

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: District of Columbia
COUNTY:
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
National War College

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Army War College (1907-1946)

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Fort Leslie J. McNair, P Street, between 3rd and 4th Streets, S.W.

CITY OR TOWN:  
Washington

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:

STATE: District of Columbia      CODE:      COUNTY:      CODE:

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
U.S. Army (c/o Commandant, National War College)

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Fort Leslie J. McNair

CITY OR TOWN:  
Washington

STATE:  
D.C.

CODE:

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:  
Registry of Deeds

STREET AND NUMBER:  
6th and D Streets, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN:  
Washington

STATE:  
D.C.

CODE:

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY:       Federal       State       County       Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:      STATE:      CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:  
COUNTY:  
ENTRY NUMBER:  
DATE:

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## 7. DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The National War College occupies the site of the historic Washington Arsenal. Between 1901 and 1903, in the wake of Secretary of War Root's formulation of plans for a General Staff School to be known as the Army War College, the early 19th-century arsenal buildings were razed to make way for the projected new complex.

The cornerstone for the principal edifice was laid on February 21, 1903, and four years later, on June 30, 1907, it was occupied for the first time. While the area beneath the terrace across the north facade of the building has been excavated in recent years to provide additional subterranean office space, this has not affected the structure's exterior appearance. Inside, the necessary changes of half a century have left the two main interior spaces for the most part undisturbed.

Its rear elevation overlooking the Potomac, the Neo-Classical style building is constructed of beige-colored brick, with granite trim, and faces north onto a quarter-mile greensward. The ground plan is oriented on a cross-axis formed by the intersection of the domed central pavilion and the wings which extend laterally east and west. The main pavilion is pedimented and, on the north or main facade, distinguished by a tall arched loggia featuring a distyle in antis Ionic screen, a motif also employed in the east and west gable ends of the structure. Surmounting the entablature of this columnar screen, in each instance, is a symbolic sculptured eagle.

A long, unbroken, slate-covered ridge roof, enhanced by acroteria, emphasizes the horizontality of the 12-bay wings. The third floor is treated as a clerestory, with four great arched clerestory openings rising above the entablature of the pilastered, two-story wing elevations to the north and south. A two-story windowless, pilastered bow projects from the south, or rear, of the central pavilion.

Dominating the interior is a marble-paved three-story rotunda, encircled at the upper levels by balustraded galleries. The exposed brick structural members--the pilasters and segmentally-arched brick vaulting supporting the galleries--contrasts with the severe white walls. A large marble plaque set between brick pilasters commemorates the efforts of Secretary of War Elihu Root in the establishment of the Army War College. Flanking the plaque are portraits of Theodore Roosevelt and Secretary of War Henry Stimson. Additional portraits and busts in the rotunda honor other prominent American military figures. An inner saucer dome of vaulted brick covers the rotunda and terminates in an oculus through which a large metal chandelier is suspended from the outer dome.

The entire west wing of the structure is devoted to the extensive library of the War College. Stack space consists of five metal balconies, connected by bridges at the upper levels and bisected by a

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |                                       |  |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |  |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1907-present**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal     | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric    | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic       | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science              | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture    | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture            | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture   | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian  | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art            | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater              | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce       | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation       | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation   |   |   |  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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The Army War College was an expression of the "New Army" created by Elihu Root and Theodore Roosevelt at the turn of the century. In a larger context, it was yet another manifestation of the emergence of the United States as a world power in the military as well as the economic sense. An adjunct to the General Staff established in 1903, the College centralized and rationalized Army planning and served as the capstone in the Army's expanded educational system. Its successor, the interservice National War College founded in 1946, did much the same thing for the greatly enlarged post-World War II military establishment. As a primary focus for military coordination, planning, and educational efforts, the Army War College and the National War College are of the utmost importance in the development of the armed forces in the United States.

Since 1907, both colleges have been successively housed in the immense, impressive edifice on the Potomac built through the exertions of Root and Roosevelt. The origin and continued significance of this structure constitute a major chapter in the annals of modern American military history.

History

The Spanish-American War revealed disturbing flaws in the organization of American military forces. There were disputes between the Army and Navy, and the Army itself was little more than a motley collection of various independent and poorly-coordinated units. An active role in world affairs, however, demanded a streamlined military establishment.

In 1899, Secretary of War Root announced his reorganization plans, calling, among other measures, for a war college with a central educational and advisory function as a major means of improving the efficacy of the American Army. The college would serve as a brain trust for the Army and a center for Army-Navy joint operations training. The military elite stationed in and about Washington would be utilized as faculty, while the students would be selected from among the most promising younger officers from throughout the Army. Patterned after European prototypes, especially the Prussian system, the school had

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Link, Arthur S. American Epoch: A History of the United States Since the 1890's. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963.

