

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

JULIETTE GORDON LOW HISTORIC DISTRICT

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Juliette Gordon Low Historic District

Other Name/Site Number: (1) Wayne-Gordon House (also known as the Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace), (2) First Girl Scout Headquarters (Andrew Low Carriage House), (3) Andrew Low House

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: (1) 10 Oglethorpe Ave. (2) 330 Drayton St. (3) 329 Abercorn St. Not for publication:

City/Town: Savannah

Vicinity:

State: Georgia

County: Chatham

Code: 051

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: X

Public-Local: \_\_\_

Public-State: \_\_\_

Public-Federal: \_\_\_

Category of Property

Building(s): \_\_\_

District: X

Site: \_\_\_

Structure: \_\_\_

Object: \_\_\_

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

3

\_\_\_

\_\_\_

\_\_\_

3

Noncontributing

2 buildings

\_\_\_ sites

\_\_\_ structures

\_\_\_ objects

2 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 3

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:	(1) Domestic	Sub: Single Dwelling
	(2) Social	Sub: Clubhouse
	(3) Domestic	Sub: Single Dwelling
Current:	(1) Recreation & Culture	Sub: Museum
	(2) Social	Sub: Clubhouse
	(3) Recreation & Culture	Sub: Museum

**7. DESCRIPTION**

Architectural Classification: (1) Federal (2) No Style (3) Greek Revival/Italianate

Materials:

Foundation: Brick  
Walls: Stucco  
Roof: Metal  
Other: (1) Wood; (3) Cast iron, wood

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**Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**

The Juliette Gordon Low Historic District consists of three individual properties in Savannah, Georgia: the Wayne-Gordon House/Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace at 10 Oglethorpe Avenue; the Andrew Low House at 329 Abercorn Street; and a structure at 330 Drayton Street commonly known as the First Girl Scout Headquarters. The last was originally a carriage house and servants' quarters for the Andrew Low House. All three properties are located in the Savannah Historic District (NHL, 1965). The boundary of the Juliette Gordon Low Historic District is discontinuous. The Wayne-Gordon House is situated several blocks away from the Andrew Low House and its carriage house (First Girl Scout Headquarters).

The Wayne-Gordon House/Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace and the First Girl Scout Headquarters were designated a National Historic Landmark as the Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace in 1965. This additional documentation expands the NHL to include the Andrew Low House and renames the landmark "The Juliette Gordon Low Historic District." The Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places (66000276). The Andrew Low House and First Girl Scout Headquarters are contributing resources in the Savannah National Register Historic District (66000277).

**Wayne-Gordon House/Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace, 10 Oglethorpe Avenue**

This house was the birthplace and early home of Juliette Gordon Low, who lived here from her birth in 1860 until she married William Mackay Low in 1886. Following her husband's death in 1905, she frequently stayed in her parents' house during her annual sojourns in Savannah. After her mother's death in 1917, she again began using the Andrew Low House. The Wayne-Gordon House was constructed between 1818 and 1821. A building permit was issued in 1818, and there is a considerable jump in the property valuation between 1820 and 1821. The house was built for James Moore Wayne, a prominent Savannah jurist and politician who served as Mayor of Savannah, United States Congressman, and United States Supreme Court Justice. Moore sold the house in 1831 to his niece and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. William Washington Gordon I (Mrs. Low's grandparents), and the property remained in the Gordon family until 1953 when the Girl Scouts of the United States of America (USA) purchased it and began the process of restoring many features while adapting the house to new uses. The house was opened to the public in 1956. Interpretation of the site emphasizes Juliette Gordon Low's life, the history of the Gordon family, and the history of Girl Scouting. The property is officially known as the Juliette Gordon Low Girl Scout National Center and is visited annually by thousands of Girl Scouts who participate in a variety of educational programs.<sup>1</sup>

The house is at the corner of Oglethorpe Avenue and Bull Street in Percival Ward, one of the original wards in Savannah's renowned eighteenth-century city plan. Oglethorpe Avenue is a four-lane east-west thoroughfare with a landscaped median.<sup>2</sup> The Wayne-Gordon House is flanked by two nineteenth-century houses. Across Bull Street to the west at 4 West Oglethorpe Avenue is an 1836 house that was enlarged in 1867. To the east at 14 East Oglethorpe is an 1853 house, enlarged in 1892. Facing the Wayne-Gordon House on the south side of Oglethorpe is the 1928 Independent Presbyterian Church Annex, designed by Ralph Adams Cram (1863-1942). Bull Street between Oglethorpe and Wright Square has a number of commercial and institutional buildings from the late nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> The Wayne-Gordon House occupies the southwest portion of its lot. Along York

<sup>1</sup> Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) Documentation, GA-211; John Linley, *The Georgia Catalog: Historic American Buildings Survey* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1982), 341; Hanna Hryniewiecka Lerski, *William Jay: Itinerant English Architect, 1792-1837* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1983), 169-70.

<sup>2</sup> The Savannah street grid is skewed slightly from true north-south and east-west; for convenience, this nomination will refer to east, west, north, and south.

<sup>3</sup> Mary L. Morrison, ed., *Historic Savannah: Survey of Significant Buildings in the Historic and Victorian Districts of Savannah*,

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Lane at the north lot line are a former stable (now containing program rooms) and a reconstructed carriage house containing classrooms. A walled formal garden is present on the eastern portion of the lot .

When originally constructed, the Wayne-Gordon House was a two-story house on a raised basement. The box-like character of the house was relieved by two semicircular bays projecting at the rear. The first and second stories featured central hall plans with two rooms on each side of the hall. In Savannah, this arrangement is sometimes called a "double house," indicating rooms on both sides of a hall, as opposed to a plan with rooms to one side only (single house). The house was of brick construction, stuccoed and scored to resemble stone. The house had a hip roof and a deep molded cornice. Four dormers in the roof provided light to attic space containing servants' quarters and storage rooms. The entry façade featured a shallow porch dominated by four columns in a variation of the Tuscan order<sup>4</sup> and capped by a blank entablature with a single molding dividing it in two. Staircases ran to each side parallel to the facade. Kitchen and service areas occupied the basement. The first floor had double parlors on one side and a drawing room and a dining room on the other. A curving stairway at the back of the hall led to the second floor, which had four bedrooms, dressing rooms, and a trunk room.<sup>5</sup>

The design of the Wayne-Gordon House has traditionally been attributed to British-born and -trained architect William Jay (1792?-1837). Jay was active in Savannah from late 1817 through 1822 and is credited with bringing the architectural fashions of the British Regency period to Savannah. Notable Jay-designed houses in Savannah include the Owens-Thomas House (NHL, 1976), the Telfair House (now part of the Telfair Museum of Art) and the Scarborough House (NHL, 1973). No documentation definitively links Jay to the Wayne-Gordon House.<sup>6</sup> Jay was fined in 1818 for blocking the corner of Bull and Broad Streets with rubble. This could have been debris from the original house on the property that was demolished to clear space to build the Wayne-Gordon House.<sup>7</sup> No matter who the designer may have been, the curved bays and decorative touches from Greek, Roman, and Egyptian architecture linked the house to the prevailing neoclassical tastes of the 1810s. Neoclassical houses from this period are typically denominated Regency in Great Britain, derived from the period (1811 to 1820) when the future King George IV was regent for his father, George III. Federal style is the term generally applied to houses from the early neoclassical period in the United States.

