

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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NATIONAL
REGISTER

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Brodhead-Bell-Morton Mansion
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 1500 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W. not for publication N/A
city, town Washington vicinity N/A
state District of Columbia code DC county N/A code 001 zip code 20005

3. Classification

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

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Carol B. Thompson _____ SEP 01 1987
Signature of certifying official State Historic Preservation Officer Date

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) _____

Patrick W. Anderson _____ 10/14/87
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Single Dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade/Organizational

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Beaux-Arts Classicism

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Limestone

roof Slate

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Brodhead-Bell-Morton residence, 1500 Rhode Island Avenue, is a large-scale four story-structure located on a trapezoidal lot surrounded by busy city streets. The building as it now appears is the work of architect John Russell Pope. Although a few interior alterations have been made during the 47-year period since the house was converted from residential to business use, an effort has been made to preserve the residential character and historic significance of the house.

The building is trapezoidal in shape, with the north facade angled to correspond with the property line, which follows the angle of Rhode Island Avenue. The building is clad in smooth limestone block with neo-classical detailing. Its over-all form is a nearly-symmetrical five-bay by three-bay quadrangle with a projecting one-story service wing on the east end. A shorter wing occupies the second story to the east.

The exterior has several notable features. The first floor level has large round arched window openings that contain small wrought-iron balconies on the north and south facades, and a stone balcony on the west. Articulated corner quoins and band coursing emphasize the first floor level. The porte-cochere, which is near-square in plan, is capped by a stuccoed parapet that conceals an accessible flat roof.

The second floor level windows are capped with flat, projecting lintels while the smaller third floor level windows have a low-relief surrounding frame.

The down-scaling of the building's window sizes focuses attention towards the first level which, historically, was used for "public" function. The facades are crowned by dentilated molding, projecting cornice and a balustered parapet with conceals the attic story. Five stuccoed chimneys with molded limestone caps and a slate roof are also visible.

8. Statement of Significance

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

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

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

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
Social History

Period of Significance

1879-1920

Significant Dates

1879
1912

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Morton, Levi Parsons

Architect/Builder

Fraser, John
Pope, John Russell

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

The Brodhead-Bell-Morton mansion is significant both for its architecture and for its role in the history of Washington during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The building is listed on The District of Columbia inventory of historic landmarks. Its inclusion in Volume 2, "Massachusetts Avenue Architecture," published in 1975 by the Federal Commission of Fine Arts, documents its importance as an example of the Beaux Arts style, and as a contributor to the character of its Scott Circle and Embassy Row neighborhood.

Originally, a fine example of the romantic Victorian period, the mansion was transformed by John Russell Pope in 1912 into its present form. Few traces of the work of the original architect, John Fraser, are still visible, although the basement still contains millwork that is typical of Fraser's designs.

Pope's redesign is a fine example of the Beaux Arts school of architecture that flourished in Washington briefly around the turn of the century. It remains the only surviving residential example adjacent to Scott Circle.

Drawings by Pope dated 1912 indicate the original configuration of the house and show where round bays and hip roofs were removed to create the more ordered, classical look typical of the "City Beautiful" movement. Certain aspects of the design are the result of Pope's effort to impose a typical Beaux Arts symmetry over some of the spaces in the original plan (refer to MAPS, pages 1, 2 and 3).

9. Major Bibliographical References

Cassini, Marguerite, "Never A Dull Moment - (Her) Memoirs," Harper, Inc., New York, 1952.

Clark, Raymond B. Jr. and Stephany Jaramillo, "Biographical Sketches of Owners, Residents, and Architects of 1500 Rhode Island Avenue N.W.", (unpublished, undated).

Commission of Fine Arts, Massachusetts Avenue Architecture, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1975.

"I Live For Love." Washington Herald, January 30, 1938 - February 28, 1938.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data: N/A

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one-half acre.

UTM References

A

1	8
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3	2	8	3	0	0
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4	3	0	8	3	0	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C

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B

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Zone Easting Northing

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Begin at curb line at the southeast corner of Rhode Island Avenue and Fifteenth Street, N.W. Proceed south along west curb line of Fifteenth Street to southeast corner of property.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The property occupies Lot 800 of Square 195. The property bounded by Rhode Island Avenue on the north, Fifteenth Street on the east, N Street on the south and Corregidor Street on the west. All boundary lines are clearly defined by paved city streets.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Marilyn Ludwig, Asso. Director - PR Div.; Mary Travers, Editorial Asst. - PR Div.

organization National Paint & Coatings Association date June 11, 1987

street & number 1500 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W. telephone (202) 462-6272

city or town Washington state D.C. zip code 20005

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

BRODHEAD-BELL-MORTON RESIDENCE
1500 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.
Washington D.C.

Section number 7 Page 2

The lot is landscaped except for an asphalt parking area on the east side. Re-landscaping in 1986 preserved existing trees while replacing a number of dead or overgrown shrubs with curved planting beds of azaleas, perennials and annuals. The semi-circular driveway was resurfaced in concrete, formed and tinted to resemble cobblestones.

