

PH0681172

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED AUG 9 1978  
AUG 7 1979  
DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

The Cloisters

AND/OR COMMON

The Parker Estate

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

10440 Falls Road

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Brooklandville

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

Second

STATE

Maryland

CODE  
24

COUNTY

Baltimore

CODE

005

**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
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

City of Baltimore

Supervising Agency: (Mayor's Advisory Committee on Art and Culture)

STREET & NUMBER

21 South Eutaw Street

CITY, TOWN

Baltimore

VICINITY OF

Maryland

STATE, zip code

21201

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Baltimore County Courthouse

Liber #: LMCLM874  
Folio #: 364

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Towson

STATE

Maryland

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

| CONDITION                                |                                       | CHECK ONE                                     | CHECK ONE   |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT       | <input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD            | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS        | <input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED              | <input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR | <input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED    |   |   |

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Cloisters is located at the crest of a wooded hill to the west of Falls Road (Maryland Route 25), immediately north of the Baltimore Beltway (Route 695). The building is highly picturesque and irregular in elevation and plan, and features a multiplicity of architectural ornament. The building is two and one-half stories tall over a full basement, the main block rising to an approximate height of 42 feet. It is principally composed of large, random sized blocks of a native grey and gold colored rock known as "Butler stone." It has a flagstone roof and architectural details principally of sandstone, wood from the site, plaster and wrought iron.

The main (south) facade is dominated by two assymmetrically placed, projecting sections topped by massive half-timbered gables which were originally part of a Medieval house in Domremy, France. Both sections are two bays wide but the one on the left is broader than the right. Between these sections is a recessed bay which is crenelated at the top. Across this bay a grey stone balcony with turreted ends connects the two projecting sections; below the balcony is the front door. On the far left side of the main facade is a projecting wing, two stories high with gable end facing south. The front of this wing is covered with a plaster and wood, arched, half-timbered design accented on the posts and studs by small carved gargoyle-like figures.

The Gothic arch-shaped front door is made of wood banded in iron in a diamond pattern. The door surround is a recessed series of heavy stone moldings, with an inscription of the owners' names on the outer molding and label molding over the top. There is an additional outer door of glass banded with wrought iron. There are two narrow side lights to either side of the door.

The windows of all the facades are diamond-paned, iron casement windows with random circular bits of stained glass. The windows vary in dimension, most being composed of one, two or three narrow, vertical sections, and are irregularly spaced along the facade. Most windows have flat stone sills and heavy wooden lintels with flat upper edges and curved lower edges. One unusual window in the main facade is the pair of narrow, Gothic arch-shaped windows on the second floor in the recessed bay to the left of the left-hand projecting gabled section. The rectangular windows are surmounted with carved wooden, trefoil-shaped motifs and separated by a small, carved wood, gargoyle-like figure.

The roof of the entire building is covered with heavy slate flagstones laid in an overlapping pattern and secured by an iron pin at their lower edges. The stones are of random size, but most are at least an inch thick and average about eight to twelve inches across.

Decorative details on the main facade include two pale grey stone circular medallions, located between the first and second floors of the two projecting sections. The medallions, which came from a 16th century

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

|                  |            |
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THE CLOISTERS  
Brooklandville  
Baltimore County

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

DESCRIPTION (Continued)

Venetian house, have carved scenes of peacocks drinking from a fountain and a bird of prey attacking an animal. At the corners of the two half-timbered gables are Romanesque-style, antique, carved stone figures, including one of a lion devouring a man. A square, bronze sundial is located below the crenelated crest of the recessed central bay.

Moving clockwise to the west facade, the house viewed closely from this side appears to be only one and one-half stories in height. As one moves farther back from the west facade, the jagged forms of roof-lines, chimneys and towers of the central sections begin to appear above the lower roof line. The high-pitched roof on the right side of this wing is broken by a tall, rectangular, projecting, stone chimney with a stepped cap and is terminated on the left by a broad gable with a central window. The chimney, which is additionally decorated by a small, round, antique white, stone medallion, has two windows on either side of it on the first floor.

