

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

LANIER MANSION

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: THE LANIER MANSION

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 511 West First Street

Not for publication: ___

City/Town: Madison

Vicinity: ___

State: IN County: Jefferson Code: 077

Zip Code: 47250

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property
Private: ___
Public-Local: ___
Public-State: X
Public-Federal: ___

Category of Property
Building(s): X
District: ___
Site: ___
Structure: ___
Object: ___

Number of Resources within Property
Contributing
1

1

Noncontributing
1 buildings (1957 garage)
___ sites
___ structures
___ objects
1 Total

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

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

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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.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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

Signature of Commenting or Other Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ____ Entered in the National Register _____
- ____ Determined eligible for the National Register _____
- ____ Determined not eligible for the National Register _____
- ____ Removed from the National Register _____
- ____ Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Domestic Sub: Single Dwelling
Current: Recreation and Culture Sub: Museum

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Greek Revival

MATERIALS:

Foundation: Blue limestone
Walls: Brick
Roof: Macadam
Other:

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Lanier Mansion is a wonderful Greek Revival estate situated on the slopes of the Ohio River with a garden rolling down to the water. The following description is excerpted from a 1991 report, *The James F.D. Lanier Mansion*, by Diana Lanier Smith, a great-great granddaughter of James F.D. Lanier.

The Lanier Mansion is a masterpiece of classical proportion. The river or formal front with its two-story portico is spectacular. Although the style is Classical with overtones inspired by the Greeks, much of architect Francis Costigan's refinement is original. From the anthemion carving (a Greek honeysuckle motif) centered on the parapet and topping a large wrap-around entablature supported by four columns on the portico down to the delicate wrought iron railings on the terrace the elements of style are arranged in perfect symmetry. These slender, thirty-foot fluted columns are topped with capitals that might be called "composite" (a mix of Greek and Roman) yet are very Costigan.

The north, or street entrance faced First Street which ran east-west before it was eventually blocked off. In contrast to the dramatic south front, a small porticoed entry is framed by two columns and two pilasters. Fourteen more pilasters, regularly spaced and identical to the smaller ones, encircle all but the east wing of the building. Then, the eye travels upward to the frieze where there are twelve evenly spaced circular windows outlined with wreaths (a Grecian touch.) Above these, on the parapet, an anthemion carving is centered on each of the four cornices and at each of the four corners—making eight in all. ...by walking some distance away and looking skyward one sees the sixteen-foot octagonal cupola crowning the mansion.

The house plan is almost a cube in shape measuring fifty-four by fifty-seven feet, except for the east wing which housed the kitchen. A basement under the kitchen is fifteen feet deep and has an arched brick ceiling. The foundation of cut blue limestone extends around the building. All materials used in construction of the house were manufactured nearby or on the premises. Brick was made near the house, limestone was quarried locally and timber—largely tulip poplar—was a plentiful local resource.

When the Lanier Mansion was built, the exterior was probably left plain brick with painted trim. Pressed face brick on front and rear facades was made in Cincinnati. Later, the brick was painted and through the years the paint scheme changed several times. In the mid-1920's the mansion was painted entirely white as was popular with Greek Revival structures at that time. It remained this way until 1988 when the paint colors on walls and trim were restored to reflect one of the earlier periods. To ensure accuracy and authenticity, colors were chosen with the help of a professional paint analyst specializing in historic preservation. This painstaking restoration of the exterior highlights Costigan's architectural detail. The portico on the street side was added in the 1870s.

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Interior cornices, moldings, paneling, window and door treatments—all echo the proportion and refinement of the exterior. Ceilings on the first floor are fourteen feet, five inches high.

The interior of the mansion is laid out so that a formal hallway runs through the center from north to south. Almost at mid-point, an elaborate cornice bulges out over the hall, forming a rounded hood for the tucked spiral staircase to enter and corkscrew up to the cupola. One of the most beautiful and remarkable features of the Lanier Mansion, this graceful stairway is almost free-standing.

The hallway has two rooms on each side. On the west are the double parlors, on the east are the dining room and family library. The first-floor plan is repeated on the second floor (except for a small room on either end [of the hall]) and again on the third. Both floors were primarily made up of bedchambers.

