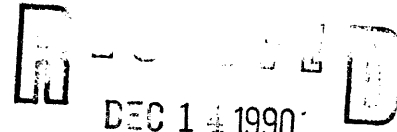


2175

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Dumbarton House
other names/site number Cedar Hill, Bellevue, Rittenhouse Place

2. Location

street & number 2715 Q Street, N.W. not for publication N/A
city, town Washington vicinity N/A
state District of Columbia code D.C. county N/A code N/A zip code 20007

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.
x Carol B Thompson 12-10-90
Signature of certifying official D.C. State Historic Preservation Officer 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 _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register. Patrick W. Anders 1/28/91
 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 the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: Single Dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreational and Cultural: Museum

Social: Clubhouse

Civic

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Federal: Adamesque

Georgian

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone

walls Brick

roof Metal

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Dumbarton House is located on Q Street, N.W. in historic Georgetown, District of Columbia, in an area which (at the time of the erection of the house, c.1800) marked the northernmost boundary of the busy port city. It is situated not far from Rock Creek (a tributary of the Potomac River) and the Q Street bridge which spans the creek. The area is distinguished by its outstanding collection of 18th and 19th century Georgian "great houses" which includes (in addition to Dumbarton House) nearby Evermay (erected in the 1790s) and Dumbarton Oaks (which dates from 1801). All three structures are excellent examples of early plantation or country houses successfully transposed to large city lots.

Dumbarton House's main facade closely resembles that of Woodlawn Plantation in northern Virginia, designed in 1800 by William Thornton for Laurence Lewis and his bride Nellie Custis:

"...(it) has similar stone window lintels above the windows, a cut-stone beltcourse between the first and second stories, and, as at Woodlawn, a stone coping at the water table. The entrance doorways on both are topped by arched cut-stone openings and fanlights. This use of cut and dressed stone (with) fine brickwork is a typical feature of Federal houses in the Washington area."
(W. Elder, "Dumbarton House", unpagged)

Dumbarton House is a 2½ story, symmetrical, five-part, early Federal brick mansion with Adamesque characteristics; typical among these are the semicircular window at the gable end on the main block, the delicate iron balconies, and the modillioned cornice. The house is laid in Flemish bond brickwork and has a raised-seam metal roof. The main block was probably erected in the early 1800s; the wings and connecting hyphens date from 1915, when the house was moved and these sections were rebuilt.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Elder, William V. III, "Dumbarton House", reprinted from the "Winter Antiques Show Catalogue" (undated).

Historic American Buildings Survey, District of Columbia Catalog, compiled by Nancy B. Schwartz, University of Virginia Press, 1974.

Lamar, Mrs. Joseph R., "Bellevue: The Home of the National Society of Colonial Dames"; Maryland Historical Magazine, June 1924.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee, A Field Guide to American Houses, Knopf, New York, 1984.

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
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property 0.64 ac.

UTM References

A

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3	2	1	7	3	0
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4	3	0	8	6	7	5
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 Zone Easting Northing

C

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B

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 Zone Easting Northing

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the property are the lot lines which define Lot 801 of Square 1285.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The subject property occupies all of lot 801 of square 1285 which has been historically associated with Dumbarton House.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lois Snyderman, Historic Preservation Consultant
 organization N/A date 5/30/90
 street & number 8804 Spring Valley Road telephone (301) 654-6423
 city or town Chevy Chase state Maryland zip code 20815

8. Statement of Significance

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

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Social History

Period of Significance

c. 1800-1915

Significant Dates

c. 1800

1915

1932

Cultural Affiliation

None

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Jackson, Samuel (Builder)

Peaslee, Horace (Architect-Restoration)

Kimball, Fiske (Architect-Restoration)

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

Dumbarton House, which dates from the beginning of the nineteenth century, is architecturally significant because it is an outstanding example of American architecture of the early Federal period; it represents a transitional phase in American architecture, from the Georgian to the Federal; and it has retained much of its original building fabric, in spite of successive alterations. Historically, Dumbarton House is significant because it is associated with several prominent eighteenth and nineteenth century public figures and with the early history of Georgetown.

Dumbarton House is one of an exceptional group of houses that were erected in the Washington area at the turn of the nineteenth century, houses which were representative of the aesthetic and political forces which shaped the era:

"The years 1798 and 1799 seem to be the magical dates for the beginnings of many Maryland and Virginia houses. The houses that can accurately be dated from these years mark the break from the older Georgian building traditions of the Chesapeake tidewater area and the birth of an Adamesque Federal style of local distinction. Houses such as William Thornton's *The Octagon*, *Woodlawn Plantation*, in nearby Virginia, *Oatlands* in Loudon County, Virginia, the *Washington*, *Bowie House*, *Woodley*, and *Prospect House* were all conceived, in the process of being built, or newly completed during these last years of the eighteenth century. From architectural evidence and what can be determined from property descriptions of early deeds and land transactions, Dumbarton House can safely be dated as belonging to this period." (W. Elder, "Dumbarton House", unpagd.)