Projecting outwards from the left side of the wing is an octagonal chapel with a tall, sloping roof whose apex is topped by an iron cross. Small buttresses project at the three corners. Two sides of the chapel are lighted by full length windows. From the left side of the chapel extends the stone and wood cloister area. The single story, flat-roofed cloister has four Gothic-arched openings and a low, arched doorway on this west facade. The wooden interior frame of the cloister may have originated in France.

The rear (north) facade of The Cloisters is perhaps the most interesting architecturally with its picturesque interplay of unusual forms and materials. A large courtyard is enclosed by the cloister which slopes gently down the hillside to a length of nine bays. The rear facade is dominated by the two gable-ended sections with half-timbered top stories off center to the left in the facade. A handsome and massive chimney of quatrefoil shape rises from the center of the right slope of the roof at the right gable. Between the two sections rises the striking form of a massive stone octagonal stair tower. The tower is lighted by narrow windows which climb the sides in diagonal lines. It is crowned by a crenellated parapet and a small, round, stone-roofed structure from which one can exit onto the roof of the main tower. To the right of the right-hand gabled section is a one and one-half story section whose sloping roof is broken by a large, gabled dormer window. Rising through the center of this dormer is a rectangular chimney with a large, blocklike cap with stepped lower edge.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #2

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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THE CLOISTERS  
Brooklandville  
Baltimore County

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 2

DESCRIPTION (Continued)

Other important decorative features of the north facade include a handsome, single story, three-sided porch which stands on the right side of the right half-timbered gable section. This porch, which forms the main entrance from the house to the cloister-enclosed terrace, is decorated with wooden Gothic-style tracery, particularly a frieze of quatrefoils beneath the roof. To the right, beneath the rectangular chimney, is a fine 17th century french marble fountain with a tall back and projecting triangular pediment.

The east facade is the most plain, and appears the most massive, with the main block rising to a height of four stories from the basement level. The pitched roof is broken at left by one large, hexagonal chimney with a heavy molded cap. To the right of the chimney, three small adjoining dormer windows are decorated with elaborate Gothic wooden pediments. The principal feature of the east facade is a very large, hexagonal porch with pointed stone roof which rises two and one-half stories above the open carport on which it rests. The tall windows have narrow vertical sections filled with wooden Gothic tracery from the renowned Baltimore Gothic Revival mansion, Glen Ellen, designed by A. J. Davis. To the right beyond the massive central section of the east facade is a large, single story garage with two wide, wooden doors. Stone steps with a wrought iron railing lead up from the left of the garage to a battlemented terrace on top of it.

The interior of The Cloisters is as complex and richly ornamented as the exterior. The entrance hall, which is off center to the right in the main block of the house, is particularly striking in its decoration. The ceiling has elaborate Gothic ribbed vaulting meeting at two central rosettes. This vaulting is not structural but rather is of plaster molded to imitate stone. Plaster painted white and molded in trefoil ridges and rosettes form the ribs. The interstices are painted and scored to imitate buff colored stone. Molded plaster pendants were applied at the points where the ribs meet at the top of the side walls. The walls of the hall are plaster, covered up to a height of about seven feet with antique Portugese leather embossed and gilt in a complex damask-like foliated design. Above this is a simple wood molded picture rail, then the remainder of the plain plaster wall, painted ivory. The woodwork in the hall consists of unpainted oak, molded door surrounds and plain baseboard. The floor is paved with large, random size, dark grey slates decorated with small, pale grey marble medallions.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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THE CLOISTERS  
Brooklandville  
Baltimore County

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 3

DESCRIPTION (Continued)

At the north end of the entrance hall is the octagonal stone stair tower which opens onto the hall through three Gothic pointed arches, approximately eight feet tall. The central arch leads onto the spiral staircase of heavy concrete steps that climbs from the basement to the third floor. The stair railing is wrought iron supported by iron balusters in a variety of twisted and pierced designs.

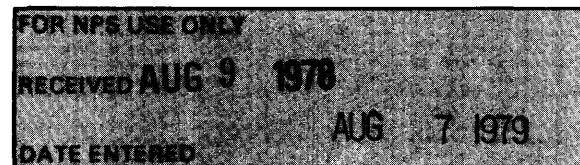
To the left of the entrance hall, running perpendicular to it, are the principal rooms, the gallery on the north side and the living room on the south side. The chapel is attached at the northwest corner of the gallery, and the library is to the west of the living room. To the right of the entrance hall is the dining room, north of which is the pantry and kitchen.