In the spring of 1986, while investigating layers of paint, a historic preservation consultant discovered in the first floor hallway an elaborate Neo-Grec design scheme, purported to be one of a very few in the nation. The hand-painted ceiling was done during the time that James Lanier's son, Alexander Lanier, owned the mansion, and incorporates Egyptian, Greek and Anglo-Japanese designs. In the family library, the ceiling displays a different style. Both the library and the hallway have been restored. Whereas the hallway has a pale green base color with decorated panels of gray in the ceiling, the library reflects deep earth tones and a highly stylized decorative ceiling done in gold leaf, deep red and blue. Restoration of the formal double parlors and the dining room is planned for the near future. Another project under consideration is the restoration of art glass sidelights at each end of the hall.

The furnishings are of particularly fine quality, many original to the house.

Both parlors are largely furnished as one, with twin fireplaces, mantel mirrors and chandeliers. The parlors include a set of sofas and chairs imported from France by Lanier for his New York home, later given to the mansion and still in their original upholstery. The north parlor is furnished primarily as a music room with a...piano (circa 1850) made by Linderman & Sons of New York; and a French harp dating from the eighteenth century, donated by J.F.D. Lanier II, a grandson.

The second floor: At the north end of the hall is Mr. Lanier's private study with his crested chair, desk and other memorabilia. At the other end is the boudoir of Mrs. Lanier; this room is connected to the southeast bedchamber, also Mrs. Lanier's, and features a fine collection of tiger and bird's eye maple furniture. Some, like the four-poster, is Biedermeier made originally in Germany. Other pieces were crafted in the Ohio Valley. The southwest bedroom was probably Mr. Lanier's.

This and two remaining bedchambers are furnished in mahogany and walnut from the Civil War era. Handsome armoires are located on this floor and in each bedroom the showpiece is a magnificent tester bed.

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The third floor: This floor contains a hall, now used for special exhibits; and four bedrooms, two of which are open for public viewing. Lighted by circular windows, these rooms were probably used by the youngest children and servants in the household. The northwest bedroom contains an outstanding collection of children's toys, clothing and furniture. The southwest bedroom is set up as a typical servant's or nursemaid's room of the period, complete with rope beds and a small coal-fired stove for warmth.

The oldest son of James F.D. Lanier embellished the older house.

After he became the mansion's owner in 1861, Alexander Lanier built three greenhouses and made many improvements to the grounds. Dwarf fruit trees, flowering shrubs, vegetable plots, an arbor, a vineyard and formal garden—all flourished there during the nineteenth century. In 1988, after two years of research, restoration of the formal garden began. Archeological examination revealed not only the brick edgings that marked the original layout of the gardens but also the cinders which were used as a base material for paths that bisect the gardens. Further restoration is planned.

In the 1920's the north entrance of the mansion still fronted on High Street (later First.) Directly opposite was the McKim Furniture Factory, on the site of an earlier iron foundry. When the furniture factory was destroyed by fire, the lot was deeded to the state; High Street was blocked off, and Cravens Square created as a park in 1953, becoming the mansion's north gardens. Redbud, whitebud and flowering crabapple flank the north entrance—a springtime delight.

There were a number of outbuildings at one time but all are now underground. Currently there is a public archaeology program funded for three years with an interpreter on the site. They have determined there were as few as 7 or as many as 13 outbuildings. Today there is a 1957 garage on the grounds which is non-contributing.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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

Nationally: X Statewide: ___ Locally: ___

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A ___ B X C X D ___

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):

A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G ___

NHL Criteria: 4, 2

NHL Theme(s): XVI. Architecture
D. Greek Revival

Areas of Significance: Architecture
Commerce

Period(s) of Significance: 1840-1844

Significant Dates:

Significant Person(s): James F.D. Lanier (1800-1881)

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Francis Costigan (1810-1865)

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

The Lanier House is one of the finest Greek Revival structures in America. This was a new architectural vision for a young, democratic nation. The Greek Temple form was philosophically, as well as visually, suited to this optimistic age in the first half of the 19th century. The geometric purity of the Doric-Greek style was tempered by the hands of America's first architects to fit regional demands, and this is vividly illustrated by the commission to build an estate on the Ohio River for one of the most successful bankers in Indiana, James F.D. Lanier.

This elegant, Midwestern Greek "temple" was designed by an architect-builder, a combination of architect and carpenter who depended on pattern books published by established eastern architects such as Minard Lafever and Asher Benjamin.

Francis Costigan was an obscure craftsman who appeared in the Ohio Valley early in the 19th century. The commission to design and build a house for James Lanier (completed 1840-1844) became one of his masterpieces.

Costigan was born in Washington, D.C., March 4, 1810.