An arched porte-cochere defines the centrally located entrance, which features two sets of ornamental wrought iron and glass double doors. Between the two sets of doors is a marble-floored and wainscoted vestibule. Plaster walls above the wainscoting have been painted in an elaborate faux marbre design.

The reception hall is also painted in a faux technique to simulate pink and white travertine. Its most dramatic feature is a three-story curved staircase with a wrought iron railing which incorporates at intervals an ornate initial "M" (for U.S. Vice President Levi Morton, the owner of the house at the time of the Pope renovation). The metal portion of the railing is now finished in a verdigris shade; the handrail is the original mahogany.

Off the reception hall to the west is the Drawing Room/Library, (now used for meeting space). The room is paneled in Circassian walnut accented with mahogany-toned bands and molding. A carved gray-veined yellow marble mantel featuring an ovolo surround, capped by tablet with end scrolls and shelf, enhances the fireplace centered on the south wall. The bundled-reed motifs on door and window hardware provides a preview of the Grand Salon to the east.

Mirror-surfaced pocket-doors (original) lead from the Reception Hall to the Grand Salon to the south. Unquestionably the most elaborate room in the house, the Salon contains many carved moldings including ovolo, fascia and bundled reed with shell and floriate embellishment. Panels over the four sets of 9' double doors display plaster reliefs of musical instruments (now gold-leafed), an indication that the room was probably used for dances and musical entertainments. A carved marble fireplace with ormolu accents, a gift to Mr. Morton from the government of France, is topped by a large mirrored overmantel with a carved, gold-leafed frame in fern, ribbon and wreath patterns. Wall panels are finished in a green glaze and accented by bands and wainscot panels painted to simulate serpentine marble.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

BRODHEAD-BELL-MORTON RESIDENCE
1500 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.
Washington D.C.

To the east of the Grand Salon is the former dining room, located in the wing added in 1889. The fireplace at the east end of the room is darkgreen marble with a carved wood mantel. The high, coved ceiling is accented with egg-and-dart and Greek key moldings. In the ceiling, a perforated iron medallion once concealed a ventilating fan mechanism, controlled by a knob located on the north wall.

The office of the executive director, off the Reception Hall to the west (and north of the drawing room), was traditionally the "office" from which the owner of the house managed his affairs. The most dramatic feature of the small room is an ornately carved fireplace of Carrara marble. This too was a gift to Mr. Morton, in this case from the government of Italy.

Second and third floor rooms were originally family and guest bedchambers. A carved marble and ormolu fireplace, a duplicate of the one in the Grand Salon and also a gift from the French government, is the outstanding feature of the former master bedroom. There is a concealed, velvet-lined safe in what was presumably a dressing room in the master suite.

A suite of small rooms, located over the dining-room addition, is thought to have contained chambers for personal servants to the Mortons. The rooms are reached from a half-landing on the Grand Staircase between the first and second floors.

The fourth floor, originally servants' quarters and storage space, has been renovated and serves as offices. Its most interesting surviving feature is a skylight originally intended to provide light to all floors of the house; a glazed opening in the third floor ceiling, which allowed the light to penetrate the center of the building, was filled in when the building was turned from a residence into office space. In its place, the ceiling of the third floor now features a whimsically painted trompe-l'oeil "skylight scene" in Italianate style.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

BRODHEAD-BELL-MORTON RESIDENCE
1500 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.
Washington D.C.

Section number 7 Page 4

One intent of the 1986-1987 renovation (interior only) was to provide a showcase for paints and painting techniques, as befits the interests of the present owner, the National Paint and Coatings Association. Throughout the building, the designer has used a palette of shades of dusty rose, celadon green and gold. Floors are carpeted except in the Drawing Room, Library and Grand Salon, where the original basket-weave parquet floors have been uncovered and refinished.

Chandeliers (not original) in the major rooms are Austrian crystal. The "Maria Theresa" pattern recalls details of chandeliers in the Schoenbrunn Palace in Vienna.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

BRODHEAD-BELL-MORTON RESIDENCE
1500 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.
Washington D.C.

Section number 8 Page 2

The building is one of a number of residences that were similarly remodeled around the same time, including the Cosmos Club building at 2121 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., and the John R. McLean residence at 1500 Eye Street, N.W., (subsequently razed). The McLean renovation, also by Pope, incorporated an original early Victorian house and a later addition into a unified whole.

The house was originally built for a Mr. and Mrs. John Brodhead (building permit issued in 1879). It is not known whether the Brodheads ever occupied the mansion, but they sold it in 1882 to Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner Green Hubbard, whose daughter Mabel was the wife of telephone inventor Alexander Graham Bell. The Hubbards offered the house to the Bells as an inducement to relocate from the Boston area, and Bell allowed himself to be persuaded. The Alexander Graham Bells resided here between 1883 and 1889.

