

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION FORM

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1. Name of Property

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historic name: General Federation of Women's Clubs Headquarters

other name/site number: Miles Mansion

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2. Location

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street & number: 1734 N Street, NW

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Washington

vicinity: N/A

state: DC county: District of Columbia code: 001 zip code: 20036

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3. Classification

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Ownership of Property: private

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	2	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	2	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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4. State/Federal Agency Certification

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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. _____ See continuation sheet.

 Signature of certifying official Date

 State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. _____ See continuation sheet.

 Signature of commenting or other official Date

 State or Federal agency and bureau

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5. National Park Service Certification

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I, hereby certify that this property is:

- | | | |
|---|-------|-------|
| _____ entered in the National Register
See continuation sheet. | _____ | _____ |
| _____ determined eligible for the
National Register
See continuation sheet. | _____ | _____ |
| _____ determined not eligible for the
National Register | _____ | _____ |
| _____ removed from the National Register | _____ | _____ |
| _____ other (explain): _____ | _____ | _____ |

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic: social Sub: clubhouse

Current : social Sub: clubhouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Late Victorian Renaissance

Other Description: _____

Materials: foundation- masonry roof- tin walls- brick other- _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance. _X_ See continuation sheet.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: National

Applicable National Register Criteria: A
Applicable National Historic Landmark Criteria: 1

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : N/A

Areas of Significance: social history
conservation
education
health/medicine

NHL Theme: XXXI. Social and Humanitarian Movements
L. General Philanthropy
J. Poverty Relief and Urban Reform

Period(s) of Significance: 1922 to 1945

Significant Dates: N/A

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

X See continuation sheet.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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X See continuation sheet.

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

X Other -- Specify Repository: GFWC Archives, Washington, D.C.

Washington Historical Society, Washington, D.C.

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property: less than one acre

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A 18 323090 4308230 B _____
C _____ D _____

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: ___ See continuation sheet.

The nominated property occupies city Lot 22 and the west 12 feet, 6 inches of city Lot 23, in Square 159.

Boundary Justification: ___ See continuation sheet.

The boundary includes the entire city lot that has been associated with the property, as per the District of Columbia Office of the Surveyor, and the original deeds to the property.

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11. Form Prepared By
=====

Name/Title: Page Putnam Miller, Director
 Jill S. Topolski

Organization: National Coordinating Committee Date: September 25, 1989
 for the Promotion of History (revised June 6, 1991)

Street & Number: 400 A Street, SE Telephone (202) 544-2422

City or Town: Washington State: DC Zip Code: 20003

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DESCRIPTION OF SITE:

The house at 1734 N Street, NW, is located on a quiet residential street near Dupont Circle, an area developed in the 1870's as wealthy Washingtonians built opulent homes. Although most of the buildings are now used as offices, these elegant Victorian mansions were originally private homes. The house at 1734 N Street, NW was built by Rear Admiral William Radford in 1875 when he retired from the U.S. Navy.

This four bay, four story, rectangular building displays a disciplined and unusual composition of elements associated with Renaissance architecture. It has neither the studied formalism of many Renaissance inspired buildings, nor the exuberance of earlier Italianate buildings. The overall impression is one of regularity, though the facade is asymmetrical. The entrance is off-center, but the two right bays are grouped together so that a tripartite reading of the facade is possible. The lower floors are of smooth faced coursed ashlar and form a strong base for the plainer brick upper floors. Though a complex play of keystones, bay window, cornices, consoles, string courses, and balconies exists on that base, the overall effect is one of restraint, partly because none of the elements or motifs projects more than a foot or two from the wall. The most dramatic feature of the front elevation is the iron and glass marquee soaring over the front entrance. Another dramatic feature, also marking an entrance, is the monumental arch in the deeply recessed carriage entrance on the left of the building. That arch, with its monumental scale, is the motif that most strongly recalls the Renaissance palazzos.