In all probability, Costigan spent his formative years in Baltimore—certainly his apprentice days as a carpenter. In 1835 when he was 25 years old, the Baltimore directory lists him as "carpenter and builder." Strangely enough, his name does not appear in an Indianapolis directory until 1858-59 when he is listed: *Costigan, Francis, proprietor Oriental House, South Illinois between Maryland and Georgia Streets [Indianapolis]*, this notwithstanding the fact that some of his most noteworthy architectural work in Indianapolis was done prior to that date. The only personal reminiscence of Costigan by a former employee was to the point, "When Costigan came around, there was a general stiffening up, he knew his business."
[Origin unknown]

In Baltimore when he was still a young man, Costigan was seized with an urge to come West, probably because of a financial depression which had the entire East in its grip. Coming West, he settled in Madison, a cultured, rich and prosperous Indiana town at that time. Established there, he designed and built, among others, the Lanier and Shrewsbury houses, two outstanding examples of the distinct American architectural trend we know as the Greek Revival. There cannot be any doubt whatever but that he saw the outstanding examples of the Greek Revival in his immediate neighborhood (Washington and Baltimore.) Indeed, he saw them in the course of construction. And it is more than probable that he was aware of what was going on in Boston, New York City and Philadelphia, either by way of contemporary illustration or travellers' tales. Much more difficult to explain is Costigan's awareness and appreciation of the subtleties inherent in ancient Greek architecture which are apparent in the better examples of the American adaptation of that style.

It is more than probable that Francis Costigan was familiar with Latrobe's work, with Latrobe's pupil, Strickland and his adaptation of the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates [on] the Philadelphia Merchant's Exchange, [and] with Isaiah Rogers and his effective Ionic colonnade in the Boston Custom House. These contemporary designs, inspired by Stuart and Revett's revelations, certainly exercised their spell on a young architect who before he was 40 years old had to his credit the Lanier House in Madison.¹

When Costigan moved west in 1838, Indiana was only twenty years old as a state and was rapidly developing as an agricultural center. Commerce travelled along the Ohio River and Madison became a civilized center.

[With] graded streets and paved sidewalks it was a burgeoning industrial and mercantile center with four pork packing plants, one reputed to have been the nation's largest, a starch factory, a glue factory, flour mills and iron foundries. The town could also boast a public library, a chamber of commerce, numerous retail stores, and the wharves and warehouses requisite to every river port. There were as well many fine residences lining the streets "attesting to the wealth and taste of Madisonians."

At the time of Costigan's arrival Madison was buzzing with the prospects of becoming the first rail terminus from Indiana's hinterland, and the construction of the Madison and Indianapolis Railway that was begun in that year and finished a decade later in 1847 brought additional growth to the City.²

But the development of railroad lines to larger cities overshadowed the commerce on the river and after 1850, Madison's economic base collapsed, development was arrested, and the town was cast in the mold of a mid-nineteenth century river port.

The man responsible for much of the visual and architectural character of Madison during its great decade of prosperity was Francis Costigan; during his thirteen years there he designed and built much, and even more buildings were influenced by him through his workmen. Tradition records that he had as many as 150 men in his employ at one time—the ultimate result was the establishment of Costigan's style as Madison's at mid-century. This popularity has created much difficulty in identifying his work and distinguishing it from that of his followers; the projects in question for the most part are modest in scale and represent a great range of expertise in execution from workingmen's cottages with crude dogear door frames to a church interior with a fine coffered ceiling exhibiting the skill of a virtuoso designer.³

¹ *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*. American Notes: Anton Scherrer, Francis Costigan, Architect 1810-1865. Vol. XVII, Number 1, March 1958, pp. 30-32.

² William W. Woollen, *Bibliographical and Historical Sketches of Early Indiana* (Indianapolis: Hammond & Co., 1883), p. 513.

³ Todd R. Mazingo. "Francis Costigan," Master's Thesis, University of Virginia, 1975, pp. 24-25.

The buildings in Madison credited to Costigan are:

St. Michael's Catholic Church (attributed 1838-1839)
 Vine Street house
 Holstein-Whitsett house, West Main Street (attributed 1840)
 Lanier House (1840)
 Shrewsbury House (1846-1849)
 McKee House (demolished), *where high school stands now*
 Godman House (demolished), *"Craigmont," now mental hospital*
 Madison Hotel (demolished 1847-1848), *had free-standing stair like Shrewsbury*
 Townhouse on Third Street for Costigan (1850)
 Marsh Jackson House (1840)
 Hendricks-Beall House } attributed
 Madison Baptist Church (1850-1860)

(The Charles Lewis Shrewsbury House (1846-1849), a short distance from the Lanier Mansion, was the second grand house designed and built by Francis Costigan in Madison. It was even more elegant in detail with a lighter, more mature touch.)

