounded with tropical plants. In the center of the tiled mosaic floor a pink and white marble fountain by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney carries Aztec, Zapotecan and Mayan motifs. The plain white stucco walls are crowned with a polychrome frieze showing the insignia of the American countries. An overhanging wooden cornice with sloping red-tile roof is surmounted by a gabled rolling glass roof which permits the tropical vegetation to flourish at all times of the year. Other outstanding elements of the interior are the second floor Gallery of Patriots and the Hall of the Americas from either end of which an exterior stairway descends to the west garden level.

The dominant features of the "Blue Aztec" garden are the blue tile mosaic reflecting pool and a sculptural reproduction of an ancient Aztec god at the western end. The two-story white stucco residence with a hipped-tile roof is noted for its iron grilles, balconied windows, and for its garden loggia, the inner walls of which are lined with blue tile and bas-relief decorations derived from Chichen-Itza. Until recently the building served as the Secretary General's residence. It is now used by the Office of Public Information.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

B. SIGNIFICANCE

Check one (check all that apply as appropriate)

Pre-Columbian	16th Century	18th Century	20th Century
15th Century	17th Century	19th Century	X

SPECIFIC DATE (If Applicable and Known) 1908-1910

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (check one or more as appropriate)

Aboriginal	Education	X	Political	Urban Planning
Prehistoric	Engineering		Religious	Other (Specify)
Historic	Industry	X	Visual Arts	Architecture
Agriculture	Invention		Science	
Art	Landscape		Social Sciences	
Commerce	Architecture		Humanities	
Communications	Literature	X	Other	
Conservation	Military		Theater	
	Music		Transportation	



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Include Photographs, Dates, Events, Etc.)

The Joint Committee on Landmarks has designated the Pan American Union a Category II Landmark of importance which contributes significantly to the cultural heritage and visual beauty of the District of Columbia. The Pan American Union is the Secretariat of the Organization of American States, which is the world's oldest international association uniting the 21 republics of the Western Hemisphere in a "community of nations" dedicated to the achievement of peace, security, and prosperity for all Americans. The architecture of the building, a blending of South American motifs and the classical style in vogue in the U. S., was intended to be symbolic of a common understanding of the American Republics. This distinguished building should be preserved.

When the District of Columbia was formed in 1790, the property on which the Pan American Union stands was owned by David Burnes, a Scotch farmer whose plantation encompassed much of today's downtown Washington. Although Burnes became a wealthy man after the sale of some of his land to the government, he continued to live in a rude cottage on the present Pan American grounds. Burnes' daughter Sarah married General John P. Van Ness. The Van Ness Mansion designed by Benjamin Latrobe and erected on the property in 1816, was long regarded as one of the finest homes in the country. Burnes' cottage was blown down in a windstorm in 1894. The Van Ness Mansion was demolished in 1907 to make way for the Pan American Union. Only the Van Ness stables are still standing.

The history of attempts to establish an international American Union goes back to the days of Simon Bolivar, who liberated half of the South American continent from the Spaniards and is generally regarded as the father of Pan Americanism. Under the impetus of L. S. Secretary of State, James C. Blaine, the first meeting of the International Bureau of American Republics was held in Washington in 1889-90. William E. Curtis, the first director of the organization, was appointed in 1890. The second conference was held in Mexico City in 1901. The third conference convened in Rio de Janeiro in 1906. At the sixth conference held in Buenos Aires in 1910, the association's name was changed to the Pan American Union. The purpose of the Pan American Union as originally founded was to encourage cultural, commercial, and financial ties among its members and to promote friendly intercourse and peace.

In 1903 the member nations approved a plan to erect a building in Washington. Andrew Carnegie gave \$750,000 of the \$1,000,000 needed to construct the building. The various republics contributed the remaining amount. The architects of the building, Albert Kelsey and Paul P. Cret of

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Caemmerer, H. P. Washington, The National Capital, Washington, D. C.: U. S. GPO, 1937, pp. 487-492.

Washington City and Capital, Federal Writers' Project, WPA, American Guide Series, Washington, D. C.: U. S. GPO, 1937, pp. 343-348.

Barrett, John, The Pan American Union: Peace, Friendship, Commerce, Washington, D. C., 1911.

Kiser, Margaret, Organization of American States, 4th Edition, P.A.U.: Washington, D. C., 1955.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN ONE ACRE			
CORNER	LATITUDE			LONGITUDE			
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	
NW	38°	53'	36"	77°	02'	30"	
NE	38°	53'	36"	77°	02'	23"	
SE	38°	53'	32"	77°	02'	23"	
SW	38°	53'	32"	77°	02'	30"	

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE		DATE
Nancy C. Taylor, Landmarks Historian		April 4, 1969
ORGANIZATION		
National Capital Planning Commission		
STREET AND NUMBER		
726 Jackson Place		
CITY OR TOWN	STATE	CODE
Washington	District of Columbia	OR

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☒ State ☐ Local ☐

Name John F. Tate

Title Deputy Mayor-Commissioner

Date May 12, 1969

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Conrad Allen Chubb
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date JUN 4 1969

ATTES:

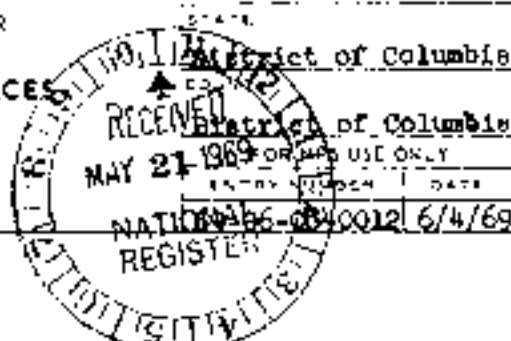
William J. Swartz
Keeper of the National Register

Date JUN 4 1969

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)



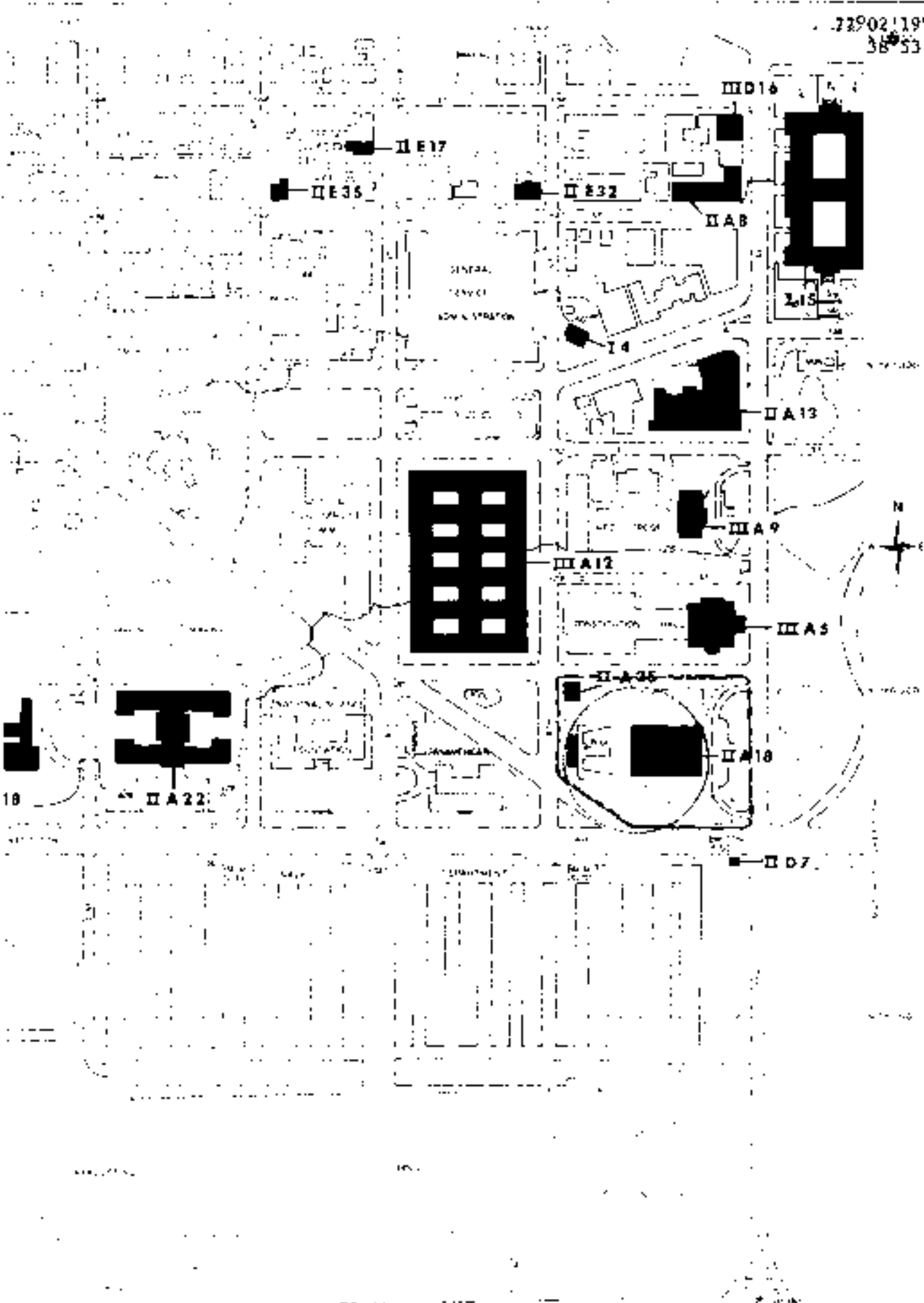
(Number all entries)

8. Significance--Pan American Union

Philadelphia, were selected by a jury after a national competition in which 75 prominent architects and builders submitted designs. The cornerstone was laid on May 11, 1908. President Taft and the entire Washington Diplomatic Corps attended the dedication ceremony on April 20, 1910. Andrew Carnegie donated another \$100,000 for the development of the annex and gardens which were completed in 1912. From the beginning, the Pan American Union has served as a focal point for cultural activity in Washington, with frequent concerts and art exhibits, as well as diplomatic receptions.

Over the years, the duties of the Union were gradually expanded by the member nations. In 1948 the 9th International Conference of American States at Bogota, Columbia, reorganized the Inter-American system into the Organization of American States with the Pan American Union as its permanent Secretariat. As such, the Pan American Union now works under the direction of the Secretary General "to promote economic, social, juridical, and cultural relations among all the member states." It also renders such technical and informational services to private groups and individuals as will further the aims of the OAS.