Mrs. Low's parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Washington Gordon II, renovated the house in 1886 according to plans prepared by New York architect Detlef Lienau. Lienau was of German and Danish parentage and received his training in Berlin, Munich, and the office of Henri Labrouste in Paris. Arriving in New York City in 1848, he achieved nearly immediate success and had an active career, largely with residential commissions, until his death in 1887.<sup>8</sup> Lienau's changes included the addition of a full third floor to replace the original attic and the construction of a one-story porch, or piazza, on the east side of the house. The new top floor had a hipped roof of shallower profile than the one it replaced, a bracketed cornice and frieze, and quoins around windows and at the corners. The added story contained five bedrooms and two bathrooms. Two bathrooms were installed on

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*Georgia* 2d ed. (Savannah: Historic Savannah Foundation, 1979), 66, 94; Georgia state survey forms, on file in National Park Service Southeast Regional Office, Atlanta.

<sup>4</sup> The Tuscan order was developed by the ancient Romans and features a simple semi-circular torus molding at the base, a smooth, unfluted shaft, and a simple molded capital. The Wayne-Gordon House columns lack the necking band, or astragal, below the capital that is often a feature of the Tuscan order.

<sup>5</sup> This description is based on HABS Documentation, GA-211, and "Juliette Gordon Low Girl Scout National Center Background Information sheet, Wayne-Gordon House," 2-3.

<sup>6</sup> Lerski, 63, 169-70.

<sup>7</sup> "Juliette Gordon Low Girl Scout National Center Background Information sheet, Wayne-Gordon House," 1-2.

<sup>8</sup> Robert A.M. Stern, Thomas Mellins, and David Fishman, *New York 1880: Architecture and Urbanism in the Gilded Age* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1999), 18.

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the second floor, and a kitchen was inserted as part of the new piazza. During World War II, the Wayne-Gordon House experienced further interior changes when it was converted to apartments. The rehabilitation begun by the Girl Scouts in 1953 removed the 1942 alterations and generally aimed to return the house to its appearance following the 1886 remodeling, while accommodating certain contemporary functions.

### **Current Appearance**

Currently in good condition, the Wayne-Gordon House largely reflects the appearance of the house following the 1880s remodeling under architect Lienau. The stucco coating over the bricks, scored to mimic stone, was most recently replaced in 1964. Stringcourses separate the raised basement from the first floor and the first floor from the second. The original molded cornice remains between the second story and the added third floor. The tin cornice with brackets, added in the 1886 remodeling, remains at the roof line. The entry portico is unchanged save for a door opening in its base giving onto the sidewalk. A window in this position was converted to a door by the Girl Scouts. A symbolic "Founder's Gate" covered this door until 2004, when the gate was moved to the courtyard. The 1880s piazza dominates the east elevation. It runs the full width of the elevation with a projecting semicircular central portion, echoing the original semicircular bays and a framed off portion at the north, which accommodated a new kitchen. The piazza is supported on Doric columns, with a heavy entablature and cornice and a paneled parapet wall at the top. The only known change to the piazza is the replacement of the original paneled balustrade with a pierced balustrade. Fenestration of the house is varied: the basement has 8/8 windows, the first and second floors are 6/6, and the third floor is 2/2. Chimney stacks rise over the side walls above the front parlors and again above the bays at the rear.

In the basement, interior partition walls were removed in the 1950s to provide a large meeting space. In general, this floor has been renovated to meet modern needs. The interior finishes of the first and second floors are almost all intact. The house boasts elaborate millwork around doors and windows, incorporating carved oil lamps and heads that appear to derive from ancient Egyptian or Etruscan models, and neoclassical plaster cornices and ceiling medallions. The central hall is divided into a more formal front hall and a plainer back hall, where the stairs are located. Under Girl Scout ownership, the wall separating the two spaces was moved three feet to the south to accommodate HVAC systems, requiring the reworking of some ceiling plasterwork. The front entrance hall has plaster rosettes in the ceiling and a central medallion with a wreath of acanthus leaves.

All of the first floor parlors have plaster cornices composed of bellflowers and acanthus leaves separated by a Greek key course as well as plaster ceiling medallions. The double parlors on the west side of the first floor are the premier public rooms of the house. The mahogany pocket doors between the parlors are given the complete neoclassical treatment with engaged Ionic columns supporting a full entablature, which incorporates a row of rosettes in the frieze portion. The rooms at the back of the house have fireplaces in the center of the curving bays, flanked by windows.

The rear yard and side garden of the Wayne-Gordon House have always been enclosed by service buildings and high walls. The stable building has been extensively remodeled for use as program rooms. The carriage house was largely reconstructed in the 1950s; only a portion of the south wall retains some original material. Neither of these buildings has integrity to the period of significance and both are classified as noncontributing.

The garden and courtyard landscapes were designed in the 1950s by landscape architect Clermont Lee. The garden represents an early nineteenth-century formal garden and is highlighted by two oval parterres. Historic plant materials known to have been utilized by the Gordons are employed wherever possible. The garden is not,

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however, based on research into the original bedding plan.<sup>9</sup>

**Andrew Low House, 329 Abercorn Street**

The Andrew Low House, built in 1848-1849 for Andrew Low, a wealthy cotton factor,<sup>10</sup> fronts Lafayette Square, one of the squares of the renowned Savannah town plan. The house was designed by New York architect John S. Norris, who also designed the U.S. Custom House in Savannah as well as numerous other private and public buildings in the city. The Low House and its associated Carriage House occupy an entire block in the Savannah Historic District National Historic Landmark. The two buildings are separately owned. The Andrew Low House was the adult home of Juliette Gordon Low, founder of the Girl Scouts in the United States. Low, who traveled for extended periods, used the house between 1886 and 1905. She inherited the property from her husband after his death in 1905 and it became her Savannah residence in 1918 and remained such until her death in 1927.

The Low House is set among houses built mostly in the nineteenth century. The house faces east on Lafayette Square, which was laid out in 1837 in conformance with Savannah's original ward and square plan. Development around the square was limited until 1846, when a city jail that occupied a substantial portion of the Low building site was relocated. The Low House was one of the first to be erected on the square, but was soon followed by a number of houses with Greek Revival detailing built in the 1850s.<sup>11</sup>

Prominent edifices on Lafayette Square include the Second Empire Hamilton-Turner House (1873) at 330 Abercorn Street on the east side of the square, and the Gothic Revival Cathedral of St. John the Baptist (1872-73) on the northeast side of the square. Filling the block just north of the Low House is the Lafayette Condominiums, occupying a four-story brick building (1928, 1948) that originally housed offices of the Southern Bell Telephone Company. The 1852 Battersby House (119 East Charlton) and the 1858 John B. Gallie House (201 East Charlton) are neighbors to the south and southeast, respectively. Directly south of the western portion of the Low lot is the shell of an abandoned 1920s service station and garage. Lafayette Square features mature live oak trees, brick walks, grassed areas, seasonal plantings, and a three-tiered cast-iron fountain at its center.<sup>12</sup> The block occupied by the Low House is bounded by Drayton Street on the west, East Harris on the north, Abercorn on the east, and East Charlton on the south.