Washingtonian Room, District of Columbia Public Library. Collections under "National War College" and "Army War College."

Weigley, Russell F. History of the United States Army. New York: Macmillan, 1967.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	38° 52' 14"	77° 00' 57"		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	38° 52' 14"	77° 01' 08"				
SE	38° 51' 40"	77° 00' 57"				
SW	38° 51' 40"	77° 01' 08"				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **40 acres**

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

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

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
**Robert Gamble, Historian; Chris Redburn & Alice Wentworth True, Assistants**

ORGANIZATION: **Historic Sites Survey - National Park Service**      DATE: **August 1972**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**1100 L Street, N.W.**

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington**      STATE: **D.C.**      CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION      NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

<p>As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/>      State <input type="checkbox"/>      Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Title _____</p> <p>Date _____</p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p>_____  <i>Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</i></p> <p>Date _____</p> <p>ATTEST:</p> <p>_____  <i>Keeper of The National Register</i></p> <p>Date _____</p>
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Army War College

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

7. Description (Continued) (1)

central corridor. At the far end of the long, vaulted room is a reading area.

The east wing, extensively modernized in recent years, contains classrooms ranged along a central corridor at all three main levels. The ground story houses more office and classroom space, while off the south side of the rotunda, in the bowed central extension, is a lecture chamber.

Although the complex was never finished as originally contemplated, officers' quarters flanking the green at some distance from the War College building have served as sometime faculty residence. Both the structure and the setting largely conserve their historic character.

Initially it was intended that the stepped terraces on the north side of the building would bear appropriate statuary of great warriors. Although the podia were constructed, the statues were never installed, except for one of Frederick the Great, a gift of the German government soon after the completion of the edifice. Anti-German sentiment eventually forced its removal.

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Army War College

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

8. Significance (Continued) (1)

been presaged in this country by the Naval War College.

The plan was realized only slowly, both because of limited funds and of opposition among many top military personnel. Congress nevertheless approved the plan early in 1904, and classes were begun in temporary quarters at 20 Jackson Place, Washington, later that year. Construction meanwhile was commenced on a permanent home at the confluence of the Anacostia River and the Washington Channel of the Potomac. Designed by the noted firm of McKim, Mead, and White, this building was finished in 1907 at a cost of \$700,000. As many as fifty additional buildings were envisioned, including barracks, mess halls, and faculty quarters, but the plan was never realized in its entirety.

Consisting of approximately 100 students and from 15 to 20 faculty members, the college played much the role Root had foreseen. It offered a military graduate education in all phases of war-making--strategy, tactics, logistics--in addition to training in the political, economic, and social ramifications of the conduct of war. Past conflicts were studied and future strategies developed, with imaginary "war games" in which these were validated or disproved.

In its equally important capacity as an advisory body, the War College figured prominently in the "preparedness" movement of 1914-16, precipitating what Arthur Link describes as "one of the most violent political controversies of the decade"<sup>1</sup> when it proposed abolition of the National Guard and the creation in its stead of a nationwide volunteer reserve--a so-called Continental Army--of 400,000 men. President Wilson took this cause to the people in an extended speaking tour early in 1916, and, over the stout opposition of congressional pacifists, most of the War College's recommendations were embodied, though altered through compromise, in the Army Reorganization Bill which was signed by the President on June 23. Again, the wartime, the advance plan for rapid mobilization devised by the War College facilitated the raising of a large American army as Allied reserves were exhausted.

At the beginning of World War II, the college was temporarily disbanded as a superfluous luxury. The result was an embarrassing shortage of trained top officers. Thus in 1946, the concept was revived and enlarged upon by

<sup>1</sup>Arthur S. Link. American Epoch: A History of the United States Since the 1890's (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), pp. 182-83.

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Army War College

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

8. Significance

(Continued)

(2)

the creation of the National War College, embracing all branches of the armed forces, as well as the Department of State and the C.I.A. The role of this successor college closely parallels that of the older body, except on a broader basis. The Army War College itself, how subsidiary to the National War College, was reestablished at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

The founding of the college in 1903 may be viewed in retrospect as a seminal act which has exerted a major influence, profound if undramatic, upon the nature of the American military establishment in the 20th century.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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National War College

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Washington	
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(Number all entries)

**Boundary Description:**

Bounded on the north by D Street and D Street extended east to the Anacostia River and west to the Washington Channel of the Potomac; on the east and south by the northern shore of the Anacostia River; and on the west by the eastern shore of the Washington Channel.