38°02'19" N. Lat.
 77°53'55" W. Long.



○ Pan American
 Union & Residence
 17th St. bet. C St. &
 Constitution Ave. N.W.

Scale 1"=400'
 0 200 400 600 800
 FEET
 CONTINUED ON REVERSE
 NOT TO BE USED FOR
 ANY OTHER PURPOSE
 WITHOUT PERMISSION

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS AND TRAFFIC

38°53'16" N. Lat.
 5770

JUN 12 1973

Mr. J. Van Ness Philip
507 East 84th Street
New York, New York 10028

Dear Mr. Philip:

Miss T. Robins Brown of the Historic Preservation Office of the National Capital Planning Commission informed me that on June 6, 1973, she spoke to you about the nomination of the Van Ness Mausoleum in Oak Hill Cemetery to the National Register of Historic Places. The enclosed brochure explains the program in greater detail.

The mausoleum and the Van Ness House Stables at 18th and C Streets, N.W., are listed on the District of Columbia's Inventory of Historic Sites as Category II Landmarks. A Category II Landmark is defined as a "Landmark of importance which contributes significantly to the cultural heritage or visual beauty of the District of Columbia and its environs, and which should be preserved or restored, if possible." Any information from your family papers which would help us document these sites would be appreciated. The enclosed tentative chronological outline may be of assistance in locating information.

Thank you for agreeing to permit members of the Historic Preservation Office to view the interior of the mausoleum. We are interested in seeing the interior for aesthetic and historic purposes only and are not concerned with building code standards. Miss Brown has spoken with Mr. Steve Werfel, Assistant Administrator of Oak Hill Cemetery, and he has located the key to the mausoleum. Please send written permission to enter the mausoleum to Miss T. Robins Brown, Architectural Historian, National Capital Planning Commission, 1325 G Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20576. Telephone: (202) 362-6605.

Sincerely yours,

(Sgd) Charles H. Conrad

Charles H. Conrad
Executive Director

Enclosure

cc: Central Files
Reading Files
Brown
Taylor

TRBrown/bmh 6/12/73

the Treaty of Ghent, which terminated the War of 1812, was signed by Madison. After the inauguration of Monroe as President he was escorted in March, 1817, to the Octagon, the White House not having been restored. For some years the Octagon was vacant, and, after sheltering many minor occupants, it was finally acquired, in 1902, by the American Institute of Architects, prominent members of which regarded the Octagon as one of the finest architectural examples in the country.

Shortly after the departure of the Madisons from the Octagon, another famous house sprang up in the same neighborhood—the Van Ness mansion, built by General John P. Van Ness, of New York, in 1820, on what is now to be the site of the new Carnegie home for the Bureau of American Republics. The Van Ness house is on 17th Street south of the new Continental Hall of the Langlothes of the American Revolution and the grounds occupy an entire city square which once included the old cottage of Jolly Flannes, the Scotchman, whose only daughter, the beautiful Marcin Burns, became the wife of General Van Ness. Prior to the erection of this magnificent house—now going to rack and ruin—its builder lived on 11th Street, between C and D Streets. During the period beginning with 1824 the Van Ness mansion was renowned for its generous hospitality and as a gathering place for Congressmen.

Franklin Square has been another center for the grouping of houses destined to become the homes of famous men of the nation. The large brick structure at the northwest corner of E and K Streets was used as the Mexican Legation about the close of the Civil War when Senor Maria Romero was Mexican Minister to the United States. During his occupancy of this house Senor Romero was visited several times by Gen-

eral U. S. Grant. On one such occasion Romero brought to Grant's notice facts about the activity of certain men who had planted themselves at Galveston, Texas, in furtherance of the movement against Juarez, the deposed ruler of Mexico, then struggling for power with the troops of the usurper. The result of this conference between Grant and Romero was the prompt arrest of the Galveston revolutionary center by the American authorities.

The third house west of the former Mexican Legation on K Street is the site in which the Treaty of Washington, for the settlement of claims growing out of the depredations of the Commodore cruiser *Albatross*, was signed May 8, 1871. The house was used for the meetings of the Joint High Commission which framed the treaty. The personnel of the Commission included Secretary of State Hamilton Fish, Associate Justice Samuel Nelson of the United States Supreme Court, Robert C. Schenck who was American Minister to England, Attorney General Wickham Taft, Senator William of Oregon, the Earl of Grey, the Earl of Napier, Sir Stratford Henry Northcote, Sir Edward Thornton who was British Minister to Washington and Sir Edward Mordaunt of the Privy Council of Canada. The clerks of the Commission during its deliberations in this house were Levi Tonterton and J. C. Bancroft Davis.

Viscount Ash, the Japanese Ambassador, now occupies the large stone front mansion at 1321 K Street, which was built by former Secretary of State John Sherman, who also lived and died there. When Sherman first came to Washington, he boarded a while at Willard's old hotel. Then he went down by the Capitol to reside in what was an old fashionable portion of Washington. One day he told Mrs. Sherman:

datrobe (1764-1820)

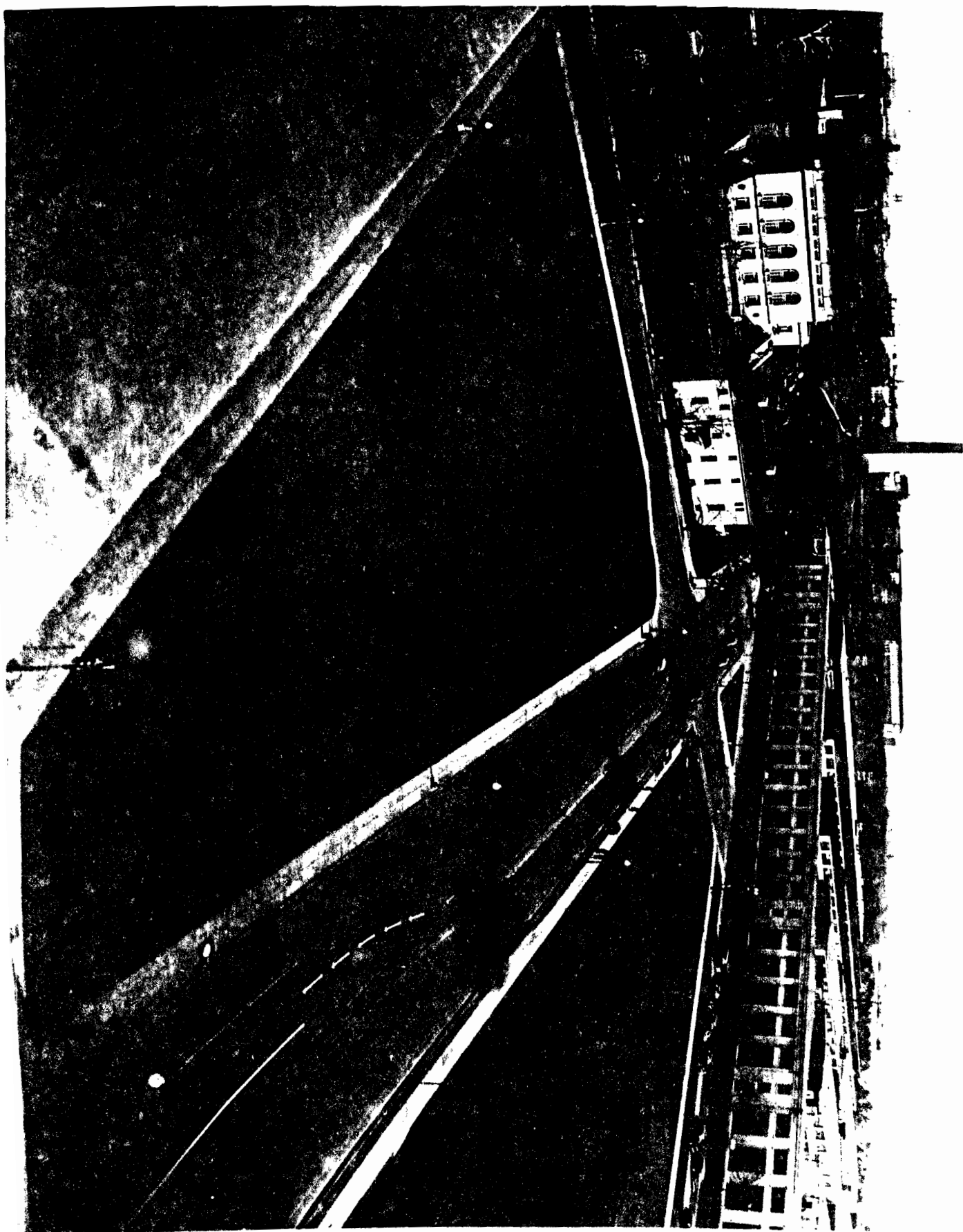
Maryland Historical Society - publishing every known
datrobe document

In Md Historical Society

Journals March 23, 1796 - 1819

Letters 1803-1817

Metropolitan - 6 drawings of Van Ness
House



— 10 —



MEMO

To: File
from: T.R. Brown

August 7, 1973

Re: Van Ness House Stables

A letter was sent to Mr. J. Van Ness Philip on June 12, 1973 requesting information on a stable from the Van Ness family papers. ^{Register nomination} ~~did want to~~ ^{immediately}

I have not visited the site, nor notified the owner (the Pan American Union) about a possible NR nomination. Since the stable is already on the Register as part of the Pan Am Union and the Register staff dislikes double nomination ^{I do not} I recommend filing a separate form on it. The integrity of the stable is also questionable as it has been moved.

Van Ness House

F Kimball Domestic Arch of the Colonial
Period - the Early Republic (NY
Scrivener, 1927)

Hamlin - date

Jonathan Elliot Historical Sketches of the Ten Mile Sq.

1830

p. 270-272 Residence of Gen. Van Ness, Mansion Square

at junction of Lakes of Potomac
Van Ness built house & landscaped grounds.

"The solidity, elegance & convenience, throughout
the whole of the buildings and other improvements
at this spot."