Andrew Low purchased the 60-by-180-foot property for his house from the city in 1846. A city jail built circa 1800 had occupied a portion of the lot, and defensive works associated with the War of 1812 also ran across the lot. A ground-penetrating radar investigation in April 2005 by Brockington and Associates revealed an intermittent wall structure below grade in the rear courtyard. This may be a portion of the jail structure or possibly a vault for storage constructed concurrently with the house. Many of the pottery shards found during a 2001 archeological investigation of the site date from approximately 1790 to 1840 consistent with the period that the jail operated. The same archeological investigation revealed the brick cistern beneath the ground in the backyard. The cistern was filled by drainpipes from the roof.<sup>13</sup>

The Andrew Low House was one of the first in Savannah to include elements associated with the Italianate

<sup>9</sup> "Juliette Gordon Low Girl Scout National Center Background Information sheet, Wayne Gordon House," 10.

<sup>10</sup> Factor was the term for a middleman or broker.

<sup>11</sup> Georgia state survey forms.

<sup>12</sup> Morrison, 129-34; Georgia state survey forms. The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America in the State of Georgia donated the fountain to the city in 1983.

<sup>13</sup> The jail and defensive line show up on an 1818 map of the city by I. Stouf. See Judson Kratzer, "An Archeological Assessment of the Historic Drainage System and Rear Garden Stratigraphy at the Andrew Low House, Savannah, Georgia," Environmental Services, Inc., ESI Report of Investigations No. 258, 2001, 24-32.

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style of architecture. Various details in the house show the transition, under the direction of architect John S. Norris, to the Italianate from the Greek Revival style then prevalent in Savannah. The Low House exemplifies Norris's sophisticated application of stylistic touches popular in his home city of New York to an up-to-date dwelling with all the conveniences of the time.

When the house was completed in 1849, it demonstrated several elements that were forerunners of the fully developed Italianate style popular in Savannah from the mid-1850s: a massive square block, pyramidal roof, tall narrow windows on the main floor, recessed main doorway, generous use of cast iron, and shallow balconies on the south and east elevations. After an 1854 hurricane damaged the original roof, a new roof with overhanging eaves was installed. Brackets under the eaves add to the structure's Italianate appearance.<sup>14</sup> The framing and decking of the roof are original; only the roof sheathing was apparently lost in the hurricane. Other decorative details are in the Greek Revival style, and are described below.

### Exterior

The house is free-standing, of two stories on a raised basement, and surrounded on all sides by a shallow dry "moat." Brick stairs rise from the moat at four corners to street level, leading to a formal parterre garden in the front and to a paved courtyard in the back. At the west end of the courtyard, and separated from it by 1929 openwork brick wall of a "dropstitch" design,<sup>15</sup> stands the stucco-over-brick Carriage House, with a two-story central block and one-story wings added early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Girl Scouts began using a portion of the Carriage House in 1912 and it is now owned by the Savannah Council of Girl Scouts. A cast-iron fence, with an original double-leaf gate on Abercorn Street, surrounds the house on three sides. The fence stands on rectangular brownstone blocks and meets stucco-over-brick walls at the back wall of the house. The walls, scored to resemble blocks of stone, enclosed the rear courtyard and ties into the end walls of the Carriage House wings.

The entrance façade of the Andrew Low House, facing east, is a five-bay design with a central brown sandstone entry staircase carried on half arches. This entry is flanked by two cast-iron lions at the foot of the stairs, which are climbed with the aid of a cast-iron railing. The railing for the stairs continues from the top of the steps and becomes the railing for a shallow, projecting balcony that extends across the east façade. The cast-iron features intricate meanders and guilloche detailing.<sup>16</sup> In contrast, the recessed stone entrance features an unadorned pediment above a pair of fluted columns. The entry portico is modeled on the Tower-of-the-Winds (or Temple of the Winds),<sup>17</sup> a second-century B.C. structure in Athens, Greece. For the Low House, Norris flattened the pediment and eliminated the dentil ranges included in the original Tower-of-the-Winds pediment. This variant at the Low House features capitals with curled acanthus leaves superimposed on vertical lotus leaves. A simple entablature tops the columns, which are in antis (i.e., recessed). The entry itself continues the Tower-of-the-Winds motif, employing four fluted pilasters, also with lotus and acanthus leaf capitals, supporting an entablature with egg-and-dart and leaf molding below a four-pane transom. Four-pane sidelights frame the studded wooden double door.

<sup>14</sup> A panoramic view of the city published by J. Hill in 1855, before the hurricane, shows a hip roof with a parapet.

<sup>15</sup> Savannah landscape architect Clermont Lee, who did a garden restoration plan for the house in the 1970s, applied this term to the openwork checkerboard pattern of the wall.

<sup>16</sup> A running ornamental decoration of interlaced bands that forms a pattern of circles or loops.

<sup>17</sup> The Tower of the Winds, or the Horologion of Andronikos of Kyrrhos, is a tall, octagonal building designed by astronomer Andronikos to be an elaborate water clock on the inside, sundial on the outside, and weather vane on the top. The nickname "Tower of the Winds" is derived from the personifications of the eight winds carved on the eight sides of the building. The construction date is now thought to be mid-second century B.C. <http://www.stoa.org/athens/sites/romagora.html>, website for The Stoa: A Consortium for Electronic Publication in the Humanities, a photographic archive by Kevin T. Glowacki. Accessed Feb. 28, 2005.



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The basement windows are tall and narrow, of a 4/4 double-hung design featuring wide center muntins with a vertical groove, giving the appearance of casement windows, a feature repeated on all windows of the house. The first-floor windows are 4/6 double-hung, while the second-floor windows are 4/4 double hung. The roof is low-pitched pyramidal, with narrow wooden brackets under broad eaves. The walls of the house are stucco scored to resemble stone. Four rectangular stucco-over-brick chimneys, flush with the exterior side walls, rise through the roof overhang, each serving a stack of three fireplaces directly below. The north and south elevations offer four-bay facades. On the south, a cast-iron balcony divided into six bays runs across the façade at the parlor level. The balcony features delicate cast-iron posts with guilloche patterns, a frieze, railings with ornamental meanders, and a pagoda-style roof. The balconies on the east and south elevations are carried on cast-iron brackets. Cast-iron grilles of similar pattern guard the lower portions of the north facade's first-floor windows.