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The house is situated on a rise overlooking Q Street; its walkway is reached by a flight of brick steps leading from the street. The street entrance is marked by decorative iron gates attached to tall, square brick piers; each pier rests on a stone base and is capped by a stone cornice and a classical urn. A brick retaining wall topped by an iron picket fence extends along the property line on Q Street; the gates and the wall (copies of those surrounding the Lord Fairfax House in Alexandria, Virginia) were added in 1931, as part of the Society's restoration project. They replaced an earlier brick wall which was topped with wooden pickets.⁽¹⁾

The five-bay center block has a low hipped roof and is accented by a modillioned cornice which extends the width of the main (south) facade and a slightly-projecting two-story, one-bay entrance pavilion with a crowning pediment; the pediment cornice is boxed and returned. The gable end features a semicircular tracery window with a cut-stone surround. Below the gable-end window at the second story is a tall arched window accented by tracery and a similar cut-stone surround. There are corbelled interior chimneys on the east and west roof slopes of the center block.

On either side of the entrance pavilion on the main block, at both the first and second stories, are two bays of windows. Those at the second story are 9/9 double-hung sash with delicate wrought-iron balconies; at the ground-floor level, the windows are 6/6 double-hung sash, without balconies; all windows have cut-stone lintels with keystones.

The one-story, flat-roof entrance portico (which dates from the 1931 restoration of the house and is similar to the south porch at Woodlawn Plantation) is supported by paired Ionic columns and has a wide, plain entablature. Ionic pilasters frame the center entranceway, which has a paneled door with a semicircular tracery fanlight, sidelights, and a classical surround.

Although records indicate that Charles Carroll, who acquired the property in 1813, engaged the well-known architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe to design an entrance portico, there is nothing to indicate that the portico was ever built.

A cut-stone beltcourse separates the first and second stories of the main block and there is a stone coping at the water table.

(1) All references to building alterations are based on materials in the archives of the Colonial Dames, located at Dumbarton House.

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On either side of the central block are 1½ story, one-bay, flat-roofed hyphens which serve as passageways from the main part of the house to the wings. Their paneled entrances have sidelights and are capped by blank arches with brick surrounds and keystones. Above each of the entrances is a 6/3 double-hung sash window with a plain surround.

The rear facade of the hyphen connecting the east wing with the center block matches its main (south) facade, with an entrance at the ground floor level and a window at the second story. The rear of the hyphen connecting the west wing with the main block has windows at the first and second story, but no entrance.

The hyphens have a roof valley with a high end to the north. The ends are covered by paneled parapets, topped by one-panel "stick-ups" which conceal the sides of stair connections between the second floor of the main house and the wings.

The hyphens connect the main block with identical two-story, three-bay, front-gabled wings with boxed and returned cornices. Entrance on the main (south) facade is through a center paneled doorway with a brick lintel. There is a round compass window with a brick surround in the gable end. Second-story windows are 6/6 and double-hung; windows on the ground floor are 9/6. All windows have brick lintels and plain surrounds.

The rear facade of the west wing (used as a kitchen on the first floor and custodian's apartment on the second) has two 6/6 double-hung sash windows at the second story, with brick lintels, and a similar window in the easternmost bay at the ground floor level. There is an entrance to the kitchen in the westernmost bay.

The three-bay west elevation of the west wing features a one-story entrance portico with a wide, plain entablature; it is supported by two sets of square columns with classical caps. There is a centered 6/6 double-hung sash window at the second story, above the entrance portico, and a similar window (with brick lintels) on each side of the portico, at ground-floor level. Two corbelled brick chimneys are centered on the west slope of the west wing.

On the east elevation of the east wing (used as a library on the first floor and offices on the second) there are three sets of French windows at the ground floor level separated by classical pilasters. The second story has a row of narrow 10-pane casement windows. At the rear of the wing there is a two-story exterior chimney with a corbelled cap; the narrow, 10-pane windows are repeated at the second story, one on each side of the chimney.

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At the rear of the main block is one of Dumbarton House's most exceptional features, a pair of rooms that project to the back in semicircular bays. The bays, which have a curvilinear cornice, frame a central entrance above which there is a Palladian window.

Each of the rounded bays has three 6/6 double-hung sash windows with stone lintels at both the first and second stories. The cornice is plain, in contrast to the decorated cornice on the main facade of the center block.

The bays are thought to date from the early 1800s, since an advertisement for the sale of the house at that period mentions the two round rooms in the rear. As William Elder notes in his article on Dumbarton House, such Adamesque oval or half-round rooms were

"...prevalent architectural fashions of the day, begun in Washington with the White House in 1792 and further developed in Thornton's Octagon House of 1799." (W. Elder, "Dumbarton House", unpagged)

The interior of Dumbarton House is simple but elegant. The fine plasterwork in the entrance hall and in the two rooms on the first floor to the west of the hall are the mansion's most outstanding interior features; the two rooms to the east lost their plaster friezes during an earlier remodeling.

The decorative plasterwork extends half the length of the hallway to the dividing classical arch. Beautifully executed, it is composed of several rows of Adamesque designs, including classical urns, swags, garlands, and stylized geometric patterns.