The entrance is two steps below street level and is recessed. Conversely, the bay it occupies projects slightly, which is the only pronounced vertical feature of the facade. To the left of the entrance is a two-story bay window. Balancing the bay on the right of the entrance is a large double window. Both are topped by shallow balconies with heavy balustrades.

The second floor appears, because of its pronounced ornament, to be the primary floor, or piano-nobile. The windows on that floor are unusual; single pane casement windows are topped by curved transoms, above which are transom windows with round center lights. A string course divides the first floor from the second, while a pronounced cornice, which forms the base of the balustrades, separates the second floor from the upper two. The windows on the upper floors are simple, with only jack arches with contrasting keystones and end blocks as trim. A wide entablature with pronounced dentils caps the building. The roof has a low pitch and cannot be seen from the street. The chimneys, though, are visible, and dilute the impression of the sharp edge of the cornice against the sky. The corner of the building not occupied by a party wall has smooth faced ashlar quoins and the wrapped around end of the entablature.

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The Radford family lived here until 1895 when the house was purchased by the citizens of Massachusetts as a gift for General Nelson A. Miles, Commanding General of the United States Army. He was responsible for building a stable behind the house (now the Iron Gate Inn Restaurant), and enclosing the driveway with tall iron gates that still stand. The house was later owned by Mr. and Mrs. John Jay White, Jr. who remodeled the house into a modern residence. John White was a world traveler and big-game hunter who frequently accompanied Theodore Roosevelt on expeditions, and thus commissioned Albert Herter to paint murals on the drawing room walls of exotic animals and birds. Following World War I, the house was used by the Czechoslovakian Legation for eighteen months. In 1922, White sold the property to the General Federation of Women's Clubs.

A newspaper article dated March 8, 1922 described the house in detail as GFWC moved in. At either side of the building entrance were offices which housed the legislative, research and distribution headquarters of the organization. Behind the offices were the kitchens, the pantry, and the housekeeper's office. The second floor had a music room and conservatory which opened out into a formal garden. There was also a white-paneled dining room, a reception room with fireplace, a library, and a sixty-foot lounge. The upper floors were equipped with sixteen bedrooms, six baths and a large sitting room which was at the disposal of visiting GFWC members. This main building has never been altered structurally, but it has been redecorated several times during the GFWC's occupancy.

From 1923 to the present, one of the bedrooms has been reserved for the President who remains in residence for her two-year term in office. In 1952, the presidential bedroom was made into an apartment consisting of a bedroom, sitting room, bathroom and small kitchen all decorated in the French Provincial style. In 1955 GFWC conducted additional remodeling of the headquarters building. This included fireproofing of the building and a third floor connection to the building at 1738 N Street, which had been purchased by the GFWC in 1951. The remodeling involved changes in the bathrooms but the basic integrity of the floor plan remained unchanged. The Junior Federation was responsible for the restoration of the marquee in front of the building in 1958.

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HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

The house at 1734 N Street, NW was the first permanent headquarters building of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the foremost umbrella organization of women's clubs. Within the context of the National Historic Landmark Program thematic framework the General Federation of Women's Clubs has national significance under theme: XXXI. Social and Humanitarian Movements (L) General Philanthropy and (J) Poverty Relief and Urban Reform. For the later part of the nineteenth century and much of the twentieth century, the women's clubs were an essential vehicle for women's activity outside of the home.

Although founded in 1890, GFWC was most active after their move to 1734 N Street in 1922, when it became involved in conservation projects and community programs including anti-drug campaigns and adult literacy. Despite the fact that there were state federations of women's clubs as well as individual clubs throughout the country, GFWC remains the most significant representation of the entire women's club movement on a national scale. Even though GFWC previously maintained temporary information centers, the building on N Street was its first official headquarters, and thus is the most appropriate structure to represent their work.