At the rear of the house, the west elevation is accentuated by a five-bay, three-tiered porch rising the full height of the house that is supported by six square, stuccoed brick posts with shutters between the posts. When all the shutters are closed on this elevation, the house presents an imposing but elegant face to the private courtyard surfaced with squared flagstone pavers. Brick steps dating to 1952 lead up to a 1996 glass and plastic panel enclosure on the porch that shelters a museum shop and video-viewing area. Beyond the double glass doors of the enclosure (which is concealed behind the closed shutters), the original recessed entryway remains, with simple double pilasters on either side of a four-panel door with four-pane sidelights. The exterior shutters on all elevations are painted lava gray, in contrast to the dusty rose color of the house and the black of the cast-iron fence.

### Interior

All three floors have a central hall. The ground floor/basement is devoted to offices for the house museum and for The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America in the State of Georgia. To the north are two large rooms (a servants' bedroom to the west and a laundry to the east in Juliette's time) divided by a bathroom (formerly a storeroom). At the east end of the hall is a mechanical room, formerly another storeroom. There is a brick-lined well directly beneath the front wall. The south side contained the original kitchen to the west, and children's dining room to the east, divided, as is the parlor floor above, by a butler's pantry (originally with dumb-waiter) and graceful curved servants' stair. The original Egyptian marble mantel remains in the children's dining room, as does the original bell system used to summon servants. Each room had its own bell with a distinct tone. A second narrow stairs, directly below the main stairs, joins the basement and first floor halls.

On the parlor (first) floor, a central hall runs from front to back (east to west). There are two main rooms on each side. Doorways in the hall have pediments and pilasters repeating the Tower-of-the-Winds motif. A handsome staircase with an octagonal turned newel post rises at the rear of the hall along the south wall, curving gracefully at the landing. On the north side of this floor are two parlors connected by a double-width solid mahogany pocket door; the other doors on parlor level are faux-grained to resemble mahogany.<sup>18</sup> The doorknobs on this floor are silver plated, a Norris signature piece.<sup>19</sup> The ceiling height of the parlor floor is 13' 8". The central hall ceiling is divided in two by a deep beam supported by anthemion and scroll brackets. A second matching beam with brackets is over the stair opening. The entrance hall ceiling, just inside the front

<sup>18</sup> This is based on the recommendation of Edward Vason Jones, a consulting interior design expert who surveyed the house in the 1970s.

<sup>19</sup> Another Norris house in Savannah, the Green-Meldrim House (c. 1853), also features silver-plated doorknobs. He also specified silver-plated doorknobs for another Savannah house (c. 1857) that was never built.

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door, has a recessed passion flower medallion set inside a frame of egg and dart which is in turn surrounded at the wall by a cornice of egg and dart and anthemion. The central hall ceiling is similarly paneled, but with a raised medallion composed of six caducei alternating with acanthus leaves, which is repeated in the two parlors and dining room. The three dimensional cornices of the first floor are double layered, separated by a coved recess, the dining room having a floral design and the library being plain. Original black Egyptian marble mantels grace the double parlors, library, and dining room. Faux marble baseboards and a faux marble hall floorcloth have been added in the 1980's on the recommendation of Edward Vason Jones. Against the east parlor wall is a full height pier mirror, one of a pair given to Juliette and William Low as a wedding present, and specially ordered for this location.

The second (top) floor contains five bedrooms, a large central hall, and the original bathing room referred to an advertisement in the July 7, 1849, *Savannah Georgian* by architect John Norris, offering a reward of \$200 "upon conviction of the person or persons, who broke into A. Low's House on the Old Jail Lot, last Saturday night June 30, and cut off the lead pipe in the Bathing Room, by which 500 gallons of water was flowed on the floor of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Story, and the ceilings and side walls of the principal story damaged." The water flowed out of the attic tank described below.

Faux graining of the baseboards can still be seen on the second floor. In the bathing room, the original lead pipes remain under the floor. These and a piece of the original floorcloth will form the basis for the restoration of the room. An upstairs porch, or piazza, enclosed by operable louvered shutters, runs across the entire west façade of this floor. Juliette Low enclosed this piazza, making it into two dressing rooms with bathrooms divided by an extension to the stair landing, probably when she moved back in 1918. In 1996, the National Society of The Colonial Dames of America in the State of Georgia restored the piazza to its original appearance.

The southeast bedroom was the master bedroom for Andrew and Mary Low. She died there in childbirth in 1863. In 1870 Robert E. Lee stayed in the house when a reception was given for him in the parlors below. The author William Makepeace Thackeray stayed in the house on two occasions, in 1853 and 1856, while visiting fellow Briton Andrew Low during lecture tours in the United States. The desk on which he wrote while staying with the Lows is the only item of original antebellum furniture remaining in the house.

When the Andrew Low House was completed in 1849, a 500-gallon iron tank was installed in the attic to supply water for the bathing room, butler's pantry, and kitchen. A large underground cistern in the backyard was supplied with rainwater runoff from the roof. A hand pump then carried water from the cistern to the attic tank for household use. The attic tank remains and is situated over the passageway between the southwest and southeast bedrooms.

The northeast bedroom is interpreted as the Thackeray Bedroom. English novelist William Makepeace Thackeray stayed in the house on two occasions, in 1853 and 1856<sup>20</sup> while visiting fellow Briton Andrew Low during lecture tours in the United States. The desk on which he wrote while staying with the Lows is the only original item of furniture remaining in the house today. In 1870, General Robert E. Lee visited Savannah and a reception in his honor was held in the double-parlor.<sup>21</sup> Lee stayed in one of the second-floor bedrooms, and the northwest bedroom is currently interpreted as the Lee Room.

<sup>20</sup> The house museum has a copy of a letter Thackeray wrote, presumably from this desk, to a friend on the "Feast of St. Valentine," 1856. He notes in the letter that he writes it "from the most comfortable quarters I have ever had in the United States."

<sup>21</sup> Linley, 332.

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The house retains substantial integrity to the period of Juliette Gordon Low's occupancy. The only major change to the exterior fabric of the building was made in 1855, following a hurricane that damaged the roof. The roof sheathing was replaced, and slender Italianate brackets were added under projecting eaves. In 1886, after the marriage of Juliette Gordon and William Mackay Low, some cosmetic changes were made to the interior of the house. The 1886 piazza bathrooms (now removed) are described above. Also in 1886, fireplaces were altered to accept coal grates, and hardwood floors were laid over the original pine floors on the parlor level. When the house was converted to a museum in 1975, interior moldings were repaired and the interior was painted. The brick pavers in the rear courtyard and rear brick steps were added in the second half of the twentieth century. It is uncertain when the alterations in the vicinity of the butler's pantry circular staircase were made.