Costigan died in Indianapolis on April 18, 1865. He was originally buried at Greenlawn in Indianapolis, but when it became a park, the remains of a number of citizens were removed to Crown Hill, and no one really knows where he is interred.

When James Lanier commissioned this house in 1840, he was one of the best known and most successful bankers in Indiana and went on to international fame as a financier. His family had migrated from France to England in the 17th century and then to coastal Virginia. In the early years of the 19th century, his father was in Easton, Ohio, and served under General William Henry Harrison in the War of 1812. (Harrison became the first governor of the Indiana territory and later the ninth president of the United States.) In 1817, the Lanier family moved to Madison, one of the major ports of call on the Ohio river.

After studying with a lawyer in Madison, James completed his legal education at Transylvania Law School in Lexington, Kentucky. Upon graduation in 1823, he returned to Madison as a prosecuting attorney. By 1824, he was appointed assistant clerk of the Indiana State House of Representatives in the state's first capital, Corydon. The capital was soon moved to Indianapolis, where in 1827, James became clerk of the House. During these years he invested and prospered in agricultural and forest land throughout Indiana.

In 1833, however, James Lanier's career shifted to banking. He bought the largest single block of stock in the newly-chartered Second State Bank of Indiana. Lanier became the president of its Madison branch and served on the bank's board of directors. When the Panic of 1837 struck, Lanier saved the Second State Bank of Indiana from failure by making a hazardous journey overland—much of it through wilderness—to carry \$80,000 in gold bullion to the secretary of the treasury in Washington. Lanier's personal delivery of the gold convinced the secretary of the

bank's solvency, preventing the withdrawal of vital government deposits. The Second State Bank of Indiana was one of the few banks in the western states to survive the Panic.⁴

He prospered in the 1830's and in 1840, he commissioned Francis Costigan to design and build his mansion for the huge sum of \$25,000.

The house that Costigan produced for Lanier became Indiana's first mansion, having only one architectural rival in the state, the State Capitol (1831-35), by Town and Davis, at Indianapolis. It is a town mansion in concept, with an exuberant street facade originally fronting on First Street, before that street was closed to form the present park.

The Ohio River at its back in the distance called for a more romantic solution on the River front—Costigan provided this side with a dramatic portico—a promontory from which to relish the view across the river to the hills of Kentucky as well as being an ornament of picturesque charm speaking eloquently of the taste and refinement of its owner. The house was capped with a belvedere and a fantasy of Greek detail.⁵

There is no doubt that Costigan used the pattern books of Minard Lafever, both *The Modern Builders Guide* (1833) and *The Beauties of Modern Architecture* (1835).

In the Lanier home the most striking feature, the giant order that wraps the building, is the "New Corinthian Order" of Lafever (*Beauties*, Plates 11 & 12), employed with full entablature. The raked block course with its anthemion and sinuous decoration that tops the entablature is illustrated as the top of a door frame in the same source (*Beauties*, Plate 25). Although it seems likely that the Lafever plate was known to Costigan, the inspiration for its use on the roof could have come from the Bank of Louisville (1834) [designated a National Historic Landmark in 1971] by James Dakin where the same feature was employed, a year prior to Lafever's publication of *Beauties*. It would seem likely that this building in an adjacent city would have been known to Costigan and his banker client.

The window surrounds of both main facades are from the other influential Lafever publication, *The Modern Builders Guide* (Plate 65), and are copied directly except for the addition of a simple cornice improving the general appearance. The entries set in antae seem to be based on a variety of designs illustrated in both *Beauties* and *Modern Builders* but with no direct source immediately apparent; on the street front a small two column portico has been integrated with the entry—the porch details as in the entries seem to be a potpourri of orders, the only detail that is traceable being the very finely worked Roman Corinthian column capitals. The quality of their execution in comparison to the house's other detail work would lead one to believe that they were produced elsewhere. The wrought iron railings are particularly fine and were probably made at the Neal Foundries in Madison, one of the most famous iron works of the old west. The designs themselves are quite florid and unrestrained appearing to be based on the general themes of some of the iron work designs illustrated in Asher Benjamin's *The Practice of Architecture* (1833).⁶

In 1851, after just seven years, James Lanier moved on to New York. He was active in the

⁴ Smith, Diana Lanier. *The James F.D. Lanier Mansion*. Coleman Printing Company, 1991, Madison, Indiana, p. 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

development of the railroads as well as banking, forming a partnership with Richard H. Winslow, a Wall Street financier.