Most upper and middle-class women in the nineteenth century were relegated to their own separate sphere, where they were responsible for running the household and most importantly, raising the children. Although the prevailing attitude viewed women as morally superior to men, they were also seen as frail and weak. In order to assert their own autonomy, some women worked within their sphere, developing their world of domesticity. According to historian Karen Blair, a specialist on the woman's club movement, this attitude was not isolated. She asserts that universally women sought to expand their sphere, and in order to achieve moral and domestic perfection, turned their energies toward schools, libraries and benevolent associations. Their vehicle of change was the woman's club.¹

In 1868, the exclusively male New York Press Club denied entrance to a lecture by Charles Dickens to journalist Jane Cunningham Croly. As a result, she began Sorosis, a literary club that appealed to career women. In the same year, a group of reform-minded Boston women began the New England Woman's Club. Both clubs sought to offer women intellectual stimulation, companionship, and ways for women to exert their influence outside of their homes. Sorosis women met and discussed such issues as higher education for women (which they favored because it provided further independence for women), however they rejected controversial issues such as suffrage and religion. Sorosis did encourage discussions on literary and artistic topics, thus redefining culture as a female-centered topic. The New England Woman's Club also functioned for social and cultural purposes; however, they proved to be more active in directly improving the quality of women's lives.

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NEWC immediately accepted women's suffrage as part of their program, and began projects to benefit women. They established a horticultural school to open a new labor field for women, they lobbied for representation on the school board, and they advocated Dress Reform. Both groups were responsible for forming club branches outside of their own clubs.²

In addition to the growing number of Sorosis clubs and NEWC affiliates, women across the country formed small literary and local civic clubs. These clubwomen were not typically career women or reformers, yet they still desired a greater arena of activity. The clubs stressed personal growth and development and taught women valuable speaking skills. Clubwomen were not radical suffragists. They refused to challenge the image of the ideal lady or the myth of women's instinctive moral and domestic traits, and as a result, these clubs were attractive to a larger number of women. Because they were successful in expanding their sphere, they saw no need to demand equality despite the fact that they asserted their role outside of the home as well as within it.³

In 1889, Sorosis invited representatives from clubs throughout the country to meet in New York City. Jane Cunningham Croly expressed a desire to unite these many literary and study clubs under one umbrella society. The idea was approved by the close of the conference, and a constitution establishing the General Federation of Women's Clubs was ratified in 1890. The New England Woman's Club decided not to join the new Federation. Croly's initial objective was to perpetuate cultural programs, but GFWC soon focused on civic work. The women of the 1890's were of a different generation from the women who had originally formed women's clubs. These second-generation clubwomen discovered that they could have influence and were more ready to approach public problems than their foremothers. As a result, GFWC members worked with public programs (conservation, sewage), family problems (child labor and juvenile courts), working class programs (minimum wage and factory abuses), and women's rights (police matrons, scholarship and coeducation).⁴ Libraries had always been a main concern of clubwomen, and GFWC is responsible for establishing 75 percent of America's public libraries. Individual local clubs, as members of GFWC, contributed extremely important and valuable services to the community and the nation. The Chicago Women's Club succeeded in having the first juvenile court law passed, and the Worcester Women's Club (Massachusetts) established kindergartens, public playgrounds, and occupational therapy programs in hospitals. Individual clubwomen who excelled in community and civic service were also GFWC members, for example Emily P. Bissell who established the Christmas Seal program to end tuberculosis. Beginning with the presidency of Anna Pennybacker (1912-1916), GFWC collaborated with government agencies such as the Departments of Labor, Interior, and Agriculture to establish programs. As an indication of the importance of the clubwomen's volunteer contributions to the war effort, President Wilson made an exception to national policy prohibiting the holding of national organizational

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meetings during World War I and the GFWC was permitted to hold a convention in 1918.⁵

The General Federation of Women's Clubs was originally a union of individual clubs, but as early as 1893 began accepting state federations as members. In order for individual clubs to meet their own needs at a local level and allow as many clubs as possible to collaborate on civic projects, they organized themselves first as a local federation and by 1911 each state federation was also a member of GFWC. GFWC representatives, along with state federation members, met biennially at a convention held in a different city throughout the country, with representatives from state federations included. GFWC had acquired a society-like reputation, and these conventions often resembled an extended social event. The Federation maintained a policy of not discussing religion and politics until the early twentieth century when they modified their stance. As women gained access to the traditionally male-dominated world, GFWC women reflected this change in status. Beginning in 1906, suffrage was discussed at the conventions. Clubwomen asserted that society and home values now belonged in the public sphere and that the vote could help achieve that goal. GFWC formally adopted a suffrage platform at the 1914 convention.