Mansion is probably not excelled by any
mansion in the country"

Was one of 15 portions of the kind excepting
Pres House

Washingtoniana Pan American Union

Collection of the International Bureau of the

American Republics May 1910

"The Romance of the New Buildings Location"

Van Ness Mansion - torn down 1908

Burns Cottage on site - ^{Beidogen} 1894

~ 1850 Van Ness Mansion - bought by
Thomas Green - ^{largely} arrested in relation to
Lincoln assassination

~ 1879 owners ^{Beidogen} Gen. Swann of Md - was
a bander

602 Geo. Wash. Un., No roof interior
decoration gone

Newspaper Clipping Washingtonian Collection,

Biography
Maj. J. Van Ness Philip - Obituary
(- 1949) 83 yrs old

1945 Retire from State Dept

WAS U.S. Rep to Pan Am. Highway Finance Committee for
of yrs. 1936-42

Assistant chief of Bureau of Insular Affairs
Son of Col. Wm Henry + Eliza Worthington Philip
Served in Cuba + Philippines in army + in
Fr. in WWI

Family home - Talavera in Claverack

Sons: J. Van Ness Philip Jr + Nicholas
Worthington Philip

'AN New House "Historic Houses A-Z, Washington
+ 6859 W. H626 via [Collection, Scrapbook

"E B9274d David Buines + Marcia
Buines Van Ness 1936

c. 1907? "Moving Old Landmark"

Picture of Stable being moved
Stable moved from site of Pan-Am Bldg to
c. 1844 + c. 1875.

Reconstructed at time Pan Am Union bldg
erected. Used by the Superintendent of
the bldg as his residence.

Decided to move after Carnegie gave
\$100,000 to beautify grounds

"The date of the erection of the stable was
ascertained by the contractor who did the
reconstruction work several yrs ago. At that
time many timber were taken from the founda-
tion + on several of them the name +
initials of a carpenter or some other
person who had been employed in the
erection were found painted on or
cut in the wood, of the date, 1806."

Rambles" J. Harry Shannon.

The Sunday Star

Vol on I.C. dib

David Buñes 1: 154, 156; 2: 117, 159-164 (i.i)

Jan 24 and Feb 7, 1915; Nov 11, 1917;

Sept. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 + Oct. 6, 1918

Buñes, David (Mrs) ^{Maiden name} 4: 73, 76; burial
place Oct. 4 + 25, 1925; 76(i.i)
Oct. 25, 1925

Buñes cottage (removed 1894) 1: 164
Apr. 14, 1915; 4: 80 Nov 22, 1925

Buñes family 2: 159-164 (i.i) graves
165 Sept 1, 8, 15, 29 Oct 6 + Oct 13
1918

Van Ness family 2: 161. 4: 73-76 (i.i)

Ann Elbertina Middleton 2: 158, 159
Aug + Sept 1, 1918

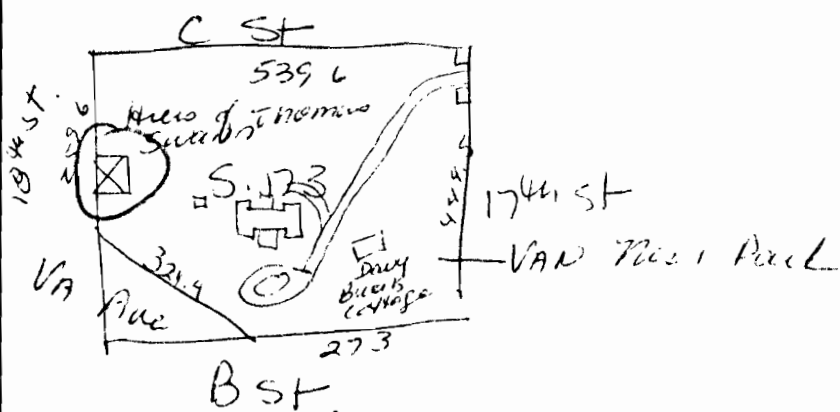
Van Ness House Stables - Atlas in Washington

1816 - 1817

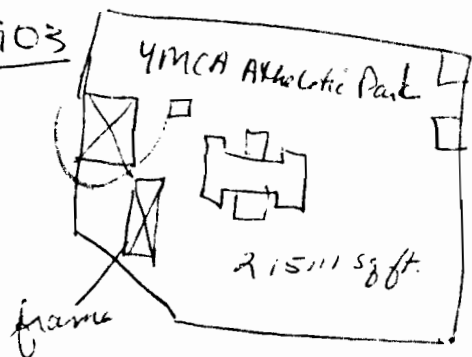
17th St + B St

Plate 7, 1887 Hopkins

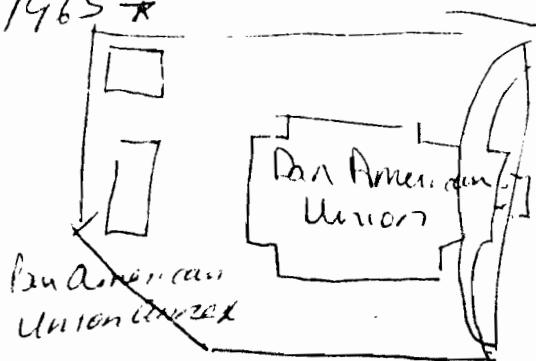
1887



1903



1965 *



30.
32.

539.50



8007
US RE 383

18 TH 49.5 12 in.

PAN AMERICĂ
 UNION ANNEX

PAN AMERICAN
S. I. & B
UNION
800
2151th Avenue West

INSTITUTION

(B-5T)

AVE

Brist
V.I
pl. 17

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic CONSTITUTION HALL

and/or common SAME

2. Location

street & number 311 Eighteenth Street, NW not for publication

city, town Washington vicinity of

state DC code county code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: cultural

4. Owner of Property

name National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution

street & number 1776 D Street, NW

city, town Washington vicinity of state DC

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder of Deeds

street & number Sixth & D Streets, NW

city, town Washington state DC

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
good	ruins	altered	moved date
fair	unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Constitution Hall, built and owned by the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, faces Eighteenth Street between C and D Streets, Northwest. It was designed by the eminent architect, John Russell Pope, and is constructed of Alabama limestone. The building houses the largest auditorium in the City of Washington, with a seating capacity of 3,746 plus an additional 150 chairs on the 32' x 50' stage. Excavating for Constitution Hall was begun on August 24, 1928, and the first event held in the Hall, a Vesper Service, took place on October 23, 1929.

Constitution Hall was the first of several structures in the vicinity of The Mall in the Nation's Capital that were designed by John Russell Pope. The others are the American Pharmaceutical Institute Building near the Lincoln Memorial; the National Gallery of Art Building and the National Archives Building, between the Capitol and the White House; and the Jefferson Memorial, on the axis that crosses The Mall from the White House, completing Pierre L'Enfant's Plan of the City of Washington.¹ Pope died in 1937, the year he designed the Jefferson Memorial.

The location of Constitution Hall is a re-affirmation of the L'Enfant Plan of 1792, which was supervised and approved by George Washington. The building fronts west, and is a block long and a third of a block deep. Its neighbor to the south, on C Street, is the Pan American Union; to the north, on D Street, is the American Red Cross. Opposite its main entrance on Eighteenth Street is the United States Department of the Interior Building. Constitution Hall is one of a complex of buildings occupying an entire city square, extending to Seventeenth Street opposite the White House Ellipse, owned by the National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution. Soon after the Society was founded in 1890, it began acquiring the land on which it has built its headquarters buildings: Memorial Continental Hall, the Administration Building, and Constitution Hall.

The Ionic entrance portico of this Neoclassic building, facing on Eighteenth Street, is surmounted by a 90-foot-wide pediment above the name, CONSTITUTION HALL, cut in the stone frieze. The huge sculptured American eagle, and the dates "1776" and "1783" of the Declaration of Independence and the Treaty of Paris, respectively, to the right and left of the eagle, were carved in situ by the sculptor, Ulysses A. Ricci. High on the wall under the portico are five-foot-tall allegorical low-relief panels. Below each panel, and between them, are three pairs of bronze doors. Directly above the center doors is a bronze plaque inscribed: "Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest can repair. The event is in the hands of God. George Washington to the Constitution Convention, A.D. 1787".²

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below				
prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architecture	religion	
1400-1499	archeology-historic	conservation	law	X science	
1500-1599	agriculture	economics	literature	X sculpture	
1600-1699	X architecture	X education	military	X social	
1700-1799	X art	engineering	X music	humanitarian	
1800-1899	commerce	exploration/settlement	philosophy	X theater	
X 1900-	communications	industry	X politics/government	transportation	
		invention		X other (specify)	
				performing arts	

Specific dates 1924-1930 Builder Architect John Russell Pope

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Summary

The National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, built Constitution Hall to accommodate their annual Continental Congresses and other activities, but it quickly became the unofficial cultural center of the Nation's Capital and a nationally known focus for all forms of the performing and literary arts. It has retained much of its importance in Washington's cultural life, despite the construction of the Kennedy Center. The Daughters of the American Revolution, from this national headquarters, have made major contributions to citizenship education, historic preservation, and historical scholarship.

Annually, several thousand delegates representing the members of the National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, gather in Constitution Hall during the week of April 19th (the anniversary of the Battle of Lexington and Concord) for their Continental Congress, when they report on their activities of the past year and set goals for the coming year. At this time, they reaffirm the Society's objectives as set forth in the Act of Incorporation by the Fifty-Fourth Congress of the United States in 1895, whereby the Society was created "a body corporate and politic, ... for patriotic, historical and educational purposes; to perpetuate the memory and spirit of the men and women who achieved American Independence; by the acquisition and protection of historical spots and the erection of monuments; by the encouragement of historical research in relation to the Revolution and the publication of its results; by the preservation of documents and relics, and of the records of the individual services of Revolutionary soldiers and patriots, and by the promotion of celebrations of all patriotic anniversaries;..."

The achievements of these goals over the ninety-five years of the Society's existence are contained in its numerous publications, hundreds of them. To mention only two of these: the Society's monthly magazine, published continuously since 1892; and the annual Proceedings of the Continental Congress that, as required by the Act of Congress creating the Daughters of the American Revolution, is reported to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution who "shall communicate to Congress such portions thereof as he may deem of national interest and importance." In order to carry out the objectives enumerated in the Act of Congress, the Society built Constitution Hall.