Another distinctive interior feature is the simple, but graceful, curved stairway with narrow square balusters which rises from the central entrance hall; it is lighted at the landing by a Palladian window overlooking the rear garden. The wall beneath the stairway is paneled.

Although restoration architect Horace Peaslee doubted claims that the house was pre-Revolutionary, he noted that "the stairway alone has a naive simplicity which might be the strongest argument to prove the antiquity of the house." (January 8, 1930 letter, Peaslee to Lamar, Society Archives).

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The identity of the skilled itinerant craftsmen who did the interior cornices is unknown, but it is evident that they were drawn to the area in the late 1700s and early 1800s by opportunities for work in the new Federal city. Examples of their skill can be found in a number of stately homes in nearby Virginia and Maryland, as well as in Washington:

"Although little is known about the craftsmen who fashioned and molded these rich architectural cornices, their work seems to have been confined to the Chesapeake tidewater areas, encompassing the existing towns of Alexandria and Georgetown and the new Federal city of Washington, and also travelling down the Chesapeake Bay to...Norfolk and Portsmouth (and) into Virginia to Richmond and Petersburg. Stylistically, the plasterwork of two Baltimore houses, Homewood (1801) and Willow Brook (1799), is related to that at Dumbarton House, Woodlawn Plantation, (and) Oatlands..." (W. Elder, "Dumbarton House", unpagged)

The interior of the house features a plan which had its beginnings in the earlier Georgian style and which was particularly popular in the southern states, a wide central entrance hallway with two rooms on either side. The entrance hall is divided from the stairhall by a classical arch supported by fluted pilasters. A narrow, fluted chair rail runs the length of the entrance hall and up the stairway. The two rooms at the front of the house are square and the two at the rear have the rounded north walls mentioned above, with windows overlooking the garden. The garden and its rear wall (including the "garden temple", whose niches house statues of a dolphin and two girls symbolizing Spring and Fall) were designed by Fiske Kimball during the 1930s restoration.

The center block of Dumbarton House consists of four rooms down and four up. To the east of the entrance hall, at the front of the house, is what is known as the "Blue Parlor"; to its rear is the Music Room, with its bowed north wall. To the west of the entrance hall at the front of the house is the Library, and, to its rear, the Dining Room, also with a bowed north wall. Three of the upstairs rooms are maintained as bedrooms; the fourth, at the northeast corner of the house (originally a bedroom), is currently used by the Society as a museum for artifacts illustrating the history of the house.

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The Washington Chapter of The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America maintains an office in the basement of the main block of the house and the National Society has its office on the second floor of the east wing. The main floor of the east wing is currently used as a library and meeting room.

Several of the rooms have decorative mantels that were added in the early 1930s, during the Peaslee/Kimball renovation. The dining room mantel, with its carving of the frigate "Constitution", was salvaged from the Marshall House in Washington, D.C. before it was demolished. The mantel in the Blue Parlor features a motif of pineapples and tridents above a centered figure of a boy riding dolphins.

Research into the history of Dumbarton House shows that it has gone through four distinct stages in its architectural evolution: from 1750 to 1800, the only existing part of the structure may have been a small tenant house which later became the west wing, when the mansion was erected about 1800; from 1800 to 1900, the house took on its present five-part configuration; from 1900 to 1931, the relatively simple early Federal structure was altered to present a more Colonial Revival appearance; and, from 1932 to the present, (after the acquisition of Dumbarton House in 1928 by The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America) a major restoration project returned it to its original early Federal appearance. ("Draft Report", M. Rosenbloom Associates.)

The original west wing (which, as noted above, was probably the only part of the house predating 1800) was demolished (as was the east wing) when the house was moved in 1915, apparently because the absence of a cellar under the wings made it more difficult to move them; they were then rebuilt, using the original bricks. The existing wings, therefore, date from the 1915 move.

The appearance of the west wing has varied only slightly over the years, the major changes being the addition of a gabled pediment over the entrance in 1900 and the replacement of the original vertically-paneled door by a six-panel door. In the 1932 renovation, the pediment was removed and the window in the gable end was simplified by eliminating the stone surround.

As noted above, the house took on its present configuration in the early 1800s, when the main block, the hyphens, and the east wing were erected. The hyphens were originally one story and without windows; another half story was added in 1915, along with a window above the entrance. The only change in 1932 was the removal of the shutters from the windows.

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The east wing was originally erected in 1800 to match the west wing, but in 1915 its second story windows were replaced with a ribbon window composed of three 6/6 double-hung sash and the round window in the gable end was replaced with a diamond-shaped window. In the 1932 restoration, the east wing was altered to match the west wing once again.

When erected in the early 1800s, the main facade looked much as it does today, except that the central portion stood on a higher base, exposing the basement. The entrance porch (which was, unlike the existing porch, elevated and reached by steps on its east and west sides) was enclosed by a balustrade and had a balustraded second-story balcony. At the balcony level there was a tall arched and shuttered window with a cut-stone surround capping the arch.