As early as the 1892 convention, Federation members proposed a Headquarters building, but no action was taken. In 1904, the Federation established a Bureau of Information at the home of Mary I. Wood in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, under the direction of President Sarah Platt Decker who saw a need for a central clearing house of club information. This Bureau was responsible for disseminating information and literature to club members, although it did not serve as a central administrative headquarters. Later, GFWC rented rooms in a Portsmouth building and then in a Washington, D.C. building at 1410 H Street. According to an Act of Congress signed by President William McKinley in 1901 granting a charter to GFWC, "said Corporation shall have its Headquarters in Washington, District of Columbia."

In 1920, GFWC adopted a resolution that stated "the General Federation of Women's Clubs, to comply with the terms of its Charter and meet its own needs shall build its own Headquarters in the city of Washington, D.C., which Headquarters shall be commensurate with the dignity, size and influence of the organization." A building was found at 1734 N Street, NW and Alice Ames Winter, GFWC President, took an option on the building. She and each of the five Executive Committee members contributed \$1000 each. The Board of Directors met in January of 1922, and approved the purchase. The purchase price of \$70,000 plus an additional \$35,000 was raised at the 1922 Biennial Convention, and GFWC officially took possession of the building in April, 1922. A house on the west side of the building, 1738 N Street, NW, was purchased by GFWC in 1951 and a somewhat larger house at 1728 N Street, NW was purchased in 1959. Despite the fact that these three buildings are connected, 1734 N St., NW remains the original Headquarters building, and is the only building being

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nominated in this form.⁶

Following the acquisition of a permanent headquarters building, GFWC was able to direct the activities of local clubs and state federations in a more organized manner. As the umbrella organization for thousands of women's clubs, GFWC provided general guidelines, themes, and support for clubs to initiate and carry on volunteer projects. In addition, they sponsored contests to spur local club activities.

GFWC activities in the 1920's were extensive, as was the use of the new Headquarters. Alice Ames Winter, president from 1920 to 1924, accomplished much in her administration. Winter defined the General Federation as "a group of organized women in every community which can be depended upon to promote all movements leading to the betterment of life," and coined the phrase "The General Federation is 'you' made national." She was also responsible for the start of GFWC publications independent from outside ownership. The editorial offices eventually moved into the Headquarters building from Fayetteville, Arkansas.⁷ General Federation News in 1922 estimated that there were over two million active clubwomen involved in the "six P's," peace, prohibition, protection of women and children in industry, physical education, protection of the home, and public schools.⁸ The Headquarters building handled most of the administrative aspects of the Federation; Lida Hafford, director, submitted figures to the Biennial Convention in 1922 stating that her office sent out 45,000 letters, 1500 telegrams, and 170,000 packets of material in addition to making 10,000 outgoing phone calls, compiling 3500 directories and printing and disseminating almost 200,000 pieces of literature.⁹ Proceedings from the 1922 Biennial Convention describe GFWC's emphasis on literacy, public welfare, citizenship and arts programs. Specific programs included supporting a ban on offensive movies, a survey of health conditions among Florida school children, and establishing July Fourth as National Citizenship Day.¹⁰

The clubs associated with the GFWC have always been community-oriented. During the depression, GFWC programs guided states in community based programs. For example, an Alabama club "adopted" fifteen children and obtained medical care for them. In addition, Alabama clubs provided milk to over 8,000 undernourished children. Throughout the country, clubwomen had "bundle days" where they, in cooperation with the Red Cross, collected, repaired, and redistributed clothing to needy families. Also, clubwomen sponsored canning projects; they preserved food and distributed it to those in need. In rural areas, GFWC associated clubs created cooperative farm markets to sell surplus food directly.¹¹