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10. Geographical Data

Acres of nominated property ..approximately 1

Quadrangle name Washington_West

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

118	1121291210	41301661015
Zone	Easting	Northing

B

Zone	Easting	Northing			

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

Only Constitution Hall itself.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

11. Form Prepared By

name title Mollie Somerville, Researcher

National Society

organization Daughters of the American Revolution

date January 8, 1985

street & number 1776 D Street, NW

telephone 379-3278

city or town Washington

state DC

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

... national ... state ... local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title _____ date _____

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date _____

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date _____

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

7

Page 2

The architect's specifications read: "All special carving shall be done under this contract by skilled carvers, selected by the Architect, in a spirited and artistic manner, from plaster models prepared or approved by the Architect.... The cost of special carving is included under 'Allowances' and will include relief work and figures in the pediment, wreathes, ... relief panels on rear wall of and flanking main portico, and urns."³

A broad flight of steps on this, the main approach to Constitution Hall, leads past the entrance pillars supporting the portico. The approach on C Street is by way of a promenade, while a driveway leads to D Street. There are five pairs of bronze doors on each of these two sides and three pairs on the front of the building, the total representative of the thirteen original colonies.

Inside Constitution Hall, a spacious lobby extends around three sides of the great U-shaped auditorium, which is surrounded by 52 boxes, their facades decorated with the various State seals. The President of the United States has a box.⁴ A blue and gold motif has been used for these interiors. In the lobby, the blue and gold colors appear in the form of stripes. In the auditorium, specially woven, custom-designed material features gold medallions and stars on a blue background, with an elaborately woven border of gold eagles surrounded with garlands. More than 500 yards of this material was used for the 25-foot-long stage curtains. The medallion and star motif is repeated in vinyl wall-covering on the front of the boxes and exit walls around the entire auditorium. The hard surface on these walls, and on the floor, was chosen for acoustical reasons.⁵

On either side of the stage are graceful twin Ionic columns, each topped by a 3-1/2-foot American Bald Eagle finished in 14-carat gold leaf. Centered above the stage is a painted lunette of the Great Seal of the United States, flanked by twelve Revolutionary flags. Under the Seal are the names of the thirteen original colonies in geographical order. Inconspicuously lodged at the foot of the stage is the three-manual Skinner organ's console. Backstage are dressing rooms and the Conductor's Room.

Also on this floor is the President General's Reception Room. Located in the northeast corner, with doors to the lobby and a passageway to the stage, this lovely and spacious formal room is used by the President General for receiving members and guests. The portrait of Mrs. Benjamin Harrison, first President General of the Daughters of the American Revolution at the time she was First Lady, is a copy of one by Daniel Huntington that was presented to the White House by the Daughters in 1892. The room's predominant colors are golden beige and crimson.

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On the floor below is a handsome lounge finished in green, gold, and cream. A pair of custom-designed and woven rugs complement the straight line lounge chairs and sofas, upholstered in antique velvet. Also located on the lower level is the Pages' Lounge, which may be used for meetings, etc.

A marble stairway, lighted by day by a large decorative bronze window of exceptional beauty, leads to the second floor of Constitution Hall. The Genealogical Library, which it was intended to house, quickly outgrew this space. A large meeting room and offices of the Children of the American Revolution occupy the north and south ends, respectively. The central area is now used to exhibit a collection of decorative and applied arts for children and young adults. It is one of the few such displays in Washington. Open to the public, it is free.

In recent years, air-conditioning was installed and obsolete wiring was replaced throughout Constitution Hall.

Footnotes

¹Map: "Plan of the City of Washington in the Territory of Columbia ceded by the States of Virginia and Maryland to the United States of America, and by them established as the Seat of their Government, after the Year 1800." Engraved by Thackara & Vallance, Phila., 1792.

²Plaque: Exact wording of inscription.

³Specifications for Constitution Hall, by John Russell Pope.

⁴The boxes represent the Fifty States, the District of Columbia and The President.

⁵Leopold Stokowski, who conducted the Philadelphia Orchestra in the opening concert of the 1930-1931 season, placed Constitution Hall among the six leading concert halls in America. Later, the famous American pianist, Van Cliburn, said enthusiastically: "It is a grand hall! The acoustics are splendid!" These comments, recorded in the official records of the Society, have been backed by science. The Hall has been measured by sound engineers of the Bell Telephone Laboratories, who pronounced it close to ideal for an auditorium of its size. Their opinion was later confirmed by acoustic experts of the United States Bureau of Standards when the Hall was renovated in recent years.

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The Daughters of the American Revolution and Historic Preservation

The Society's first historic site preservation effort was the appropriation, in 1896, of \$100 to save historic Jamestown Island from being washed away by the James River. The building of a protective wall preserved the site of the first successful English settlement on this continent.

The number of historic sites that have been marked by the NSDAR is estimated at 10,000. As well as marking historic sites, the NSDAR restores, preserves, and maintains historic sites. They have rescued many historic buildings that were ready to be demolished to make way for super-highways. They purchase buildings, have them moved, restore them, and then open them to the public. They have also restored old forts, bridges, and cemeteries. In addition to restoring DAR-owned sites, the NSDAR also raises funds and assists other groups who are interested in preservation. Members serve as docents, maintain gardens, and contribute appropriate items for museums and historic places.

In the past year, the DAR has begun 77 restoration projects and completed 40 of them.

The Daughters of the American Revolution and Citizenship Education

As early as 1910, DAR members pioneered in assisting immigrants who lived in their local communities to become naturalized citizens. Many of these newcomers did not speak English and did not know how to become American citizens. In order to help them, the DAR has compiled and published a Manual for Citizenship since 1921. Originally printed in 19 languages plus English, it is now printed in English only (at the request of the Immigration and Naturalization Department of the United States Department of Justice). More than 10,000,000 copies of this book have been distributed free to immigrants.

The DAR Manual for Citizenship Committee is one of several committees involved in citizenship education. Others are: Junior American Citizens, kindergarten through high school, contests and award programs; DAR Good Citizens, seniors in public and private schools, scholarship and cash award programs; American History Scholarship, \$8,000 scholarship to a high school senior; American History Month Essay Contest, 5th through 8th grades, medals and cash awards; Good Citizenship Medal, awarded to elementary, junior and senior high school students.

The Citizenship Committee awards two medals with certificates: the Medal of Honor is given to a native-born citizen and the DAR Americanism Medal is given to a naturalized citizen.

THE NSDAR initiated the observances of American History Month and Constitution Week.

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The Daughters of the American Revolution and Constitution Hall

Constitution Hall is a "Memorial to that Immortal Document The Constitution of the United States in which are incorporated those Principles of Freedom, Equality, and Justice for which Our Forefathers strove. Erected by The National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, Cornerstone Laid October 30, 1928." These words are carved in the block of stone at the northwest corner of Constitution Hall. Mrs. Calvin Coolidge, then First Lady, assisted in laying the stone, and put her card and that of the President inside it. The gavel that was used to tap the stone into place was the same one that George Washington used in laying the cornerstone of the United States Capitol.

The Honorable Charles Moore, Chairman of the National Commission of Fine Arts, was also present. In his speech, he said: "True education never ends... The work of the world will be done better if you women shall use to the fullest extent the opportunities this building will afford."¹ The Daughters had adopted promotion of education as one of their objectives when the Society was organized in 1890, and sponsor scores of projects toward this end. A perusal of the programs taking place in Constitution Hall from the opening season on lists numerous events that support this endeavor.

The Archives of the American Red Cross as well as those of the Daughters testify to wartime activities. The Red Cross was given the lobby space in the Hall for its Prisoners of War relief work in 1941. The Daughters converted the basement area of the Hall into a nursery school for servicemen's children, and built a play-yard for them on the adjacent grounds. When benefic concerts were scheduled, the Daughters gave the Hall free of charge.

Constitution Hall was the only auditorium of suitable size and facilities for the cultural arts in Washington for more than forty years. Musically, every major orchestra in the world, as well as every outstanding individual artist, has performed in the Hall. Dance troupes, bands, and debaters have appeared on its stage. The series of lectures given in Constitution Hall by the National Geographic Society over the past fifty years is a record unequalled in any other known such building, a total of 2,000 to date.²

Architectural Significance of Constitution Hall

In 1928, the Jury of The Architect's Advisory Council of the District of Columbia placed Constitution Hall in its top classification of buildings--Class 1: COMBINED, and listed it as "Distinguished Architecture: Outstanding among buildings of its type."³

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Washington architects emphasized a notable feature of Constitution Hall: "Excellent circulation is afforded here by the triple frontage which permits entrances on three sides--the carriage ramp on the north side being the most notable. Within, these entrances are connected by a grand promenade."⁴

At the laying of Constitution Hall's cornerstone on October 30, 1926, the Honorable Charles Moore, Chairman of the National Commission of Fine Arts (part of whose speech is quoted above), spoke words of high praise:

Because the Daughters of the American Revolution have made their buildings a constituent part of the National Capital plan, the laying of the cornerstone of Constitution Hall has a national significance.... Mrs. Brosseau [President General, NSDAR], for your auditorium you and your committee have chosen your architect well. Among his professional brethren he stands the peer of any as a designer in those forms of buildings that have won enduring merit since charm came to be added to stability.... If there be a lack in the Washington of today, it is our lack of consideration for those things that make for the highest civilization. Towards filling that need this building will be a necessary physical contribution.

In the years since then, the Daughters of the American Revolution have maintained and preserved the building's Neoclassic design.

AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The Need for a Larger Auditorium is Recognized

The Daughters of the American Revolution were urgently in need of a new, and larger, auditorium by 1924, having outgrown the auditorium, seating 1,666, in their first building, Memorial Continental Hall. That year, the President General of the Society, Mrs. Anthony Wayne Cook, was authorized to secure and submit tentative plans for the erection of an auditorium on the vacant land facing Eighteenth Street. In December, John Russell Pope, New York architect, presented his first plans for the new building, but these were thought to be for a structure that was too large, and too costly. In January, 1925, he submitted a second plan and this was accepted by the Society at its annual meeting, the Continental Congress, the following April. Pope estimated that the new auditorium building would cost \$1,825,000. He arrived at this approximate figure by putting the cost of a cubic foot at \$1.00. The breakdown amounts were: building, \$1,575,000; architect's fees, \$150,000; and furnishings not included in the building cost, \$100,000.

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A Distinguished Architect

John Russell Pope was born in New York City, and studied architecture at Columbia University, graduating in 1894 at age 21. He was awarded a scholarship in 1895, and spent the next five years in Europe studying the classic architecture of Italy and France. As a result, he believed that the buildings he would design, incorporating what he had absorbed, would enrich American architecture. The Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893 set a pattern for public buildings of white stone instead of red brick and furthered Pope's objectives. Before designing Constitution Hall, Pope's abilities had been recognized at home and abroad. He won an award from the Architectural League in 1916 for his Scottish Rite Temple (in Washington, D.C.) and the Gold Medal of the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1918. France had made him a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor in 1922. He served on national and federal commissions and, in 1933, became president of the American Academy in Rome.