In 1900, in an effort to give the house a Colonial Revival appearance, a widow's walk and cornice balustrade with decorative swag panels was added to the roof, the windows on the second story were reduced in size (although they remained 9/9) and blank panels with swags were added under each. To emphasize the entrance bay, pilasters were added on either side of the central second-story window, which was widened and further accentuated by a cut-stone surround which extended the full length of the window. The balcony at the second story level was also embellished with swags. On the first story, windows were expanded to 9/9, to match those on the second, and the original porch was altered so that entrance was from the front, up a flight of steps. All windows were shuttered and wooden quoins, painted to resemble stone, were added at the corners of both the main block and the wings. One-story porches were added at the rear entrance of the central block and at the rear of the east wing. Inside, chair rails were installed and fireplaces added or altered.

When the house was moved in 1915 to make way for the extension of Q Street, it was sited so as to place the basement partially underground. The entrance portico was also lowered, with only two steps between the portico and the sidewalk, where previously there had been some half dozen.

In 1932, in order to return the main block of the house to its original form, the quoins, roof and portico balustrades, and pilasters were removed. The entrance portico was rebuilt with masonry columns, following the design of the portico at Woodlawn. The second floor front windows were reopened to their original floor length, and iron railings were installed in front of each. The center window's dividing mullion was removed and a double-hung window restored. French doors in the curving bays at the rear were restored to double hung windows and the back porches were removed.

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Major interior restoration work included rebuilding of the partition between the east first floor rooms; installation of mantelpieces recovered from other Federal period houses; restoration of cornices; removal of late nineteenth and early twentieth century woodwork and fixtures; installation of new electrical and mechanical systems; and repainting of interiors based on paint-scraping analysis. New garden walls and landscaping were installed, including the garden niche at the rear, drawn by Fiske Kimball after a design by the early eighteenth century English architect and garden designer William Kent.

Since the 1930's restoration, Dumbarton House has remained relatively unchanged. The basement has been renovated to accommodate offices, a vault, and restrooms, and minor changes have been made to the wings, particularly the west wing, which contains the service kitchen.

The only outbuilding on the property is a gable-roof, mid-twentieth century brick garage.

As William Elder notes in his article on the 1930's restoration of Dumbarton House:

"Alterations most in need of correction (were those) made in the early years of the twentieth century, when it was not enough to have just a Federal house. The simplicity of the Adamesque Federal design was hidden in an appliqué of Georgian quoins, balustrades, and small-paned windows. Under the direction of Mr. Kimball and Mr. Peaslee, the house was returned to its original appearance. The Georgian appliques were removed, the correct sashes installed, and, where necessary, the original window openings were restored. On the second floor of the entrance facade the original irons for holding the restored circular balconies were still to be found in the brickwork." (W. Elder, "Dumbarton House", unpagged.)

Although Dumbarton House has been altered over the years, the alterations reflect the changing needs of the various owners and are, therefore, an integral part of the evolutionary history of the mansion. In addition, much of the original fabric of the main block remains. Dumbarton House is well-maintained and current renovation plans call for the continued preservation and protection of the mansion's historic core.

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As noted above, Dumbarton House's Adamesque Federal style (a style used widely in Georgetown) was a distinct departure from the earlier Georgian tradition and an indication of the strength of the Adamesque influence at the time:

"Adam was the dominant style of the new United States from about 1780 to 1820...and reached its zenith in the prosperous port cities of the eastern seaboard...(such as) Alexandria, Virginia, and Georgetown, both near the newly developing national capital...The Adam style was a development and refinement of the preceding Georgian style...(which) drew on contemporary European trends, particularly the work of the Adam brothers who, at that time, had the largest architectural practice in Britain... Because of the breadth of (their) influence, what had formerly been called the Federal style is now becoming known simply as the American phase of the English Adam style." (V. & L. McAlester, A Field Guide, pps. 156 & 157.)

Dumbarton House is located on part of a 795 acre tract which was granted to Colonel Ninian Beall (1625-1717) by Charles, Lord Baltimore, in 1703, for services rendered by Beall as a member of the Maryland House of Burgesses and as Commander-in-Chief of Maryland's Provincial Forces. Beall (who was the founder of a family which has always taken an active role in state affairs) patented the tract (located in what was then Frederick County, Maryland) as "The Rock of Dumbarton", in honor of the land of his birth, Scotland. A man of considerable wealth, Beall owned several large estates in Maryland; his property was inherited by his eight children after his death in 1717.

The part of the Rock of Dumbarton on which the mansion now stands remained in the Beall family for over 90 years, passing from father to son. After Ninian Beall's death in 1717 the Rock of Dumbarton (by then reduced to 408 acres) was inherited by his youngest son, George Beall. Although tradition has it that George Beall was the first settler in the town of Georgetown, he actually lived in an area which later became part of Montgomery County, Maryland; he did, however, own a large part of the land upon which Georgetown was ultimately built. George Beall was forced to give up part of his property in 1751, when the Maryland Assembly ordered the town of Georgetown to be laid out; the assembly bought 60 of his acres for £280 and divided it into 80 lots; Beall was allowed to keep two of the lots.