### Gardens

The front (east) garden facing Lafayette Square is one of three Savannah gardens known to follow their original plans. The garden's appearance is remarkably little changed and retains its 1849 parterres. Two of these are the central figure-eight flower beds, which are edged with the original tiles. The walkways are gravel; originally they were probably gravel or oyster shell. Photographs from the *Garden History of Georgia*, first published in 1933 by the Peachtree Garden Club, show foundation plantings of cycads (*Cycas revolta*), camellias, and large magnolias at the street. The garden today features cycads and annuals (pansies, Dusty Miller, and calendula) in the two middle parterres, and Foster holly standards under planted with Asian jasmine in the two outer parterres. Littleleaf box edging is used throughout the garden. Large camellias anchor the corners of the garden, and additional plantings of azaleas, gardenias, osmanthus, and podocarpus complete the evergreen setting prevalent in many Savannah gardens. Little Gem magnolias at the street take the place of the larger magnolias that once overpowered the garden.<sup>22</sup>

The rear courtyard garden is one of the last remaining undeveloped courtyards in the historic district. Its current appearance was designed by retired Savannah landscape architect Clermont Lee, who was asked in the 1970s by the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Georgia – who acquired the house after Juliette Gordon Low's death – to augment the design for the paved area. Lee directed that the European flagstone already in place be carefully relaid, then designed brick panels around them. Lee used the term “dropstitch” for the pierced brick wall that encloses the garden at the back (west). These walls are not just decorative; they also allow cooling breezes into this garden retreat of dogwoods, camellias, azaleas, holly fern, white Lady Banks rose, and trumpet honeysuckle. A figure sculpted by Juliette Gordon Low is centered in the dropstitch wall.<sup>23</sup> The brick walls on the north and south date to the original house construction.

### **First Girl Scout Headquarters/Andrew Low Carriage House, 330 Drayton Street**

This building served originally as a carriage house and servants' quarters for the Andrew Low House. It is situated behind the garden in the rear of the Andrew Low House. The central two-story portion was likely built at the same time as the Low House in 1849. The one-story wings date to the early twentieth century. In 1912, Mrs. Low had the interior remodeled as a meeting place for local Girl Scout Troops while retaining the north wing as her garage. When Mrs. Low died in 1927, she bequeathed all but the garage to the Savannah Area Girl Scout Council. Low's estate sold the garage to the Colonial Dames, who donated it to the Girl Scouts in 1939. The Savannah council has used the Carriage House for a variety of purposes. It currently houses the First Headquarters Program Activity Center, which includes a Girl Scout museum and the council's archives.

<sup>22</sup> Susan L. Hitchcock, “Savannah Gardens: Past and Present,” unpublished paper, February 28, 2001.

<sup>23</sup> Hitchcock.

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Built of brick covered with stucco, the building has a central block that is two stories in height with flanking single-story wings. The building extends nearly the entire buildable width of the lot, with the sidewalk meeting the walls on each side. The wings are visually linked to the taller central section by parapet walls that tie into the front of the two-story section. The shallow-pitched pyramidal roof of the central block projects slightly with rafter ends exposed. The building is four bays wide and three bays deep. Each window bay of the central section is recessed. Second-story windows have double-hung sash in a six-over-six configuration. Ground-floor window sash have a two-over-two configuration. A simple gabled canopy shelters the front door. The basic form of the building has not changed since Mrs. Low's death in 1927, although one of the two doors in the main block has been replaced by a window, and the carriage doors that opened onto Drayton Street from the wings on either side of the main block have been removed and the openings filled in. The interior has been considerably altered, and all features from the period in which the building was used as a carriage house and servants' quarters and the early twentieth-century modifications made by Mrs. Low when she converted the building for use by the Girl Scouts have either been removed or are obscured by modern materials and features.



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

Juliette Gordon Low formed the first American Girl Guides troop (forerunner of the Girl Scouts of America) in Savannah in March 1912. She held preliminary meetings with local girls in the Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace (at that time her parents' home) and possibly at her own house, the Andrew Low House.<sup>24</sup> She gave the scouts the use of the carriage house behind her residence as a headquarters. Over the next 15 years, Mrs. Low oversaw the development of the Girl Scout movement as it grew from its local origins with 18 members to a national organization with more than 168,000 members at the time of her death in 1927.<sup>25</sup> Low traveled extensively both for personal reasons and in her work promoting the Girl Scouts. From the time of her marriage in 1886 on, she was away from Savannah for long periods of time. During her stays in Savannah between 1912 and 1927, at different times, she used both her birth home and her marital home as a base for her Scout-related activities. The house on Lafayette Square (Andrew Low House) that she inherited from her husband became her Savannah residence in 1918, the year following her mother's death.<sup>26</sup> This significance statement expands upon the original significance statement contained in the nomination for the "Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace NHL." It also demonstrates the significance of the Andrew Low house under NHL Criteria 1 and 2. The Andrew Low House is significant under Criterion 1 for its association with the Girl Scouts of the USA, one of the most important and influential girls' groups in U.S. history. It is significant under Criterion 2 for its close association with Juliette Gordon Low, founder of Girl Scouting in the U.S.

The addition of the Andrew Low House completes the thematic grouping of the three Savannah buildings important to the life of Juliette Gordon Low and the founding of the Girl Scouts: 1) The Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace (the Wayne-Gordon House) (10 Oglethorpe Avenue); 2) The Carriage House that served as the first Girl Scout Headquarters (330 Drayton Street, behind the Andrew Low House); and 3) The Andrew Low House, 329 Abercorn Street. The Period of Significance is 1860-1927, the lifespan of Juliette Gordon Low.

Justification

The Andrew Low House, Carriage House, and Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace are significant for playing a distinctive role in helping shape American girls' interest and participation in the world around them. Two National Historic Landmark themes are pertinent to this property: Creating Social Institutions and Movements and Expressing Cultural Values.

In Savannah, Mrs. Low designed, organized, promoted, and funded the Girl Guides (soon renamed the Girl Scouts), an early and influential movement for girls and young women intended to guide the way they interacted with their society and their environment. Through Girl Scouting, girls were encouraged to reach their full potential, develop meaningful values for sound decision-making, demonstrate personal responsibility, and contribute to the improvement of humanity. The Girl Scouts helped shape the cultural values of American girls, giving them the self-confidence to pursue educational and intellectual opportunities, gain access to

<sup>24</sup> Although her house was leased out in 1912, Mrs. Low seems to have had flexible arrangements with many of her tenants and was known to have dropped in on them periodically or even used her houses while leased to others.

<sup>25</sup> Gladys Denny Shultz and Daisy Gordon Lawrence, *Lady from Savannah: The Life of Juliette Gordon Low* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1958), 305-7, 381.

<sup>26</sup> Among Juliette Gordon Low's papers at the Georgia Historical Society are numerous letters sent and received from 329 Abercorn Street dealing with Girl Scout business such as revising the Handbook, the design of uniforms, and arrangements for Mrs. Low's numerous speaking engagements and fund-raising trips.