Pope designed several structures in Washington, five of them in the vicinity of The Mall. "Other architects may possibly have designed more structures for our capital city than he, but none, certainly, has contributed more to its present level of good taste. Constitution Hall, belonging to the Daughters of the American Revolution, has the classic restraint of the Scottish Rite [Temple, 1915] without and the same artistry within;...."⁵

Constitution Hall as a Cultural Center

The Daughters' initial purpose in building Constitution Hall had been to provide seating for the delegates to the Society's annual meetings. But even before the first of these meetings took place in April, 1930, the Hall had been used for concerts, lectures, and other cultural events connected with the performing arts. At the laying of the cornerstone on October 30, 1928, the Honorable Charles Moore, Chairman of the National Commission of Fine Arts, made this prediction: "For the highest form of music, the symphony concert, this auditorium will make suitable and adequate provisions. It may lead to a permanent orchestra. You may make it a platform for the world's thinkers, as well as a place to honor men of achievements."⁶

All these predictions became realities immediately after the Hall was completed. The 1930-1931 season opened with the International Oratorical Contest and was followed by a series of afternoon and evening concerts by the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and Sousa's Band. Among individual artists were Metropolitan Opera stars Edward Johnson, Beniamino Gigli, Grace Moore, and

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Maria Jeritza, the outstanding tenors and sopranos, respectively, of their time; José Iturbi, Josef Hoffman, and Serge Rachmaninoff, pianists; Fritz Kreisler and Yehudi Menuhin ("Phenomenal Boy Violist"); Roland Hayes, tenor and John Charles Thomas, baritone. The Beethoven Festival of the Boston Symphony Orchestra with a chorus of 250 voices, the Don Cossack Male Choir, and a dance company also performed in the Hall that first season.

The number of these events almost doubled in the second season. On November 2, 1931, the first concert ever of the National Symphony Orchestra, with Hans Kindler, founder of the orchestra, conducting, took place in Constitution Hall. The Hall was the "home" of the National Symphony Orchestra for more than forty years. Even after the Kennedy Center was built in 1972, the orchestra came back to the Hall to make special recordings.

The Hall is also the "home" of the National Geographic Society's lecture series. The regular season series of lectures started in 1933-1934 but there were special lectures before then. At the close of the current 1984-1985 season, the National Geographic Society will have given a grand total of nearly 2,000 lectures in the Hall. Nestled high in the ceiling of the auditorium, behind the west balcony, are 16mm and 35mm motion picture sound projectors and spot lights. The stage curtains hide a portable motion picture screen.

In the years since October 26, 1929, a roster of the artists, impresarios, orchestras, choral groups, bands, distinguished lecturers, and great and near great that have appeared on the stage of the magnificent auditorium reads like an international Who's Who. An abbreviated list follows:

The National Symphony Orchestra gave its first concert in Constitution Hall on January 31, 1930, and the Hall was the National Symphony Orchestra's "home" until 1972. More than 100 different orchestras have performed in the Hall.

The first public event took place on October 26, 1929, an International Oratorical Contest.

The National Geographic Society presented its first lecture in Constitution Hall on May 16, 1930, and began its first series of season lectures in 1933. The seventeen-week, three lectures per week series continue to be given in the Hall.

Many private individual lecturers have appeared on the stage of Constitution Hall. Sir Winston Churchill delivered a lecture on "The World Economic Crisis" on February 12, 1932. Other lecturers include Admiral Richard Byrd, Amelia Earhart, Lowell Thomas, Bennett Cerf, Ralph Bunche, and Carl Sandburg.

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Individual performers: Roland Hayes, Efrem Zimbalist, Burl Ives, Harry Belafonte, Leontyne Price, Fritz Kreisler, Maurice Chevalier, Mahalia Jackson, Victor Borge, Lily Pons, John Charles Thomas, Van Cliburn, Marian Anderson, Fred Waring, Jascha Heifetz, Artur Schnabel, Yehudi Menuhin, and Charles Laughton.

Groups: Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Howard University Chorus, Don Cossack Chorus, Robert Wagner Chorale, Vienna Choir Boys, Trapp Family, St. Olaf Choir, Korean Choir, Obernkirchen Choir, and numerous national and international dancers.

Footnotes

¹Verbatim Record, Recording Secretary General's Office, NSDAR.

²Miss Joanne Hess, National Geographic Society, by telephone, October 17, 1984.

³Report of The Architect's Advisory Council, December 11, 1928.

⁴A Guide to the Architecture of Washington, D.C., Washington Chapter, American Institute of Architects; McGraw Hill, 1965, 1974, p. 100, #9.

⁵W. Francklyn Paris, The Hall of American Artists. New York University, 1951, p. 38.

⁶Verbatim Record, Secretary General's Office, NSDAR.

*See addendum, item 8, pages 16 and 17.

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SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

THE FOUNDERS OF THE NATIONAL SOCIETY, DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

By adoption of a resolution of the Sixth Continental Congress (1897), four women were named as Founders:

Whereas, Miss Eugenia Washington, Miss Mary Desha and Mrs. Ellen Hardin Walworth did, on August 9, 1890, prepare the constitution and appoint the leading officers of the National Society, which were confirmed at the first public meeting, on October 11, 1890, and did in the interval prepare, publish and circulate application papers and other appliances for organization, and thus initiated and established the Society, which therefrom entered upon its successful career; and,

Whereas, Mrs. Mary S. Lockwood inspired a general interest in this subject, thus founding, by her pen, in the article published July 13, 1890, that she be recognized as the founder, and four medals be awarded to these founders of the Society.

Resolved, That these four founders of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, viz: Eugenia Washington, Mary Desha, Ellen Hardin Walworth, and Mary S. Lockwood shall be, and hereby are, officially recognized as founders.

Resolved, That a committee be appointed by the Continental Congress to prepare four medals to be commemorative of the work done by the said four founders, the same to be designed by a skilled artist, and that said medals be formally presented to the said founders--Eugenia Washington, Mary Desha, Ellen Hardin Walworth, and Mary S. Lockwood--to be retained by them during their lifetime, and at their demise to be returned to the Society, there to be deposited among the valuable historical mementos of our Society; and be it

Resolved, That all expenses attending the procurement and presentation of said medals be paid from any moneys in the treasury not otherwise appropriated.

Miss Washington and Miss Desha held positions in the Federal government. The former was a Virginian. The latter, a native of Kentucky, had recently returned to Washington from Alaska where she taught school. Mrs. Walworth, a lawyer, came from Illinois but received her legal training at the University of New York and conducted classes in parliamentary law in that city. Mrs. Lockwood, an author and newspaper writer, was born in New York City. The two last named women were widows.

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Eugenia Washington (1840-1900), holder of National Number One, served as one of the two first Registrars General, who jointly held office at that time. Affectionately called "Miss Eugie," Miss Washington was a modest and retiring person. Although suffering from a serious eye condition that made writing difficult, she diligently carried out the duties of her office.

We want a patriotic society founded on service and I will not become a member of an organization which is founded on rank and not on the service of the ancestors.

Mary Desha (1850-1911), designer of the Society's Seal, was a Vice President General of the newly formed Society. (The family name had originally been DeChene, but at this time was pronounced "Deshay," with the accent on the last syllable.) Her standard of action as a Daughter was the Constitution, and she would not permit the slightest departure from it.

I want the ladies to vote, but I want it to go on record that I wish to adhere to the strict letter of the Constitution.

Ellen Hardin Walworth (1832-1915) was the first Recording Secretary General. She was president and founder of the Art and Science Field Club of Saratoga (New York): it was she who suggested that the Society present a portrait of Mrs. Benjamin Harrison to the White House. Mrs. Walworth was by authorization of the Board of Management of May 7, 1892, editor of the Society's Magazine.

That the Board of Management publish a monthly magazine, which shall contain the report of the proceedings of the Continental Congress, and from time to time, the proceedings of the Board of Management, and such reports as may be sent from the respective Chapters, all to be under the charge of Mrs. Ellen Hardin Walworth, subject to the supervision of the Board.

Mary Smith Lockwood (1831-1922), the "Pen Founder" of the Society, was its first Historian General. A small, slight but extremely energetic woman, she was the author of several books and a member of the National Press Association. Although the oldest of the founders, she was the last survivor among them. It is Mrs. Lockwood who is credited with having spoken the first words in behalf of Memorial Continental Hall, in a motion she introduced at the second organizational meeting on October 18, 1890.

That after this Association has assisted in the completion of the monument of Mary Washington, the next effort shall be to provide a place for the collection of Historical relics.... This may first be in rooms, and later in the erection of a fireproof building.

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ADMINISTRATION BRIEFS OF THE PRESIDENTS GENERAL
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1890-1892 Mrs. Benjamin Harrison (Caroline Scott). Society incorporated under the laws of the District of Columbia. DAR Magazine authorized. (Published continuously since 1892.) Died in office.

1893-1895; 1896-1898 Mrs. Adlai E. Stevenson (Letitia Green). NSDAR granted a charter by the Congress of the United States. Children of the American Revolution created as a Society.

1895-1896 Mrs. John W. Foster (Mary Parke McPerson). Created office of Librarian General (Genealogical Library). Authorized Revolutionary Relics Committee (Museum). Contribution made to first historic restoration project (Jamestown embankment).

1898-1901 Mrs. Daniel Manning (Mary Margaretta Fryer). Recruited more than 500 nurses for the Spanish-American War; hospital corps organized. A War Relief Committee formed to aid needy families of soldiers. Presented launch to U.S. Government as a tender to hospital-ship Missouri.

1901-1905 Mrs. Charles W. Fairbanks (Cornelia Cole). Memorial Continental Hall site purchased; 72 architects submitted designs in competition; Edward Pearce Casey of New York awarded contract; cornerstone laid 1904 during Continental Congress. NSDAR initiated citizenship classes for foreign-born.

1905-1909 Mrs. Donald McLean (Emily Nelson Ritchie). NSDAR interest in mountain schools begun. Continental Congress of 1909 held in Memorial Continental Hall.

1909-1913 Mrs. Matthew T. Scott (Julia Green). Work among American Indians begun. Conservation Committee authorized. NSDAR presented statue of George Washington costing \$40,000 to University of Washington.

1913-1917 Mrs. William Cumming Story (Daisy Allen). During World War I, a standing committee for war relief authorized, to work with Advisory Board of the Council of National Defense; NSDAR undertook support of French war orphans.