The gallery, designed principally to display the paintings, furniture and other artifacts that the Parkers had collected, is a very large room, approximately 56 feet long by 19 feet wide. The room is on two levels, having a 20-foot section at the west end whose floor level is about one foot higher than that of the main section. This upper level is visually separated from the lower level by a heavy ceiling beam, two heavy side posts with gargoyle-like figures in the upper corners, and short open baluster screens which extend from these posts. Two of the doors into the room are notable: the one to the hall being a massive, early Italian Renaissance carved stone door featuring rope molding and crenelated sides; the other, to the library, is a small, modern Gothic style with two long, antique strap-iron hinges. The plain plaster ceiling extends to within about one foot of the edge of the side walls, at which point a deep wooden cornice molding projects to conceal a system of valance lighting. The walls also are unadorned, ivory-colored plaster. However, the west wall and part of the south wall were indented a few inches to receive two large canvasses. The handsome floors, of random width oak with a "stripe" of walnut at 30-inch intervals, are entirely constructed with pegs, as are most of the floors throughout the house. The large, projecting chimney breast on the south wall is covered with plaster scored to imitate stone. The unusual mantelpiece is a composite of several pieces of antique woodwork: the mantel is a simple piece of six panels with elaborate, linen-fold molding; the sides are each composed of a carved wood, Renaissance period lion's head, below which is a panel of ornately carved, late

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #4

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**



THE CLOISTERS  
Brooklandville  
Baltimore County

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 4

DESCRIPTION (Continued)

Medieval, geometric motifs. The interior of the fireplace is brick, covered partly by six rows of eight Portuguese delf tiles with floral designs and an ornate, cast-iron fire back. The gallery is lighted by three large windows on the north wall and has French doors leading onto the Gothic-style porch which opens onto the terrace and cloister.

The chapel is a small, octagonal room featuring a tall, cone-shaped ceiling with exposed beams and rafters. The walls are covered with plaster scored and painted to resemble stone blocks. The two windows, one double the width of the other, are segmental arch shaped and have wooden, Gothic tracery from Glen Ellen at the top. The elaborate door to the cloister area, from a 16th century Veronese house, has a surround of multi-colored marble panels and has a round arch shaped pediment with fanlight. It is filled with an antique, stained glass window depicting the Madonna in a blue robe. The floors are laid with random-sized Butler stone.

The library likewise has a steeply gabled, exposed beam ceiling which rises to a height of two full stories. Two curved diagonal braces and a central stud rest on each of the two exposed massive summer beams. Other notable pieces of woodwork in the room are the tall bookcases which cover most of the east and west walls. The molded columns between the shelves pull out on tracks to reveal ladders. On the north wall is a stairway with wrought iron railing and balusters in a simple, Gothic-style design. On the south wall is a large window and a Gothic-style door leading onto a small porch that once was glazed on the south side, but has now been plastered to give a half-timbered effect.

The living room also has an interesting ceiling. It is flat and plastered and has four exposed summer beams with molded edges and seven exposed joists. These beams were hand hewn from trees on the site and are unpainted. Several pieces of antique woodwork are used in the room: the doors to the library, hall and small closet in the southwest corner are Medieval French in origin, each with a different form of linen-fold molding; smaller pieces of linen-fold paneling are also found under each of the three windows in the south wall. As in the gallery, the broad chimney breast is decorated with plaster scored to simulate stone and the interior of the fireplace is similarly treated with brick, tiles and a fireback. The mantelpiece differs, however, in having a French Gothic-style molded mantel supported by antique (perhaps 19th century), heavy wood posts carved in the shape of two Medieval musicians.