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Before his death in 1780, George Beall willed a part of the Rock of Dumbarton to his youngest son, Thomas Beall, who, in 1783, incorporated 61 acres of it as an addition to Georgetown; it is still known as Beall's First Addition. The land on which Dumbarton House stands is in Beall's Second Addition, incorporated in 1789.

The property remained in the Beall family until 1796, when Thomas Beall sold the 4½ acre lot on which Dumbarton House was eventually erected to Peter Casanove, Mayor of Georgetown, for £250. Casanove resold it within a few months (in 1797) to General Uriah Forrest, a Revolutionary War hero, for £300; General Forest, in turn, sold it to Isaac Pollock in 1798 for £1500 (approximately \$4,500). The increase did not necessarily indicate the erection of a building, since Pollock sold it to Samuel Jackson a year later, in 1799, for only \$3,000. The fluctuations in price are probably due to the land speculation which accompanied the establishment of the new Federal City in 1800.

Although the exact date of erection and identity of the builder are uncertain, it is probable that the house (called "Cedar Hill" from 1800-1915) was built by Samuel Jackson about 1800, since, in 1799 and 1800, Jackson (about whom little is known) mortgaged the property for almost \$8,000, a sum which would have allowed him to erect a good-sized mansion. In addition, during the restoration of 1931, a coin dated 1800 was found embedded in the masonry of one of the entrance hall walls, evidence of an old tradition among building craftsmen for "marking" the buildings on which they worked. An 1800 erection date is also compatible with the stylistic character of the house, which closely resembles Woodlawn Plantation, erected in the same year.

Jackson, unable to meet his mortgage payments, was forced to sell the property (probably in an incomplete state) at auction in 1804; the successful bidder was Gabriel Duval, who was then Comptroller of the Currency. In 1811, Duval was appointed to the Supreme Court by President Madison, a post he held for the next 35 years. Only a year after he acquired the property, in 1805, Duval sold it to Joseph Nourse, another prominent official in the new government.

Joseph Nourse (1754-1841) emigrated from England to the colony of Virginia with his family when he was a young boy. Raised in Virginia, he served on the staff of General Charles Lee during the Revolutionary War. In 1779, he was appointed Assistant U.S. Auditor General in the new Federal government and, in 1781, First Registrar of the U.S. Treasury. In this capacity, he was responsible for transferring the records of the Treasury department from Philadelphia to Washington in 1800 and he assisted Alexander Hamilton in organizing the new nation's financial system.

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Nourse initially lived on Congress Street (now 31st Street) in Georgetown. When he acquired Dumbarton House in 1805, it was located on four acres of land just north of the corporate limits of Georgetown, near Rock Creek.

Joseph Nourse owned the property from 1805 until 1813, acquiring a block of twelve adjoining lots during that period. As he was the first long-term resident, it is likely that he completed the construction of the house.

In 1813, Nourse sold the property to Charles Carroll, cousin of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, the signer of the Declaration of Independence. Carroll (who ran a paper mill on the bank of Rock Creek and was the founder of the city of Rochester in upstate New York) renamed the house Bellevue and called himself Charles Carroll of Bellevue. The mansion was known as Bellevue until its restoration in 1932, when the Society renamed it Dumbarton House.

Tradition has it that, when the British burned the city in 1814, Charles Carroll helped Dolly Madison flee the White House and that she stopped at Bellevue on her way to Virginia, where she was to join the President; the story has not been substantiated, however.

Carroll apparently lived in Bellevue until 1820 when he moved to upstate New York, subsequently leasing the house to Samuel Whitall, a Philadelphia Quaker and a member of the family which occupied the property for the next 75 years. Upon Charles Carroll's death in 1841, Joseph Ellis Whitall, Samuel's son, bought the property, later willing it to his daughter, Sarah, who was born at Bellevue and lived there for some 70 years. Sarah Whitall married Charles E. Rittenhouse in 1855, and the Rittenhouse family owned the mansion until 1896, a period when it was known as Rittenhouse Place.

In 1896, it was sold to Howard Hinckley who, four years later, undertook to give it a more "classical" appearance. It was Hinckley who, in about 1900, added such details as a widow's walk, a roof cornice railing with paneled swags, second story pilasters, and corner quoins.

In 1912 Hinckley sold the property to John L. Newbold. Three years later the District of Columbia decided to complete Q Street, requiring that the house be moved a short distance to the north. As noted earlier, only the center block was relocated; the original wings and hyphens (which had no basements and were, therefore, more difficult to move) were demolished and rebuilt at the new location, using the original materials.

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The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America, the present owners, purchased Bellevue for \$185,000 from Mrs. John Newbold in 1928 in order to preserve the mansion and adapt it for use as their headquarters and as a house museum of early American culture. They renamed the property Dumbarton House after the original patent (and in recognition of its proximity to Dumbarton Bridge and Dumbarton Street) and, in 1932, embarked on a far-reaching restoration project to return the house to its original early Federal simplicity.