1917-1920 Mrs. George Thacher Guernsey (Sarah Elizabeth Mitchell). Society loaned land to U.S. government for World War I temporary office building; purchased \$100,000 in Liberty Loan Bonds; contributed money to care for some 5,000 war orphans. President General visited France to study needs of French village of Tilloloy which Society had pledged itself to restore: water supply rebuilt, 60 houses completely furnished, livestock supplied.

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1920-1923 Mrs. George Maynard Minor (Anne Belle Rogers). Conference on Limitation of Armament held in Memorial Continental Hall; tablet of appreciation presented by U.S. government. Social and educational work among the immigrants at Ellis Island begun; first Manual of the United States for Immigrants and Foreigners published.

1923-1926 Mrs. Anthony Wayne Cook (Lora Haines). Published pamphlet on correct use of the Flag. Projects: Madonna of the Trail monuments, one in each state crossed by the National Old Trails Road; Pilgrim Memorial Fountain, Plymouth, Mass.

1926-1929 Mrs. Hall Brosseau (Grace Lincoln Hall). Constitution Hall built and dedicated. Founders Memorial and last Madonna of the Trail statue unveiled. Memorial to Caroline Scott Harrison: rehabilitation of main building at Oxford College for Women, Oxford, Ohio. Furnished George Washington's house in Philadelphia during Sesquicentennial Exposition.

1929-1932 Mrs. Lowell Fletcher Hobart (Edith Erwin). George Washington's Bicentennial: NSDAR presented oil painting of Martha Washington to Lee Mansion in Arlington Cemetery. Yorktown Sesquicentennial: two bronze tablets listing names of American and French soldiers who died there dedicated and unveiled.

1932-1935 Mrs. Russell William Magna (Edith Scott). NSDAR instrumental in having government officials photostat early U.S. census records. Occupational therapy provided by DAR at Ellis Island, at U.S. government request.

1935-1938 Mrs. William A. Becker (Florence Hague). Inaugurated annual \$1,000 contributions each to Kate Duncan Smith (KDS) and Tamassac DAR Schools. American Indians Committee authorized. Surrender Room at Yorktown furnished. Originated: National Defense News; Good Citizens Medal for boys and girls; Junior American Citizens Clubs, 21,418 members, sponsored by NSDAR.

1938-1941 Mrs. Henry M. Robert, Jr. (Sarah Corbin). 50th anniversary projects: presented Caroline Scott Harrison portrait to President Harrison Mansion, Indianapolis; construction of Archives Room; continuation of Penny Pine (conservation) Projects.

1941-1944 Mrs. William M. Pough (Helena R.). Aid offered U.S. government for national and civilian defense. Corridors of Constitution Hall used as offices by American Red Cross; Red Cross Unit organized; Air Raid Shelter, Hospital Room established; War Relief Service Work Rooms created; Constitution Hall used for benefit performances for Community War Fund and United China Relief; contributions totaling \$340,000 for equipment, blood plasma, blood

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donor centers and station wagons, etc. Occupational therapy work extended to Staten Island Marine Hospital. Memorial Bell Tower, Valley Forge, cornerstone laid, Carillon presented and dedicated.

1944-1947 Mrs. Julius Y. Talmadge (May Erwin). War projects: \$86,566 to U.S. Navy, Marine, Coast Guard, and Mayo General Hospital; \$3,400 for radio head sets donated to bed patients at Staten Island Hospital; DAR members purchased more than \$152,000,000 war bonds; triptychs donated for battlefield worship, \$2,000; presented U.S. Navy Award of Achievement for outstanding services in World War II. Buildings used by war units reconditioned for DAR use. Contributed \$25,000 each to two DAR Schools, KDS and Tamassess, on their 25th anniversaries; \$1,100 each to 12 Approved DAR Schools.

1947-1950 Mrs. Roscoe C. O'Byrne (Estella A.). Over \$350,000 in cash contributed to DAR Schools. Addition to Administration Building approved and built. National Tribute Grove in California dedicated, \$26,000.

1950-1953 Mrs. James B. Patton (Marguerite Courtright). Silk American Flag presented for Speaker's Rostrum, U.S. House of Representatives; General Douglas MacArthur speaker at Continental Congress, April 1950. Special Award to NSDAR from Freedoms Foundation, Valley Forge. President General by invitation of U.S. Defense Department, joined on inspection tour of 5 military services training centers; presided at Yorktown ceremonies.

1953-1956 Miss Gertrude Sprague Carraway. Constitution Hall renovated and repainted, approximate cost, \$175,000. Constitution Week commemoration started in 1955, with DAR help, by U.S. Senate and continued in 1956; NSDAR received a special award from Freedoms Foundation, Valley Forge for outstanding observance of this commemoration. Additional annual awards to service academies; new medicine, nursing, and occupational therapy scholarships.

1956-1959 Mrs. Frederic A. Groves (Allene Wilson). Authorized committee to commemorate American History Month. Acquired 98 original letters, documents, and manuscripts from all 74 statesmen who attended the Constitutional Convention in 1787. Award of Merit established recognizing patriotic service directed toward preservation of our Constitutional Republic. Friends of the Museum formed to further work of DAR Museum. New Americanism Medal authorized for Naturalized Citizens. Allene Wilson Groves Cottage at Tamassess endorsed.

1959-1962 Mrs. Ashmead White (Doris Pike). Meadow Garden, former home of George Walton (a Signer of the Declaration of Independence), given to Georgia State Society, NSDAR. Doris Pike White auditorium-gymnasium at KDS built.

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1962-1965 Mrs. Robert V. H. Duncan (Marion Moncure). Published "In Washington: The DAR Story" to commemorate 75th anniversary of NSDAR. Emphasis on public relations. Interest in youth projects: \$1,000 annual DAR Good Citizen National Award established; junior members of DAR stressed.

1965-1968 Mrs. William Henry Sullivan, Jr. (Adele Erb). 75th Anniversary Administration. In 1966, the Washington National Symphony, with Van Cliburn as guest soloist, gave a special concert in the newly air-conditioned and refurbished Constitution Hall, the first such equipped auditorium in Washington with the largest capacity audience under one roof. The President of the United States and Mrs. Johnson attended. Adele Erb Sullivan Administration Building constructed at Tennessee DAR School; dormitory completed and furnished at St. Mary's Episcopal School for Indian Girls. "DAR Patriot Index" compiled. Awards established: Dr. Anita Newcomb McGee Award to Army Nurse of the Year; DAR ROTC Medal; \$8,000 NSDAR American History Scholarship for senior high school students; Citation to U.S. Marine Band. Committees established: United States of America Bicentennial; DAR Service for Veteran-Patients; Department of American Historical Research. President General visited U.S. Armed Forces in combat area, S. Vietnam, where she awarded 47 DAR Americanism Medals. Special DAR Museum events for Armed Forces personnel and tickets given to hospitalized Vietnam veterans for Constitution Hall events. President General received by First Lady, Mrs. Johnson, to present nine pieces of crystal from a service given to President Warren G. Harding in 1921.

1968-1971 Mrs. Erwin Frees Seimes (Betty Newkirk). National Symphony Orchestra booked programs in Constitution Hall for the summer, first time ever. Americana Collection indexed and catalogued. Genealogical Society of the Church of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons) microfilmed the DAR Library holdings. Presented Certificates of Honor to families of U.S. servicemen killed in Vietnam. Seimes-Thomas Classroom Building at KDS DAR School built. DAR Magazine: awarded Freedoms Foundation George Washington Honor Medal; published list of marked graves of Revolutionary soldiers and patriots. Continental Congress (annual meeting) televised in Constitution Hall by National Broadcasting Company, a first. Rose Garden in Independence Hall Park, Philadelphia, presented to National Park Service, January 1971.

1971-1974 Mrs. Donald Spicer (Eleanor Washington). Project: "A Gift to the Nation;" refurbishing of Governor's Council Chamber and Assembly Committee Room on second floor of Independence Hall. NSDAR accorded membership in Veterans Administration National Advisory Committee. DAR Museum accredited by American Association of Museums. Air Force Band initiated free Sunday afternoon concerts in Constitution Hall. President General one of two women invited to week-long Joint Civilian Orientation Conference conducted by Department of Defense, touring military installations in five states.

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1974-1975 Mrs. Henry Stewart Jones (Sara Roddis). Project planned: murals in East Corridor of House of Representatives, United States Capitol. President General member of Editorial Committee of The Hereditary Register of the United States of America. Flag of U.S.A. presented to Museum of African Art in Washington, D.C. Died in office.

1975-1977 Mrs. Wakelee Rawson Smith (Jane Farwell). Special emphasis on Bicentennial of U.S.A. Completed project of murals, a "Bicentennial Tribute to the United States of America." Citations presented to U.S. Capitol Historical Society and its president, Mr. Fred Schwengel, and to Mr. Allyn Cox, muralist. Buildings constructed and renovated at KDS and Tamamsee DAR Schools. Authorized book on historic and memorial buildings owned by the DAR anywhere. Produced "Home and Country," an audio-visual film of NSDAR. Flags presented: U.S. Flags for rostrums of the Senate and the House of Representatives and five new State Flags at the United States Naval Academy. Special Museum programs for children inaugurated. President General elected to Board of Trustees of the United States Capitol Historical Society.

1977-1980 Mrs. George Upham Baylies (Jeannette Osborn). Held in Lobby of Constitution Hall: first art show and first antique show. Home Economics Building constructed at KDS DAR School. Special gala celebration of 50th anniversary of Constitution Hall and 75th anniversary of Memorial Continental Hall. Naval Education & Training Center, Newport, Rhode Island, added to list of service academies receiving NSDAR awards. President General advisory member of Board of Outstanding Young Women of America; invited to join American Newspaper Women's Club; served on advisory board of drug rehabilitation center in Washington, D.C.

1980-1983 Mrs. Richard Denny Shelby (Patricia Walton). Two First Day Issue stamp ceremonies held in DAR Library by U.S. Postal Service. Medals of Honor presented by NSDAR to S. Dillon Ripley, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, and L. Bruce Laingen, Foreign Service Officer, Iranian hostage; to Fran McKee and the Hon. Margaret Chase Smith. First Outstanding Veteran Patient Award presented. American Flag presented to 1981 National Boy Scout Jamboree; American Flag flown over U.S. Capitol presented to National Headquarters of The Girl Scouts of America; small American Flags presented to 1982 World's Fair for July 4th Extravaganza. Pilgrimage of Remembrance: visit to Europe--England, France. First major loan exhibition in DAR Museum, "The Jewish Community in Early America." Established Outstanding Teacher of American History Award. Yorktown Bicentennial: NSDAR Bus Tour to Yorktown; bronze plaque dedicated in memory of men of French Fleet in Battle Off the Virginia Capes. Special events in Constitution Hall: 25th Anniversary of Country Music Association; first Executive Forum in Hall with President of U.S. and Cabinet attending; Vietnam Veterans Salute.