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|                  |            |
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THE CLOISTERS  
Brooklandville  
Baltimore County

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 5

DESCRIPTION (Continued)

The dining room ceiling is treated in the same manner as that of the living room, except that there are two exposed, molded summer beams and nine joists perpendicular to them. The broad chimney breast on the east wall of this room is of exposed blocks of Butler stone, but the treatment of the mantelpiece and interior of the fireplace are very similar to that in the living room. The chimney breast is further decorated with a rectangular panel, about two feet by four feet, directly over the mantel shelf. This antique wooden panel, probably from the late Medieval period, has five vertical sections carved with foliation and animal figures. An antique oval medallion with an intricately carved coat of arms further decorates the chimney breast. Two doors to either side of the chimney breast lead onto the brightly lighted porch. Further use of the Glen Ellen Gothic-style woodwork was made in a large (seven feet tall by eight feet long) glass-doored display cabinet which stands against the outer wall.

On the second floor is a square hall to the west of which are two identical bedrooms. To the west of the north bedroom is the Lace Room. To the west of the south bedroom is the small Poe Room. To the south of the hall is the master bathroom. To the east of the hall on the south side is the large master bedroom. North of this room is the room originally used as an office, now called the Records Room. The rooms on the second floor all have plaster walls and ceilings, simple wood chair rails and baseboards flush with the walls, and exposed studs running from floor to ceiling on either side of the reproduction molded, Gothic-style doors (Morgan Woodwork Organization, 1930 catalog, "Correct Woodwork for English and Norman French Homes," fig. M1119) decorated with rows of iron nails.

The most noteworthy features of both the bedrooms to the west of the hall and of the Lace Room (so named for the large collection of laces displayed there) are the chimney breasts. In the bedrooms these are in the corners and project out from the wall to form three-sided hoods over the fireplaces. The wood mantels have a simple shelf and plain architrave. The fireplace is of stone, has a semi-circular hearth, and is lined with bricks. In the Lace Room, between two large windows on the north wall, is a stone chimney breast decorated with three large, handsome, polychrome tiles with fanciful architectural scenes.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET 6.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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THE CLOISTERS  
Brooklandville  
Baltimore County

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 6

DESCRIPTION (Continued)

The master bedroom is large with a plastered chimney breast and mantel-piece similar to that in the dining room below. The outside rim of the fireplace is lined with a particulrrly fine set of Portuguese, delf tiles. Another feature is the window on the south wall which has two large pictorial medallions of stained glass in the center of the diamond-patterned, leaded glass. Glazed doors in a Gothic design on either side of the chimney breast lead onto the second floor of the Glen Ellen porch, which is lighted by windows with wooden Gothic tracery.

The Records Room has one striking architectural feature, an elaborate Georgian-style, mahogany mantelpiece. The mantel is large and intricately carved with a large shell and grasses in the center and a variety of bold moldings. The hall is comparatively plain except for a square, stained glass skylight and the doors to the stair and master bath, which have stained glass panels near the top. The master bath has a row of very fine antique ceramic tiles with black scenes on a cream ground, in addition to the high quality bronze fixtures that are found in the baths throughout the house.

The main spiral stair ends at a narrow landing on the third floor, which is lighted by a stained glass window in the door leading out onto a deck. To the west of the landing is a large room the Parkers called the "Museum" off of which is a small room also used for display. To the east of the landing is a narrow hallway leading to a bedroom known as "Cold Saturday" on the south side. On the north side are two small baths and two small, simple rooms, now joined, in which the doll and toy collections were displayed.

The Museum is an impressive room with a very tall, gabled ceiling similar to that in the library but having four summer beams rather than two. The massive stone chimney breast has a simple, free standing, wooden mantel shelf over the fireplace. A door in the west wall leads to the small, low room from which stairs descend to a door between the Lace Room and Poe Room. This room has been paneled with what appear to be antique window shutters.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET 7.



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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

THE CLOISTERS  
Brooklandville  
Baltimore County

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 7

|                  |            |
|------------------|------------|
| FOR NPS USE ONLY |            |
| RECEIVED         | AUG 9 1978 |
| DATE ENTERED     | AUG 7 1979 |

DESCRIPTION (Continued)

The "Cold Saturday" bedroom is named after a large, late 18th century house in Carroll County, Maryland (nominated to the National Register) where Mrs. Parker's great grandmother lived and from which most of the room's furnishings came. The ceiling in "Cold Saturday" is similar in design to that in the Museum, but is lower and less elaborate. A Neo-Classical style, wooden mantel with fluted doric pilasters decorates the plain chimney breast on the east wall.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

| 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION   | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY               | <input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799        | <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)<br>Local Cultural<br>History |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION              |   |  |