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opportunities in business and politics, and participate in outdoor educational and physical activities. Girl Scouting represented a major educational and character-building enterprise, reflective of the social and humanitarian impulses of the first two decades of the twentieth century. Increasingly in recent years, Girl Scouting has helped girls understand the impact of day-to-day actions on their physical environment, educating them in ways to preserve and protect the land around them.<sup>27</sup>

Girl Scouts were encouraged to be aware of cultural and other differences as early as 1917, when the first troop of physically handicapped girls in the United States was organized in New York City, and in 1930 when the first all-Indian Girl Scout troop was registered in Oklahoma. In 1933 the Girl Scout handbook was transcribed into Braille, and in 1940 the first troops were organized from mentally and socially handicapped youngsters.<sup>28</sup> Girl Scouts have always included community service projects in their activities. In the early days, the focus was in areas including the outdoors, health, art, science, and travel/patriotism. Girls could earn awards in bird watching, nature studies, sculpting, stargazing, Morse code, and patriotic songs. As society has evolved, Girl Scouting has progressed as well. The areas of focus today in Girl Scouting are leadership; community outreach; environmental awareness; financial literacy; health and wellness; science, technology, engineering and math; the arts; and travel. Some of the patches (awards) Girl Scouts can earn today include those in: cultural awareness, building world citizenship, crime prevention, domestic violence awareness, energy conservation, environmental stewardship, "girl tek," marine ecology, learning about government, outdoor living skills, saving outdoor sculpture, HIV/AIDS, Leave No Trace backcountry ethic, and women in the arts.

Today the Girl Scouts number more than 3.7 million around the world, with 50 million girls having been enrolled since the group's inception.<sup>29</sup> By 1999, two-thirds of all the female members of the U.S. Congress were former Girl Scouts. The three properties in the Juliette Gordon Low Historic District remain of great significance to Girl Scouts. The birthplace has become a commemorative site for the Girls Scouts to honor Juliette Gordon Low. Approximately 10,000 Girl Scouts every year travel to the birthplace for a day-long "Girl Scout Heritage Visit." The experience includes orientations to Mrs. Low's life and her era, an in-depth house tour, and a "Girl Scout's Own" ceremony in the historic garden. The visit includes two-hour hands-on living history activities corresponding to Juliette's own experiences as a girl growing up in the house, with some activities taken from the early Girl Scout Handbook. The girls earn a Birthplace Pin for their heritage visit to the house. The birthplace also hosts three-day training events for adult Girl Scouts (council staff, leaders, etc.) several times each year. In addition, many of the visitors to the Andrew Low House are drawn there because of its links with the life and achievements of Juliette Gordon Low.

### Andrew Low

The Andrew Low House and Carriage House were built under the direction of Andrew Low (1813-1886), who in 1829 came to Savannah from England to join his uncle in the shipping business. When his uncle died in 1849, Low inherited a thriving shipping and cotton factoring<sup>30</sup> business, with offices in Liverpool as well as Savannah. He was soon one of Savannah's richest men. He purchased a lot from Chatham County in 1847<sup>31</sup> on newly developed Lafayette Square and contracted for the design and construction of his house, which was completed in 1849. From its completion, the house was filled with children and relatives, including four

<sup>27</sup> "Rest Comes to Founder of Scouts," *Savannah Morning News*, January 18, 1927, reprinted in Jane Judge, *Juliette Low, 1860-1927, Founder of the Girl Scouts* (Savannah: n.p., 1927), 16.

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Parthenon/1402/gshist.html>, accessed March 3, 2005.

<sup>29</sup> Marion F. Swan, "Girl Scout Week—Celebrating an American Institution," March 3, 2005 (Official Website of the Girl Scouts, [www.girlscouts.org](http://www.girlscouts.org).) Accessed March 10, 2005.

<sup>30</sup> A factor was a middleman or broker.

<sup>31</sup> Chatham County Register of Deeds 3E, 258-259.

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children by his second wife, Mary Stiles Low; her mother, Eliza Stiles; and also Low's two daughters by his first wife, Sarah Hunter Low. His oldest daughters lived most of the year in England but frequently visited their father in Savannah.

As a leading citizen of Savannah, Andrew Low entertained important people, made yearly trips to Liverpool to look after his extensive English business, and conducted some modest blockade-running during the Civil War. William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1868), British author of *Vanity Fair*, *The History of Henry Esmond*, and a contributor to *Punch*, stayed with the Lows in 1853 and 1856, lending his name to a room in the house (the northeast bedroom on the second floor). A desk believed to have been used by Thackeray remains in the house. In 1870, General Robert E. Lee visited Savannah and a reception in his honor was held in the double-parlor. Lee stayed in one of the second-floor bedrooms.<sup>32</sup>

### Juliette Gordon Low and the Founding of Girl Scouting in the United States

Juliette Magill Kinzie Gordon (1860-1927) was born into a prominent Savannah family on October 31, 1860, and her childhood was spent in the house now known as the Wayne-Gordon House. Her father, William Washington Gordon II (1834-1912), became a cotton broker in Savannah, served as a captain in the Confederate Army, and was elected to the Georgia House of Representatives. Juliette Gordon's mother, Eleanor Kinzie (1835-1917), came from Chicago, where her family had settled and prospered during the period it was changing from a remote army and trading post to a major urban center.<sup>33</sup>

Nicknamed Daisy, Juliette Gordon Low was a talented, artistic, well-traveled woman fluent in several languages. She exhibited talent as an artist early on, and over the course of her life she developed skills in several mediums including painting, sculpturing, and ornamental ironworking. As a young adult she became almost completely deaf as the result of ear infections. In 1886, she married William Mackay Low, the son of Andrew Low, who was a business associate of her father. On the death of Andrew Low, William Mackay inherited the family house on Lafayette Square as well as his father's fortune, and the Andrew Low House became the newlyweds' American residence. After 1887, Juliette and Willy, as he was known, lived primarily in England and Scotland, with extensive travels in Europe. Having married into a prominent and wealthy British family, Mrs. Low became a member of England's most exclusive social circles. William Low, for example, was a close friend of the Prince of Wales, and in 1889, Juliette Low was presented to Queen Victoria at the Court of St. James.

The early years of the marriage were apparently quite happy, but by the mid-1890s there were problems, centering on William's extramarital affairs and his growing dependence on alcohol. These problems worsened over the years, and Mrs. Low finally sought a divorce. Before she could initiate formal legal proceedings, however, William Mackay Low died in 1905, leaving all his property to his British mistress. Mrs. Low waged a grueling, but ultimately successful, court battle for her rightful share of the couple's American property and was granted the Savannah house. Between 1905 and about 1919, Mrs. Low frequently rented out her house to supplement her income. Her use of the house for Girl Scout business increased in the 1920s.<sup>34</sup>

After 1906, Mrs. Low began wintering in the United States, dividing her time between Savannah and travel to other parts of the country. Much of the rest of each year was spent in England, where she resumed her extremely active social life. She also continued to travel extensively, not only in America and Europe, but also

<sup>32</sup> Linley, 331-32; Roulhac Toledano, *The National Trust Guide to Savannah* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1997), 33, 147.