When the Civil War broke out in 1861, President Lincoln asked Governor Oliver P. Morton to organize a state militia of 6,000 troops. Unfortunately, Governor Morton was confronted with a serious arms shortage to adequately equip these troops: some 3,436 small arms of sixteen different makes and one six-pound cannon! Governor Morton related the crisis to his friend, James Lanier. Within ten days of the attack on Fort Sumter, Lanier personally bought \$420,000 of states bonds to help outfit Indiana's troops.

Two years later, Indiana, still burdened with its European debt, faced a new crisis. As the winds of war fanned against the Union, pro-Confederate and pacifist elements in the state legislature blocked funds for the war effort and for the state's debt payments. For a state that otherwise supported the Union, this was nearly catastrophic. Governor Morton again appealed to Lanier, who now loaned \$640,000 to pay two years of interest on the state's obligations. Without these funds, Indiana would have gone bankrupt. Moreover, Lanier did not expect to be repaid by a state in such financial straits. Over the years, however, the state was able to do so.

Lanier's financial expertise, his contacts abroad and his loyalty to his country were well known far beyond Indiana and New York. In 1865, and again in 1868, while on trips to Europe, Lanier was asked by the secretary of the treasury to meet with leading European bankers and investors to assure them of America's creditworthiness. Winslow, Lanier and company became one of the leading financial houses in the country.⁷

Lanier died on August 27, 1881, at his home at 16 West 10th Street, New York City. (This structure was neatly stripped of its exterior and has little interior integrity.)

As the oldest son, Alexander Lanier took over the family estate when his father moved to New York in 1851. The property was deeded to him for one dollar. Born in 1820, Alexander was a Yale graduate and for a brief time active in local business firms. But he gained notoriety as an amateur horticulturist, maintaining the spectacular gardens and building greenhouses at the mansion. Much of the produce he gave to charity. Another of his interests was wildlife conservation. A bachelor

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

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until 1889, Alexander married his childhood sweetheart, Stella Sering. He died in 1895. His widow and later a niece, Elizabeth C. Davidson, owned the property for a few years.⁸

Because of Alexander Lanier's horticultural interests, the Lanier mansion was also justly famous for the very large and elaborate gardens which are currently being restored. In its own time, it was referred to as Lanier's "Garden of Eden." Open to everyone in the nineteenth century from morning to sunset, Lanier's garden contained two greenhouses and employed several professional gardeners. There was a large conservatory at the east wing of the house.

The walkways were of coal cinders, a product that was in great supply in an industrial city like Madison, and were edged in brick. Mrs. M.C. Garber spoke of her recollections of the Lanier gardens many years later.

Here, dwarf fruit trees of choicest varieties, berries, and good things less poetic abounded; wire frames draped with vari-colored sweet peas screened the homelier but more necessary food patches; holly, red with berries in their season, hydrangeas, wisterias, clematis, syringas and spireas—flowers of each season in its turn—kept a ceaseless succession of bloom.⁹

The property was sold by J.F.D. Lanier's granddaughter, Drusilla Lanier Cravens to her uncle, Charles Lanier, who in turn gave it to the Jefferson County Historical Society in 1917. In 1925, the Lanier house became the property of the state of Indiana, and is today a State Historic Site open to the public.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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Smith, Diana Lanier. *The James F.D. Lanier Mansion*. Madison, Indiana: Coleman Printing Company, 1991.

Windle, John T., and Robert M. Taylor, Jr. *The Early Architecture of Madison, Indiana*. Historic Madison, Inc., and the Indiana Historical Society, 1987.

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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: #1934-1936

Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State Agency

Federal Agency

Local Government: Jefferson County Court House

University

Other (Specify Repository): _____

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: Nine (9) acres

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing

A 16 640110 4288500

B 16 640260 4288470

C 16 640220 4288280

D 16 640080 4288330

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary description is all of River Block 9, commonly known as the Lanier Block. The Lanier Block is bordered on the East by Elm Street, on the South by Vaughn Drive, on the West by Vine Street, and on the North by Second Street. Half of a river block on the opposite side of Vine Street was recently donated to the site, however, the lot is vacant at this time.

Boundary Justification:

The nomination property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Lanier Mansion.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Carolyn Pitts, Architectural Historian
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Date: April 5, 1993; November 1, 1993