SPECIFIC DATES Begun 1930/Completed 1932 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Sumner A. Parker

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Cloisters, a large and impressive example of the late Gothic Revival style, is a handsomely designed house which combines numerous unusual features, including architectural elements from antique European and American buildings and architectural forms such as a cloister, chapel, tower and crypt. The house shows abundant examples of the finest hand craftsmanship and is particularly notable for unusual applications of the building materials. Unique in Maryland both architecturally and culturally, the Cloisters was originally intended by its owners to be open to the public as a museum, a use to which it will shortly be returned. The interesting and varied collection of fine and decorative arts, collected by the Parkers in Europe and the United States and displayed in the mansion upon its completion, still remains largely intact.

In 1930 the Summer A. Parkers of Baltimore, Maryland laid the cornerstone for The Cloisters on land overlooking the Green Spring Valley, selected several years previously with the mansion in mind. Mr. Parker, an engineer in the ornamental iron and steel business, designed the house himself, basing his drawings on late Medieval European buildings and modern Tudor-Revival style houses. Despite its eclectic sources, the imaginative design of the castle-like mansion is as successful as it is striking, forming a picturesque symphony of angles and spires, wood and stone.

On their yearly trips abroad in the teens and twenties, the Parkers collected not only ideas and furnishings for The Cloisters, but also acquired architectural elements which were incorporated into the mansion. Among the most notable of these are the two half-timbered gables on the main (south) facade which were originally located on a house in Domremy, France; two early Renaissance, carved stone doors from palazzos in Verona, Italy; and several late Medieval interior doors with linen-fold paneling. Another significant incorporation is of elements from the fine Gothic Revival house, Glen Ellen, designed by A.J. Davis. Owned by the City of Baltimore during the 1920's, Glen Ellen was allowed to fall into ruin and was eventually torn down. Mr. Parker rescued several pieces of lovely Gothic-style work, which were incorporated primarily in the large porch on the east side, windows in the chapel and in bookcases and cupboards.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

The Parkers kept all the original architect's\* plans, sketches and information on material sources. They also kept scrapbooks containing newspaper articles about the house and files with receipts for most of the original contents. The City of Baltimore now has all these documents in its possession.

\*Mr. Parker's plans, as he was the architect

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 53 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 | 356420 | 4363600  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B 18 | 356380 | 4363240  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C 18 | 355860 | 4363260

D 18 | 355860 | 4363840

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #10.

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

Ms. Gregory R. Weidman, Curator of The Cloisters (Parker Estate)

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Mayor's Advisory Committee on Art and Culture

August 12, 1977

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

21 South Eutaw Street

(301) 396-4575

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Baltimore

Maryland 21201

# 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

*John N. Pearce* 7/27/78

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

*Carol Hull*

DATE

8-7-79

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST *Anna Gene Saxe*

DATE

8-7-79

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*Regional Coordinator*

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 8

SIGNIFICANCE (Continued)

Inspired by European castles and other structures, the Parkers included several highly unusual architectural forms in The Cloisters. The mansion's name derives from the arched cloister area which encloses the large rear courtyard. The small but elegant, octagonal chapel with its Gothic style buttresses is probably the first such consecrated family chapel built as part of a Maryland house in well over a century.

Beneath the level of the basement is the large family crypt, where Mr. and Mrs. Parker and an infant son are buried under massive stone sarcophagi. The tall, octagonal, stone stair tower rises from the basement level to above the main roofline, where one is afforded a magnificent view of the surrounding rural countryside from the crenellated parapet.

The Cloisters is equally remarkable for the types of building materials and the ways in which they are employed. Perhaps most striking is the roof of heavy slate flagstones, most of which are approximately eight to twelve inches wide and well over an inch thick. All the windows are filled with diamond-paned, iron casement windows, most of which also have decorative circles of stained glass. On the interior outstanding woodwork is displayed in the adzed, exposed beams, steep Gothic style ceilings, carved mantelpieces and pegged floors of alternating oak and walnut. The wood used in the house reportedly came from trees on the site, where chestnut and oak predominated.<sup>2</sup> Fine stonemasonry is exhibited throughout, from the main exterior walls which are twenty inches thick to the stair tower and chimneys. To additionally strengthen the structure, Mr. Parker incorporated steel beams throughout the building to help the thick, native stone walls support the immense weight of the slate roof.