The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America was founded in Philadelphia in 1891. It is a nonprofit federation of 44 state societies whose goal is the preservation of America's heritage, as exemplified by its historic sites and artifacts. Its members are direct descendants of "those who, prior to 1750, cast their lot with the American colonies and gave distinguished service in forming the republic". ("A Legacy for Generations", unpagged). The Society owns and/or administers some 86 properties across the United States and was instrumental in the erection of a monument in Arlington National Cemetery honoring Spanish-American War veterans and in the preservation of several important historic sites, including Jamestown Church in Virginia and Plymouth Rock in Massachusetts.

The 1932 restoration of Dumbarton House (which cost \$32,000 and took several years to complete) was done under the expert direction of two eminent professionals in the fields of architecture and landscape design, Horace Peaslee (1884-1959) and Fiske Kimball (1888-1955); Peaslee was the architect in charge of the project and Kimball acted as an expert consultant.

Horace Peaslee, a Washington resident and a nationally-known architect, studied at Cooper Union and Cornell University, graduating from Cornell with a Bachelor's degree in architecture in 1910. He remained at Cornell as a Resident Fellow in landscape design until 1911, and was always particularly interested in the interrelationship of landscape and building design.

One of his most important projects in Washington was the design of Meridian Hill Park on 16th Street (listed in the National Register of Historic Places). Peaslee worked on the landscape plan for Meridian Hill from 1912 to 1917 and was chief architect for the park from 1917-1935.

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Named a Fellow of the AIA in 1936, Peaslee served as President of the Washington chapter. His restoration work included such historic sites as Belle Grove plantation in Winchester, Virginia; the provincial State House in St. Mary's City, Maryland; and St. John's Church in Washington, D.C., a Latrobe design. In 1921, Peaslee helped organize the Committee of 100 on the Federal City; the Committee (which Peaslee served as Vice-Chairman) concerns itself with urban design and planning issues in Washington.

Fiske Kimball, a distinguished museum director and architect and a leading authority on Colonial architecture, obtained a degree in architecture in the early 1900s and a doctorate in architectural history at the University of Michigan in 1915. An outstanding scholar, he was particularly well known for his work in American architecture. His special interest was Jefferson's contribution to early American design, and, in 1916, he published a monumental study entitled Thomas Jefferson, Architect.

In 1925, Kimball became Director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, a post which he held until his death in 1955; he also held several professorships in Fine Arts and Architecture and served on the boards of a number of architectural publications.

Kimball published widely on the history of American architecture, a field in which he was viewed as "a scholar's scholar". He was involved as a preservation consultant in a number of important projects besides Dumbarton House, including the restoration of Williamsburg, Virginia; Robert E. Lee's home, Stratford, in Virginia; and Gunston Hall and Monticello, also in Virginia. He was also instrumental in the restoration of the Fairmount Park Houses in Philadelphia.

Fiske Kimball considered Dumbarton House to be one of the most beautiful homes of its kind in the United States:

"The simplicity of the house in detail is only what is characteristic of its time, which depended for effect on the shape of the masses and spaces, which are rendered so beautiful by two curved rooms and curved bows..."

He was particularly impressed with the interior plasterwork:

(I am)...firmly of the opinion...that the plaster cornices and friezes throughout the hall and in the two front rooms were part of the original work...There are only two or three other examples of such delicate plaster friezes surviving in Colonial houses." (June 4, 1931 letter, Fiske Kimball to Mrs. J. Lamar, Society Archives)

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At the request of The National Society of Colonial Dames in 1932, Peaslee and Kimball worked together to plan and carry out a renovation of Dumbarton House which would return it to its early nineteenth century simplicity.

During World War II, Dumbarton House was temporarily used by the National Red Cross.

The history of the changes to Dumbarton House and the site on which it is located reflects the changes which occurred in Georgetown as the new Federal city developed. As the capital city grew, the original country estates were broken up, both through land sales and imposition of a street grid. This process continued throughout the nineteenth century, and Georgetown became a patchwork of the old and the new, with Federal country houses, their large estates gone, surrounded by more recent, smaller, dwellings. In the twentieth century a new phase of development began as the interest in the preservation of early architecture sparked the restoration of the older houses.

The history of Dumbarton House follows this pattern. A large estate in the eighteenth century, the property changed hands often in the early nineteenth century, and the original large tract was sold off until only a few acres remained. Threatened by street construction in the early twentieth century, the house was moved and then altered to meet the fashions of the time. Eventually, as the "restoration ethic" took hold, the mansion was (after careful study) returned to its original appearance.

In spite of alterations to the building over the years (alterations which often took the form of embellishments to the facade or roof) and the difficulty of pinpointing the date of erection, recent investigations support the conclusions reached by Peaslee and Kimball that most of the original fabric of the c.1800 main block (plasterwork, brickwork, flooring, and attic structure) remains. More significantly, perhaps, the house is a record of the architectural modifications undertaken by a succession of owners as their needs changed. As Horace Peaslee noted, Dumbarton House is a "tremendously interesting archeological specimen." (Peaslee letter to Mrs. J. Lamar, October 15, 1931, Society archives.)