Yet GFWC activities have always been diverse. 1930 marked the beginning of the "Penny Art Fund" where clubwomen collected one penny per member annually to purchase works of state and local artists. Also in the 1930s, GFWC awarded Pan-American

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fellowships for Latin-American graduate students to study in the United States. In 1934, the GFWC began a commitment to educated women on cancer with the founding of the Women's Field Army.¹²

With the onset of World War II, the second floor of the GFWC headquarters was transformed into a war services office. Shelves replaced the furnishings in the formal dining room and parlor, and were stacked with printed pamphlets, mimeographed speeches and books that made up a special war time library. This material was then disseminated to all of the federated clubs to supplement their war time programs. GFWC adopted a National Defense Program during the war years that taught women scientific farming, industrial skills, how to fly, conservation, and assisted the treasury department in the sale of stamps and war bonds. Following the war, clubwomen were committed to helping returning veterans-- for example, one California club established a home for female veterans.¹³

In the 1950s, GFWC again emphasized community activism. One such project was the Mental Health Program that sought to promote the mental health of every individual in each community. Clubwomen also worked with the new Polio vaccine, insuring that individuals were protected from the crippling disease. The Youth Conservation Office was established at GFWC headquarters, which sought to provide "youth a honored place in the family and the community."¹⁴ Functions of the new office included a Youth Employment Program, which placed young people in afterschool and summer jobs. With the outbreak of war in Korea, the GFWC reestablished its National Defense Department.¹⁵

In the 1960s, GFWC again emphasized its anti-cancer campaign. In conjunction with the American Cancer Society, the Conquer Uterine Cancer Crusade helped to educate and provide screening for thousands of women nationwide. Other activities in the 1960s included the Women's Crusade for Seatbelts which urged car manufacturers to install seatbelts in all new automobiles. In conjunction with the Shell Oil Company, GFWC created an Education Program that included aid-in-education for the handicapped and the academically gifted.¹⁶

GFWC activities in the 1970s emphasized the environment, with the Better Environment Program. Clubwomen initiated recycling drives, and supported conservation, and clean air. Other projects included the creation of family crisis centers and activities to protect physically and mentally abused persons.¹⁷

By the 1980s, GFWC represented 10 million clubwomen in 40 countries.¹⁸ American clubwomen continued their tradition of community involvement, with programs to prevent domestic violence, protect endangered species, and to remove the architectural and attitudinal barriers of the physically disabled. Clubwomen also created substance abuse, AIDS awareness, and literacy programs. In 1984 the Women's

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History and Resource Center was established at the GFWC headquarters, in an adjacent building purchased in 1950. It serves as a resource center and archive for women's history, containing mostly information on women's role in volunteerism.¹⁹

¹Karen J. Blair, The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914 (New York, 1980), 117.

²Blair, 118.

³Blair, 119.

⁴Blair, 119.

⁵Mildred White Wells, Unity in Diversity, Vol. 2 (Washington, 1975), 39.

⁶"Historical Facts About the Headquarters of the General Federation of Women's Clubs," Archives, GFWC, Washington, D.C.

⁷Wells, 83-97.

⁸General Federation News, (Jan-Feb, 1922).

⁹Lida Hafford, "Biennial Report," General Federation News, (July-August, 1922).

¹⁰General Federation News, (July-August, 1922).

¹¹Mary Jean Houde, Reaching Out: A Story of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, (Chicago: Mobium Press, 1989), 193-94.

¹²Ibid., 200-01; 206-07.

¹³Ibid., 240-41; 244; 261.

¹⁴Ibid., 272.

¹⁵Ibid., 275; 289; 307.

¹⁶Ibid., 316-17; 349.

¹⁷Ibid., 362-63; 393.

¹⁸Ibid., 401

¹⁹Ibid., 413.

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