Upon completion of the house in 1932, the Parkers installed their collections of artifacts, including paintings, prints, furniture, dolls, toys, doll houses, laces and metalwork. The Parkers specifically designed several rooms with the collections in mind, such as the "Lace Room" on the second floor and the "Museum" on the third floor, a room in which many varied items of early Americana were displayed. The proportions of the "Gallery" on the first floor, where primarily antique European paintings and furniture were displayed, were determined by the two large "Old Master" canvases that hung on the south and west sides of the room. These rooms and several others were frequently open to the public in the 1930's and early 1940's during those seasons of the

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET 9.

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THE CLOISTERS  
Brooklandville  
Baltimore County

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 9

SIGNIFICANCE (Continued)

of the year when the Parkers were in residence, usually late spring, summer and early fall. A newspaper report that over 3700 people visited the house during a three-month period in the fall of 1939 indicates that the house and collection were well known and popular.<sup>3</sup> The Cloisters is the only private house in Baltimore County known to have been so used by its owners during this period. In the years following Mr. Parker's death in 1946, Mrs. Parker stayed at The Cloisters less and less, until by the early 1950's, the house was vacant most of the time. The house and all its contents were willed to the City of Baltimore upon Mrs. Parker's death in 1972.

Thus, in this area, the Cloisters is unusual in several ways. Architecturally, though the house is similar to local examples of the then popular Tudor-Revival style, it is outstanding in its size, design, materials, workmanship and antique elements. It is closely akin in spirit to the splendid castle-like mansions built by the super-rich in the late nineteenth century, such as "Biltmore" in Asheville, North Carolina, and is similar in approach to contemporary houses such as John Ringling's "Ca d'Zan" in Sarasota, Florida. Culturally its original use as an art gallery as well as residence is unique in this region, and it predates other great museum houses such as Winterthur by several years. The special character of the Cloisters will continue as City of Baltimore seeks to implement its plans to use the house as a children's museum and cultural center.

- 1 Scarborough, Katherine, "A House that Really Pleases its Owners," The Baltimore Sun, November 27, 1932, magazine section, p. 16. Mr. Parker's sketches and scrapbooks of designs are still extant.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Dulaney, Carroll, "Day by Day: Public Enjoys Parker Collection for Which it Pays Not a Penny," The Baltimore News Post, early 1940, clipping in Parker's social notices scrapbook.

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The Cloisters  
Baltimore County  
Maryland

CONTINUATION SHEET      ITEM NUMBER      10      PAGE      10

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The Cloisters is located on 53 acres at the southwest intersection of Falls Road and Hillside Road, Brooklandville, Baltimore County, Maryland.

The property constitutes a quadrilateral extending (on the east) south along the west side of Falls Road approximately 300 feet. The northern boundary follows the south side of Hillside Road to a point on the south side of Hillside Road approximately 2,000 feet in a straight line north-west from the southwest intersection of Hillside Road and Falls Road. The western boundary extends south from the aforementioned point approximately 1,300 feet. The southern boundary follows the north side of a private road which abuts the southern end of the eastern boundary west to meet the southern end of the western boundary (except for the western most 250 feet or so which does not follow the southern turn of the private road.)

**ACREAGE JUSTIFICATION**

The Cloisters is located on the top of a hill which is totally and densely wooded. The curving driveway gives the effect of mystery and suspense as the visitor travels the property from the public road to the house. This wooded approach provides the setting for the house and is essential for the success of the architecture. Frederick Law Olmsted used this same principle in landscaping the wooded entrance drive to Biltmore, Ashville, North Carolina.

The steeply sloping terrain on the other side of the house in the 53 acres of the nominated property is similarly densely wooded carrying out the theme of isolation from modern society, a fairy tale castle in another world. The total acreage is essential to convey the full intent of the architecture and original furnishings: an American's fantasy European castle.