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1983-1986 Mrs. Walter Hughley King (Sarah McKelley). Treaty of Paris Bicentennial Celebration: DAR Tour to Paris with more than 200 DAR members, August 25 - September 3, 1983. Marker dedicated at Yorktown Square honoring Peacemakers Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, and John Adams; President General addressed people of Paris at reception given by Mayor; NSDAR hosted dinner at Chateau de Versailles attended by more than 500; President General led Executive Officers and Pages with Flags in march up the Champs Elysees to Arc de Triomphe where wreath was placed at France's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. DAR Peacemaker Award presented to: Mrs. Douglas MacArthur, Madame la Marechal LeClerc de Hautecloque; Secretary of the Army, the Honorable John D. Marsh; the Vice President of the United States, the Honorable George Bush. Publications: DAR Library Catalog, 2nd edition; "Black Courage, 1775-1783" (black soldiers and patriots in the American Revolution); "The Arts of Independence" (DAR Museum collection); and, in celebration of the 100th birthday of the Statue of Liberty, promoted "In Search of Liberty - The Story of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island." DAR Day, June 14, at 1984 Louisiana World Exposition, New Orleans - President General Grand Marshal for Flag Day Parade. Also Grand Marshal of Fourth of July National Independence Day Parade, Washington, D.C.

(Compiled July, 1984)

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ADDENDUM

Miss Anderson performed at Constitution Hall several times, beginning in the 1940s. Far more well known, however, is an occasion on which she did not sing there. A controversy developed in 1939 when the Daughters of the American Revolution did not grant permission for a concert by Miss Anderson in Constitution Hall. The hall was previously booked for the date originally requested for Miss Anderson's concert, but in addition the DAR at that time had a policy of inserting clauses in Constitution Hall contracts that allowed "whites only" to perform in the hall. As a result of the public controversy surrounding the exclusion of Miss Anderson from the hall, it was arranged for her to perform at the Lincoln Memorial. On Easter Sunday of 1939 she sang an outdoor concert at the Memorial attended by an estimated 75,000 people, including a number of Federal officials. This event became a emblem of struggle for equal opportunity and against racial segregation for many Americans.

In a statement prepared in 1973, the DAR described the situation that arose following the initial request for the use of Constitution Hall in these words:

Because of a series of unfortunate misunderstandings afterward, a controversy developed, and Miss Anderson sang on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington. International publicity which followed was extremely detrimental to the DAR, and dramatically but incorrectly made a segment of the public regard the DAR as racist. It has been said that the incident was the first successful Civil Rights activist event.

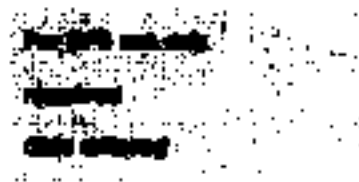
In 1939, Washington was, as it had always been, a segregated city. This was still the situation in 1945, when Eleanor Roosevelt wrote in her column, 'My Day:' 'I do not think one can hold the DAR alone responsible.' Other concert halls, theaters, churches, restaurants, hotels, schools, golf courses, and even government cafeterias were segregated in Washington as they were over much of the country.

Segregation was an ugly part of America's history and most of our institutions shared the blame."

It is certainly true that the DAR was not alone in imposing restrictions based on race. In many Washington theaters and movie houses, audiences were segregated. It is questionable, however, that any commercial theaters or concert halls in the District of Columbia, other than Constitution Hall, had a formal policy of excluding black performers from their stages, even where blacks were excluded from audiences. Certainly, black performers appeared on "white" stages in Washington through the 1930s and before. It is also true, though, that after the DAR denied permission for the concert, the DC Board of Education refused an application for Miss Anderson to perform in the auditorium of one of the city's high schools for white pupils. Race

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was apparently a factor in this decision. The Board of Education later reversed its decision, but with a proviso to the effect that this should not be considered as setting a precedent, and this proviso proved unacceptable to the concert sponsors. In the press, the issue of the segregation of the DC public school system was discussed in connection with this controversy.

DAR members have at times indicated that in their opinion the public controversy over this matter was unleashed too quickly for the DAR to consider in a dignified way, free of public pressure, whether to make an exception to the "white performers only" policy in Miss Anderson's case and to consider alternative concert dates. In any case, the DAR National Board of Management, meeting in February, 1939, voted not to set aside the "white artists only" policy for Miss Anderson.

This policy had not been instituted until March of 1932, at which time the renowned black tenor Roland Hayes and the Hampton Institute Choir had already performed at Constitution Hall. The clause was dropped by the DAR in 1953, after black artists had performed at the Hall in several benefits, and after Dorothy Maynor had performed there in 1952, becoming the first commercially sponsored black artist to appear in the Hall since before 1939.

The publicity that arose as a result of the DAR's refusal to open their Hall to Marian Anderson in 1939 focused public discussion on a national scale on the issue of racial discrimination. The Easter Sunday concert was a highly public gesture that had powerful symbolic value and has become part of popular consciousness of the history of race relations in the United States. For some contemporaries, it acquired special meaning because of events in Europe that also raised issues of personal liberties and unjust discrimination. Dr. Anson Phelps Stokes was not alone in his concerns when he said:

I cannot but believe that the DAR's action in banning Miss Anderson was immediately known in Moscow, Berlin and Rome and that it has given aid and encouragement to the opponents of true democracy.

Perhaps this is among the reasons why, in an era when, as the DAR has correctly pointed out, segregation was widespread, the refusal to allow one singer to perform in Constitution Hall became a cause célèbre and provoked a nationwide debate about racial injustice.

(This addendum was prepared by National Park Service staff in compliance with a recommendation made by the National Park System Advisory Board at a meeting in May, 1985, when the Board considered the nomination of Constitution Hall for National Historic Landmark nomination.)

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National Park Service

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PRIMARY BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SOURCES

The major sources of material for this landmark nomination are the original records of the National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution in the Society's Archives. Manuscript Minutes of the National Board of Management from 1890 to date were consulted for references to the site and buildings. The blueprints and specifications of the architect, John Russell Pope, as well as the correspondence between him and the Society's President General, were primary material. Others:

Public Law No. 19, H.R. 3553, An Act to Incorporate the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Second Day of December, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Ninety Five.

Annual Proceedings, 1892 to date. (In accordance with above Act, submitted annually to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, for communication to Congress.)

Constitution Hall, Office of the Manager. Records and programs.

Government of the District of Columbia. The Architect's Advisory Council, December 11, 1928.

Reports of the Presidents General, NSDAR, 1925-1930.

SECONDARY

Butkovich, Sister Mary Virginia. "Hans Kindler, 1892-1949." A dissertation, Catholic University Library.

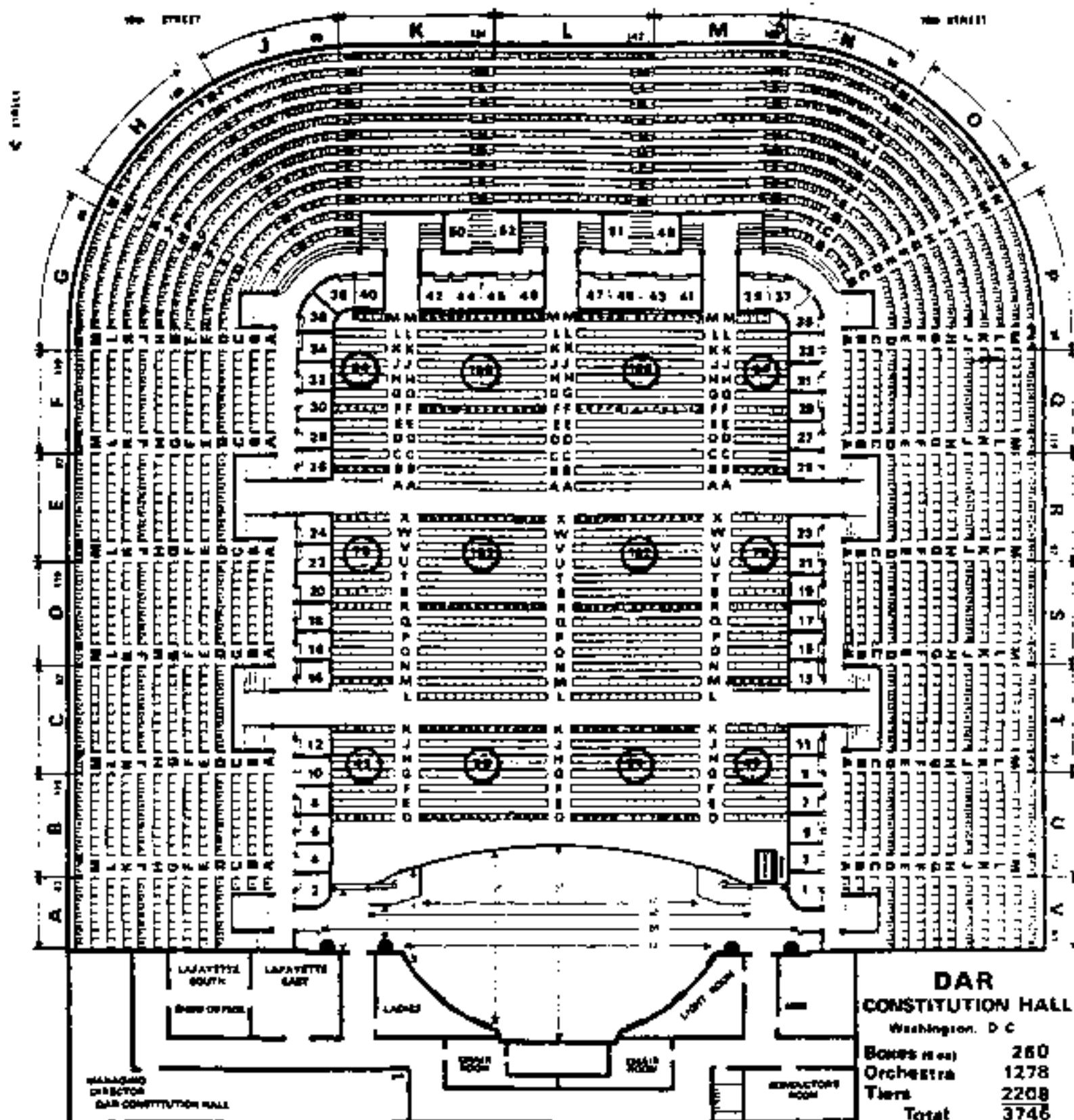
DAR Magazine, 1924 to date. (The monthly publication of the Society.)