<sup>33</sup> Shultz and Lawrence, 1-56.

<sup>34</sup> Shultz and Lawrence, 105-279.



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to more exotic places such as Egypt and India. It was in England in May 1911 that Juliette Gordon Low met Robert Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scouts. A shared interest in sculpting led to their chance meeting and helped to forge a lasting friendship. Low also met Baden-Powell's sister, Agnes, who was at the time in charge of the Girl Guides, an organization for British girls that was a counterpart to Boy Scouting. Mrs. Low was impressed by the methods Baden-Powell employed to positively influence boys through Scouting, principles she later adapted for the Girl Scouts.<sup>35</sup>

When Mrs. Low met Baden-Powell, he was an extremely popular public figure in Great Britain. His defense of Mafeking during the Boer War in South Africa had made him a national hero, and the immediate success of the Boy Scouts, which he founded in 1908, brought him even greater acclaim. Many of the guiding principles of the English Boy Scout movement were adaptations of Baden-Powell's theories on training and commanding soldiers, especially his beliefs about the character-building benefits of conferring responsibility upon individuals and training them in rigorous outdoor skills such as scouting and tracking. Baden-Powell was also influenced by American youth organizations such as Ernest Thomas Seton's "Woodcraft Indians" and Daniel Beard's "Sons of Daniel Boone."<sup>36</sup> Unlike these organizations, however, which tended to glorify the outdoors, Indian lore, and wilderness skills for their own sakes, Baden-Powell's Boy Scouts emphasized the outdoors as a means of building character and the qualities of good citizenship. The founding of Scouting in Britain was in large part a response to concerns among opinion leaders that British men were in danger of becoming morally and physically weak. Strengthening and redefining the concept of masculinity was at the core of Boy Scouting from its inception.<sup>37</sup>

Scouting for boys was established in America in 1910. It was largely patterned on the British model, but by and large it developed independently. The question of how girls fit into scouting arose at the very beginning of the movement. Baden-Powell acknowledged early on that "girls can get just as much healthy fun out of Scouting as boys can."<sup>38</sup> Still, Baden-Powell and other early British Boy Scout leaders seemed unprepared for the thousands of girls who found adventure, the outdoor life, and collecting merit badges just as appealing as their brothers did. Early scout troops in Britain often enrolled girls as well as boys. This immediately raised questions for a movement that was rooted in male bonding and strenuous outdoor activity. The mores of the time frowned on the idea of adolescent girls and boys engaging in rough sports and games together, and there was a general belief that girls needed to be trained to be wives and mothers. Baden-Powell dealt with these issues in 1910 by establishing a separate program for girls, the Girl Guides, under the leadership of his sister, Agnes. The Guides adopted some of the wood lore and sports activities of the boys, but added nursing and other pursuits deemed more suitable for girls. Baden-Powell's refusal to let the girls call themselves scouts is telling. Blazing a trail through the woods as a scout was deemed a male activity, while girls needed to learn to be guides and helpmeets for their future husbands.<sup>39</sup>

Inspired by Baden-Powell and a feeling that she was doing socially useful work, Juliette Gordon Low gained firsthand experience with the Girl Guides by forming and working with troops in Scotland and London during the summer and fall of 1911. Early in 1912, Low and Baden-Powell were fellow passengers on the S.S. *Arcadia*. Low was embarking on her annual winter voyage to America, while Baden-Powell was en route to America as part of a world tour on behalf of the Boy Scout movement. He likely encouraged Mrs. Low because,

<sup>35</sup> Tim Jeal, *Baden-Powell* (London: Hutchinson, 1989), 426-27; Shultz and Lawrence, 293-99.

<sup>36</sup> Jeal, 301-4, 364-78.

<sup>37</sup> Michael Rosenthal, *The Character Factory: Baden-Powell and the Origins of the Boy Scout Movement* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986, 5-11; Tammy M. Proctor, *On My Honour: Guides and Scouts in Interwar Britain* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2002), 11-14.

<sup>38</sup> Baden-Powell in *The Scout*, May 16, 1908, cited in Jeal, 469.

<sup>39</sup> Proctor, 19-24; Jeal, 469-73.

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after reaching the United States, he contacted individuals in New York and elsewhere about providing assistance to Mrs. Low in the establishment of a Girl Guide program in the U.S.<sup>40</sup>

When Mrs. Low arrived in Savannah, she contacted Nina Anderson Pape, a cousin and principal of a local girls' school, and discussed with her the possibility of forming several troops of Girl Guides in Savannah. Miss Pape informed Mrs. Low that there was already a group of girls in Savannah who met periodically with a local naturalist, W. J. Hoxie, who instructed them in bird watching, plant identification, and other similar skills. Mrs. Low met informally with these girls in early March at her parents' home (the Wayne-Gordon House) to find out if they would like to become Girl Guides. Their affirmative responses prompted Mrs. Low to take action, and in March 1912, she organized the first Girl Guide troop in the United States, with eighteen girls.<sup>41</sup>

Shortly thereafter, she refurbished the carriage house and servants' quarters (the first Girl Scout Headquarters) behind the Andrew Low House garden for use as a meeting place for the Girl Guides, retaining the north wing as her garage. In addition, a vacant lot across the street was converted into a combination tennis and basketball court to provide outdoor recreation to troop members. The new organization grew rapidly in Savannah, and within a year, more than 60 girls were participating in its activities. Mrs. Low intended to make the organization national in scope from the beginning, and in 1913 she established a national headquarters in Washington, D.C. That same year, she tried to interest the leaders of the Campfire Girls in joining their organization with the Girl Guides under the name Girl Scouts. The Campfire Girls rejected the plan, but thereafter, Low dropped the Girl Guides terminology and consistently used Girl Scouts. This long remained a small irritant in relations between the British and American branches of the movement. British leaders urged the Americans to become guides, and the Americans thought "Girl Scouts" should be used in Britain. The early adoption of the term scout in the U.S. may have reflected a broader, particularly American, conception of what were appropriate female activities. The first of several versions of the Girl Scout handbook, *How Girls Can Help Their Country*, was published in 1913 by Savannah naturalist, W. J. Hoxie. It was an adaptation of the British Girl Guides handbook by Agnes and Sir Robert Baden-Powell.<sup>42</sup>

Initially, Mrs. Low personally bore the administrative costs of the Girl Scouts including the salary of a national secretary. She traveled frequently and accepted numerous speaking engagements on behalf of the Girl Scouts to build a broader base of support for the fledgling organization. She also used her many social contacts to interest influential people in the Girl Scouts. Her efforts paid off, and by 1915 the Girl Scouts were a viable organization with a membership of 5,000. In that year the Girl Scouts were formally incorporated, and the first national Council Meeting was held during which a constitution and bylaws were adopted. Mrs. Low was elected President, an office she held until 1920. In 1916, the national headquarters was relocated to New York City where it has remained.<sup>43</sup>

The World War I era was important for the Girl Scouts. The participation of Girl Scout troops across the country in such war-related volunteer efforts as the Red Cross and war bond sales campaigns increased public awareness of the organization and its goals. Membership grew dramatically, and by 1920 there were more than 50,000 members nationwide. That year, Mrs. Low stepped down as president and thereafter was known officially as "The Founder." She also gave up most administrative responsibilities but continued to travel widely in the United States on behalf of the Girl Scouts and to represent the organization at foreign meetings. In 1922, the Girl Scout Annual Convention met in Savannah. Delegates made extensive use of the Andrew Low House

<sup>40</sup> Shultz and Lawrence, 299-302; Jeal, 428.