Although the house does not stand on its original site (which was in the middle of what is now Q Street and just west of the Q Street Bridge), the 1915 move (necessitated by road construction plans) did not impair the architectural integrity of the house. Moved only a short distance, it essentially maintained its original setting. In addition, the oldest part of the house, the center block with its original portico and cornice, remained intact.

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Dr. Richard H. Howland of the Smithsonian Institution has described Dumbarton House as:

"One of the few remaining examples in Washington of the Georgian country house modified by the delicate refinements of the emerging style of the new Republic. This important structure is a significant link between our vigorous colonial heritage of previous generations and the more imaginative and small-scaled designs characteristic of the momentous years of the early nineteenth century. The fact that so much of the original detail is preserved, both within and without, adds to the distinction of this notable structure." (Notes on Dumbarton House, April 1964, "Peaslee-Kimball file", Society archives.)

As evidence of the structure's importance, Dumbarton House is listed in the Historic American Buildings Survey, Washington, D.C. catalog.

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Miller, Hope Ridings, Great Houses of Washington, D.C., Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., New York, 1969.

Rosenbloom, Martin Jay, and Associates, "Draft Report, Property Development Plan, Dumbarton House", Philadelphia, Pa., 1987.

Whiffen, Marcus and Frederick Koeper, American Architecture: 1607-1976, MIT Press, Boston, 1981.

Other Sources

Building Permits, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Fiske Kimball and Horace Peaslee, correspondence, archives of The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, Dumbarton House.

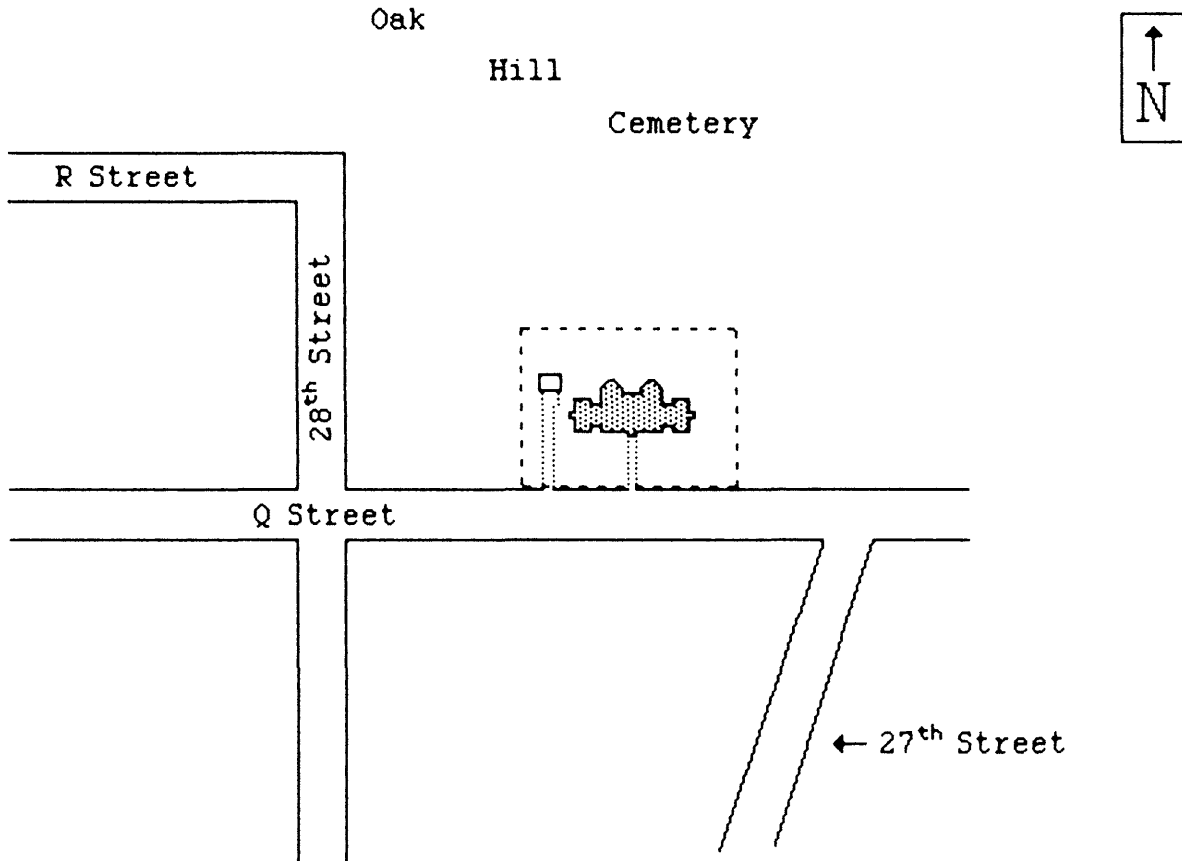
Land Records, Recorder of Deeds Office, Washington, D.C.