Goode, James M. The Outdoor Sculpture of Washington, D.C. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1974.

"Hans Kindler—Programs of the National Symphony Orchestra, 1931-1949,"
A collection.

Paris, W. Franklyn. "John Russell Pope, 1873-1937," The Hall of American Artists. New York University, 1951.

"Washington, City and Capital," Federal Writers' Project, WPA. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1937. Pp. 339-342.



The floor plan of the auditorium. (Courtesy, NSOAR, 1985)

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DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

American Red Cross National Headquarters

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

17th and D Streets, N. W.

CITY, TOWN

Washington, D. C.

VICINITY OF

STATE

District of Columbia

CODE

II

-- NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

COUNTY

District of Columbia

CODE

011

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

DISTRICT

☒ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC☐ PRIVATE☒ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES RESTRICTED☐ YES UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ COMMERCIAL☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ GOVERNMENT☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☒ MUSEUM☐ PARK☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ TRANSPORTATION☒ OTHER Offices

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

American National Red Cross c/o The President

STREET & NUMBER

17th and D Streets, N. W.

CITY, TOWN

Washington

VICINITY OF

STATE

District of Columbia

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Recorder of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

6th and D Streets, N. W.

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

District of Columbia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

FILE

Historic American Buildings Survey (DC-347)

DATE

1974

☒ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR

SURVEY RECORDS Division of Prints and Photographs Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE
District of Columbia

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT
☒ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☒ UNALTERED
☐ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Built in 1915-17, with public and private funds, and dedicated as a Memorial to the women of the Civil War, the Red Cross Main Headquarters building, is a large white stone building, designed in the Beaux Arts style with traditional classical ornaments. The architects were Breck Trowbridge and Goodhue Livingston of New York, and the building was constructed by the Boyle-Robertson Construction Company of Washington. The cornerstone was laid March 27, 1915, the first occupants moved in February 3, 1917, and the completed building was dedicated May 12, 1917. The final cost of the site and building was \$ 854,197.51.

As described by Nancy Schwartz, of the Historic American Buildings Survey, in the District of Columbia Catalog (1976) the American Red Cross National Headquarters building, on the west side of 17th Street, N.W., between D and E Streets, is constructed of white Vermont marble, eleven bays wide across the east front by five bays, three stories in height on a raised basement, with the third story recessed behind a balustrade.

The hipped roof has tall interior chimneys. A projecting vestrystyle Corinthian entrance portico with pediment stretches across the central east facade, while the remaining bays of this principal facade are separated by two-story engaged Corinthian columns. The end (north and south) elevations have slightly projecting unpedimented porticoes.

The main bronze grille entrance doors lead into a broad central hall finished in marble, with a wide stairway to the second floor. Above this stairway are three marble busts, "Faith," "Hope," and "Charity" by the noted American sculptor Hiram Powers. In the central lobby areas on all three floors of the building are paintings, sculpture and historical exhibits. On the second story, The Board of Governors Hall occupies the entire north end of the building. Three stained-glass windows by Louis Comfort Tiffany comprise the center of one wall. The panels are of St. Philomena, patron saint of the sick; a group of armored knights, symbolizing Red Cross services in war; and a figure representing Truth, with an apron overflowing with red roses. The Central Committee Room occupies the central portion of the east side of the second story. The Chairman, the President, and a Vice President occupy offices at the south end of the second story.

The Red Cross complex occupies the entire city block, is known as Red Cross Square, and includes two additional administration buildings on the north and west, one begun in 1928 and the other in 1931, and a landscaped garden in the middle of the block. Only the original, main headquarters building (1915-17), on the east end of the block has been designated as the national historic landmark.

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS-GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1915 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Trowbridge and Livingston

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

American Red Cross

Main Headquarters of the Nation's largest official relief organization, the National Headquarters building has seen the Red Cross grow from 120 local chapters before the American entry into World War I to about 3,100 chapters now serving every State and territory of the United States. Built with both Federal and private funds, this building illustrates the cooperation of government and private efforts in carrying out the important duties of the Red Cross. Federal legislation creating a commission for a Memorial to the Women of the Civil War was enacted on October 22, 1913, charging the members to procure a site and design a memorial building to be the permanent headquarters of the American Red Cross. The "Marble Palace" was the result.

The United States was being ravaged by civil war when the Red Cross movement was forming in Europe. Forerunners of the effort here were the work of the United States Sanitary Commission during the Civil War, and the work of an individual, Clara Barton. She cared for soldiers of the Union and the Confederacy on battlefields and in military hospitals, inspiring others to follow her lead. In 1881, Clara Barton succeeded in founding the American Association of the Red Cross and the following year, Congress ratified the Geneva Convention, giving the Red Cross official sanction. The American National Red Cross was granted a Congressional charter in 1900.

One of the new organization's first acts was in behalf of the victims of the devastating Michigan forest fires of 1881. Disaster relief operations continued in 1882, 1884, and 1889 following the severe flooding of various rivers. The idea of an organized program of voluntary relief for disaster victims was the major contribution of Clara Barton to the Red Cross movement worldwide. (See also, Clara Barton House, Glen Echo, Maryland, National Historic Site).

Mabel T. Boardman assumed a leading role in the American Red Cross in 1904. In 1905, the present charter of the American National Red Cross went into effect. The charter, still in effect, reaffirmed Red Cross responsibilities for disaster relief and for assistance to the armed forces, required annual reports to Congress, and placed the actual direction of the Red Cross in the hands of a Central Committee. An amendment in 1947 broadened chapter representation on the governing body, renaming it the Board of Governors.

(Continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


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 Ibid. Facts and Answers to Questions About the Red Cross. (Washington, 1963).
 Ibid. The American Red Cross: A Brief Story. (Washington, 1963).
 U.S. Senate. Public Buildings in the District of Columbia. (Washington, 1918).
 Federal Writers' Project. Washington: City and Capital. (Washington, 1937).
 Nancy B. Schwartz, District of Columbia Catalog of the Historic American Buildings Survey. 1976.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Approximately 1-1/4 acres.

LIST OF REFERENCES

A	1, 8	3, 2, 3	0, 3, 0	4, 3, 0, 6	8, 6, 0
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING	
C					

8  ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The national historic landmark boundary has been drawn to enclose the 1915 American Red Cross National Headquarters Main Building alone, with some lawn area around it, a setting for the building. The landmark is bounded by a line 22.5 feet north of the north curb of D Street, N.W., a line 30 feet west of the west curb of 17th Street, N.W., a line 29 feet south of the south curb of E Street, N.W., and by a line drawn across the block known as Red Cross Square, north to south 10 feet to the rear of the building, from D to E Streets, N.W.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
-------	------	--------	------

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	TIME
-------	------	--------	------

FORM PREPARED BY

NAME : [] [] []

Blanche Higgins Schroer, Landmark Review Project, original report 12/1/64

ORGANIZATION

DATE _____

Historic Sites Survey. National Park Service

STREET & NAME

ΤΕΛΕΡΕΜΟΝΙΑΣ

1100 "L" Street, S. W.

(202) 523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

STAT6

Washington.

District of Columbia

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL MX

STATE..

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER'S SIGNATURE _____

TITLE

DATE

NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE _____

DATE _____

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Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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Signature

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American Red Cross National Headquarters

Although the duties of the Red Cross are imposed by the Congressional charter, the organization is supported mostly by the voluntary contributions of the American people. In times of public distress, the President of the United States makes government transportation and communication facilities available to the Red Cross to facilitate its work.

In 1909 the Red Cross turned its attention to an additional field--that of nursing. Programs such as elementary hygiene and home care of the sick were organized. Wilbert Longfellow, in 1914 persuaded the Red Cross to begin courses in swimming and lifesaving. In 1916, at the request of the Surgeon General of the Army, the Red Cross undertook the organizing of hospital units. With America's entry into World War I, these units became U.S. Army Base Hospitals in France. The organization also provided nurses and other personnel to aid servicemen with counseling and to provide communications between the men and their families.

In the postwar period, the Red Cross broadened its program of peacetime activity, developing new techniques in disaster relief and services to veterans, and expanding its health and welfare services. There was a dramatic expansion in training in first aid, nursing skills, and water safety. During the disastrous drought and depression years of the 1930's, the Red Cross was called upon by the government to help with the distribution of food and clothing. During the same period the Red Cross took the first steps in blood donor recruiting that led to the formation of Red Cross Blood Services.

In World War II, no longer responsible for organizing military hospitals and providing medical staff for them, the Red Cross nonetheless was engaged in numerous other activities. It provided a wealth of volunteer and staff manpower in military hospitals, assigned field directors to major U.S. military units, supplied nearly 13.5 million units of blood for plasma for servicemen, and operated clubs and clubmobiles for the men in overseas rest and recreation areas. In conjunction with Red Cross societies in other countries, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the League of Red Cross Societies, the American Red Cross carried on extensive relief and rehabilitation programs for the civilian victims of the war.

After the war, marked changes were made in both the organizational structure and the programs of the Red Cross. Emphasis was placed on the concept of involving the entire community in programs and projects for young people and people of retirement age were much expanded.

In the 50's and 60's, after several major natural disasters, the Red Cross conducted enormous and costly relief operations. As government took a stronger hand in disaster relief, the Red Cross worked closely with governmental agencies in mobilizing resources for disaster and met its responsibility for emergency care. Its assistance included providing shelter, food, clothing, blood and blood products, medical and nursing care, essential household furnishings, interim housing, personal occupational supplies, and transportation, and meeting the most urgent immediate needs of families for minor repairs to make their homes livable.

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American Red Cross National Headquarters

In 1948, building upon its experience in World War II, the Red Cross established blood services that, by the 1980's, were meeting a large share of the blood needs of the Nation and playing a leading role in blood research. Safety services and nursing and health services kept growing, and the Red Cross continued its service to men and women in the armed forces and assistance to veterans and their families.

History prepared by Carol Kolb, Research Assistant, Historic Sites Survey, 1975.