<sup>41</sup> Shultz and Lawrence, 305-6.

<sup>42</sup> Shultz and Lawrence, 309-10, 317-23. See Proctor, 146-47, for a discussion of the implications of the difference in terminology.

<sup>43</sup> Shultz and Lawrence, 321, 337.

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for lodging, receptions, and meals. Mrs. Low was largely responsible in 1926 for bringing to the United States the Fourth International Conference of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, the first such event held outside of England.<sup>44</sup>

After Juliette Gordon Low's death in Savannah in 1927, her furniture and personal belongings were distributed to family and friends, and in 1928, the Andrew Low House and garage wing of the Carriage House was sold to The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America in the State of Georgia.<sup>45</sup> The house became headquarters for the Colonial Dames and for four decades was used as an apartment house and residential club for social gatherings. For several years it also housed a tea room. In 1975, the Colonial Dames opened the house to the public as a house museum. Today it contains an outstanding collection of furniture and artifacts from the neoclassical Period in America, from 1820 to 1860. More than 30,000 visitors come to the house each year, including many Girl Scouts from around the world. The Carriage House on the Andrew Low property, given by Mrs. Low to the Girl Scouts of Savannah in 1916, is owned by the Savannah Council of Girl Scouts, which operates a history center at the site.

### John S. Norris, Architect

When Andrew Low planned his house, he contracted with architect John S. Norris for its design. A New Yorker, Norris had been the supervising architect under Philadelphia architect Thomas Ustick Walter for the construction of the Gothic Revival St. James Episcopal Church in Wilmington, North Carolina, and had also designed Wilmington's Cape Fear Bank and that city's Custom House. The latter commission aided his landing, in 1846, the commission from the federal government for Savannah's Custom House, which was completed in 1852. The Custom House, Georgia's oldest surviving U.S. government building, is an austere granite temple where Norris also adapted motifs from the ancient Greek Tower-of-the-Winds, this time in the portico. The building, which took four years to complete, was the first fire-proof building in Savannah, having been built with stone and iron.<sup>46</sup>

Norris worked frequently in Savannah between 1846 and 1861, completing numerous other public and private buildings.<sup>47</sup> In the 1840s, most residences in Savannah were built of wood with gable roofs, dormer windows, and narrow doorways. When the construction of wood buildings was prohibited, Savannah gray brick replaced wood, and the Greek Revival style, then popular, was maintained. Norris brought to Savannah the more picturesque Gothic Revival and Italianate styles. His Italianate houses in the city include the Mercer House, Gallie House, and Brantley House, all located in the city's National Historic Landmark District. His best-known residence, also in the district, is the Green-Meldrin House (1851), which is distinctly Gothic Revival. None of Norris's plans or correspondence related to the Andrew Low House has been found. However, a notice placed by him in the Savannah newspaper in July 1849 (cited in Section 7 above) announces a reward for the arrest of vandals who damaged the house of "A. Low" by cutting the pipe in the bathing room, flooding the first and second floors.<sup>48</sup> The notice points to Norris being the architect and demonstrates that on that date the house was near completion. Savannah builder Matthew Luffburrow, a major Savannah building contractor,

<sup>44</sup> Shultz and Lawrence, 334-53.

<sup>45</sup> Chatham County Register of Deeds 24C, 50.

<sup>46</sup> Mary Lane Morrison, *John S. Norris, Architect in Savannah 1846-1860* (N.p: The Beehive Press, 1980), 23.

<sup>47</sup> Norris pioneered the use of "Fox's Patent Air Heater" in public buildings in Savannah, installing one in Christ Episcopal Church in 1846. He also designed and built navigation aids nearby, including a square tower on the Oyster Beds in the Savannah River and a round tower at the eastern end of Cockspur Island, which still stands near Fort Pulaski. Norris also completed several other buildings in Savannah, including the Georgia Historical Society library (1849) and the Chatham Artillery building (1849), both Gothic Revival and both since demolished, as well as several residences. See Morrison, *John S. Norris, Architect in Savannah*.

<sup>48</sup> *Savannah Georgian*, July 7, 1849.

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constructed the house; his name was found on woodwork in the house. Based on the prevailing construction practices of the period, it is highly probable that some of the laborers and craftsmen on the Low job were slaves.

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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: (1) GA-211, (3) GA-210  
 Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

## Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State Agency  
 Federal Agency  
 Local Government  
 University  
 Other: Georgia Historical Society, Savannah; Juliette Gordon Low National Girl Scout Center, Savannah;  
Andrew Low House, Savannah

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**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Acreage of Property: .5 acres

**UTM References:****(1) Wayne-Gordon House/Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace**

<b>Zone</b>	<b>Easting</b>	<b>Northing</b>
17	490240	3548780

**(2) Carriage House and (3) Andrew Low House**

<b>Zone</b>	<b>Easting</b>	<b>Northing</b>
17	490240	3548320

**Verbal Boundary Description:****(1) Wayne-Gordon House/Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace:**

Lots 6 and 7, Sloper Tything, Percival Ward, said lots being contiguous and as a whole being bounded on the north by a lane; on the east by Lot 8, said tything and ward; on the south by Oglethorpe Avenue; and on the west by Bull Street (Deed Book 58Y, page 230, Chatham County Courthouse).

**(2) Carriage House:**

SW corner of Lot 14, Lafayette Ward, having frontage of 47.55 feet on Drayton Street and frontage of 37.7 feet on Charlton Street, Savannah, Chatham County, Georgia (Deed Book 22X, page 392, Chatham County Courthouse).

**(3) Andrew Low House:**

Lot 13 and part of lot 14, Lafayette Ward, Savannah, Chatham County, Georgia, bounded by Macon Street on the north, Abercorn Street on the east, and Charlton Street on the South.

**Boundary Justification:**

The boundary encompasses the major properties historically associated with Juliette Gordon Low's life and her founding of the Girl Scouts of America. The boundary includes the original lots on which the Wayne-Gordon House and Andrew Low House are located, as well as the lot occupied by the Andrew Low Carriage House. (The Carriage House property was once part of the Andrew Low House property, but was donated by Juliette Gordon Low to the Girl Scouts of Savannah.) The Wayne-Gordon House lot is non-contiguous to the Andrew Low House and Carriage House lots but it is a significant contributing resource in the history of Juliette Gordon Low's life and her founding and nurturing of the Girl Scouts of America.

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NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY  
March 16, 2007