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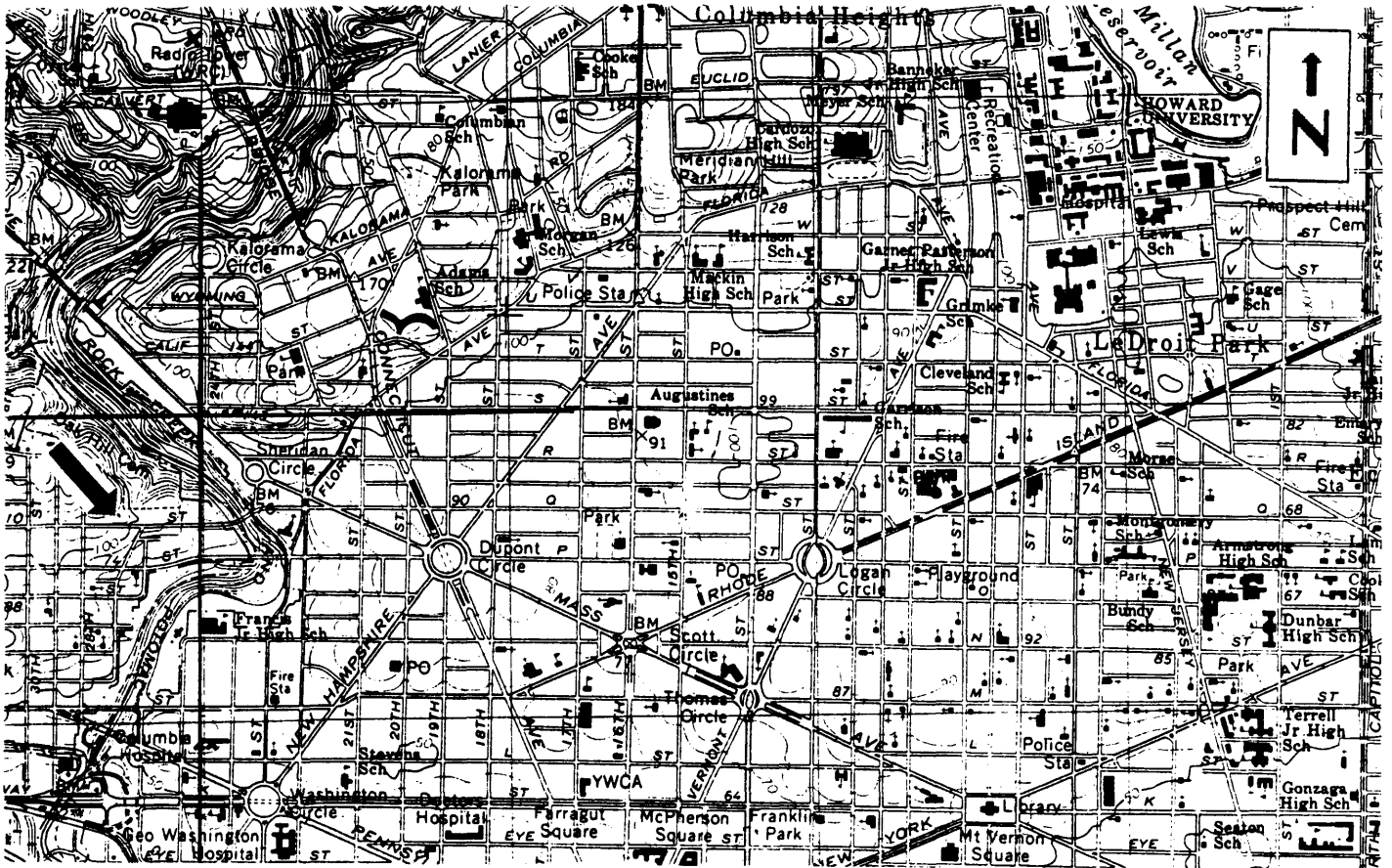
-  Contributing structure
-  Non-contributing structure
-  Property line, lot 801 square 1285

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Detail of USGS map. Refer to section 10 for UTM data.

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Photo Inventory

1. Chronology of Exterior Alterations
2. Entrance Gate (south)
3. Entrance Portico (south)
4. Main Facade (south)
5. East Wing (east)
6. Rear Facade (north)
7. West Wing and Hyphen (north)
8. West Wing Entrance Portico (west)
9. West Wing and Hyphen (south)
10. Entrance Hall and Staircase
11. Entranceway
12. Entrance Hall Cornice
13. Fireplace Mantel, Dining Room

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 90002148 Date Listed: 1/28/91

Dumbarton House D.C.
Property Name: County: State:

Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Patrick Andrews
for Signature of the Keeper

1/28/91
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

There are two technical problems with the nomination form. Criterion A and Criteria Consideration B need to be checked (because the building is nominated for Social History and was moved during its Period of Significance). Also, the Period of Significance as defined (1800-1915) does not extend far enough to include the important restoration of the building in 1932. Glen Leiner with the DC SHPO says to add Criterion A and Criteria Consideration B, and that the Period of Significance should be extended to 1932. The form is now officially amended to include these changes.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)