In 1889, they sold the house to Levi Parsons Morton, a few days before his inauguration as Vice President under President Benjamin Harrison. Two months later Morton decided to enlarge the building, and hired Fraser, the original architect, to design the projecting east wing.

Morton left Washington in 1894 after his single term, whereupon the mansion remained vacant until it was leased to Charles Franklin Sprague, U.S. Representative to the 55th and 56th Congresses from Massachusetts. Sprague occupied the house until from 1898 to 1901, when his second Congressional term ended and he declined to run for a third.

1903 ushered in one of the most glamorous eras in the history of the mansion, when it became the residence of the Imperial Czarist government's ambassador to the U.S., Count Arturo Cassini, and his household. The glamour attached itself primarily to the ambassador's daughter, Countess Marguerite Cassini.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetBRODHEAD-BELL-MORTON RESIDENCE
1500 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.
Washington D.C.Section number 8 Page 3

Although still in her teens, the beautiful and lively Marguerite became her father's official hostess, at the request of President William McKinley. When Theodore Roosevelt followed McKinley into the White House, Marguerite became a close friend of the new President's daughter, Alice (later Mrs. Nicholas Longworth). Through the "Princess Alice" connection, President Roosevelt too became an intimate of the family circle and, according to Countess Cassini's memoirs, "willingly quit the White House for many a merry Sunday dinner party at 1500 Rhode Island Avenue." More formal social events were also frequent. Marguerite instituted a series of weekly teas, which were popular with official Washington. In fact, the number of guests soon reached into the hundreds, to the consternation of the staff.

The Cassinis left the house in 1906, and were succeeded by other distinguished tenants. Elihu Root, Cabinet member under two presidents, U.S. Senator, diplomat and Nobel laureate, occupied the house from 1907 to 1909. In 1910 to 1911 it was then rented to John Hays Hammond, a mining engineer turned peace activist, and a close friend of President William Howard Taft. Then, in 1912, Levi Morton returned to Washington and commissioned John Russell Pope to undertake the radical remodeling of the building.

Like many of his contemporaries, Pope had gone abroad after completing college, to add an Old World burnish to his American architectural education. Thanks to McKim and Schermerhorn Scholarships, he spent two years at the American Academy in Rome, and then studied for two more years at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, receiving his diploma in 1900.

The Beaux Arts influence is apparent in virtually all of Pope's buildings, both large and small. Among his best-known buildings in Washington are the Jefferson Memorial, DAR Constitution Hall, the Masonic Scottish Rite Temple, and the National Gallery of Art.

Although many of the details of his design for the Brodhead-Bell-Morton mansion are similar to those found in other Pope residences, such as the Frick residence in Baltimore and the Cary and Bacon residences on Long Island, it also bears the stamp of Morton's personality.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

BRODHEAD-BELL-MORTON RESIDENCE
1500 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.
Washington D.C.

Notable interior features include the stair-rail, incorporating the initial "M", and the marble fireplaces in the Grand Salon, Office and Master Bedroom which had been presented to Morton by the governments of France and Italy.

After his death in 1920, ownership was transformed to Morton's daughter, Edith Morton Eustis. Except for a single year (from 1929 to 1930 when it was leased to then Undersecretary of the Treasury Ogden Livingston Mills), Mrs. Eustis and her family occupied the house until 1936. It was sold to Miriam J. Keller and Edward O. Keller in 1937. The Kellers first leased the building to the National Democratic Club from 1938 to 1939. In 1940, it was purchased by the National Paint, Varnish and Lacquer Association (now the National Paint and Coatings Association). As NPCA's national headquarters, it provides office space for a staff of almost 50. It is also used for various business and social functions by the association, which has retained as much as possible of the building's residential character.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

BRODHEAD-BELL-MORTON RESIDENCE
1500 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.
Washington D.C.

Section number 9 Page 2

"The Architecture of John Russell Pope" (with introductory text by Royal Cortissoz); New York, William Helburn, Inc., 1924-1930.

"The Classical Tradition in the Architecture of John Russell Pope: An Introductory Bibliography," Vance Bibliographies, Monticello IL (undated).

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

BRODHEAD-BELL-MORTON RESIDENCE
1500 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.
Washington D.C.

Section number 10 Page 2

at Fifteenth and N Streets; proceed west along north curb line of N Street to southwest corner of property at N and Corregidor Streets; proceed north along east curb line of Corregidor Street to northwest corner of property at Corregidor and Rhode Island Avenue; proceed east along south curb line of Rhode Island Avenue to point of origin.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

BRODHEAD-BELL-MORTON RESIDENCE
1500 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.
Washington D.C.

Section number MAPS Page 1



N Street Elevation, 1912
National Paint and Coatings Assn., Inc. Compare with 1906 photo.

SOURCE: Commission of Fine Arts, Massachusetts Avenue Architecture,
U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C.,
1975, p. 50.

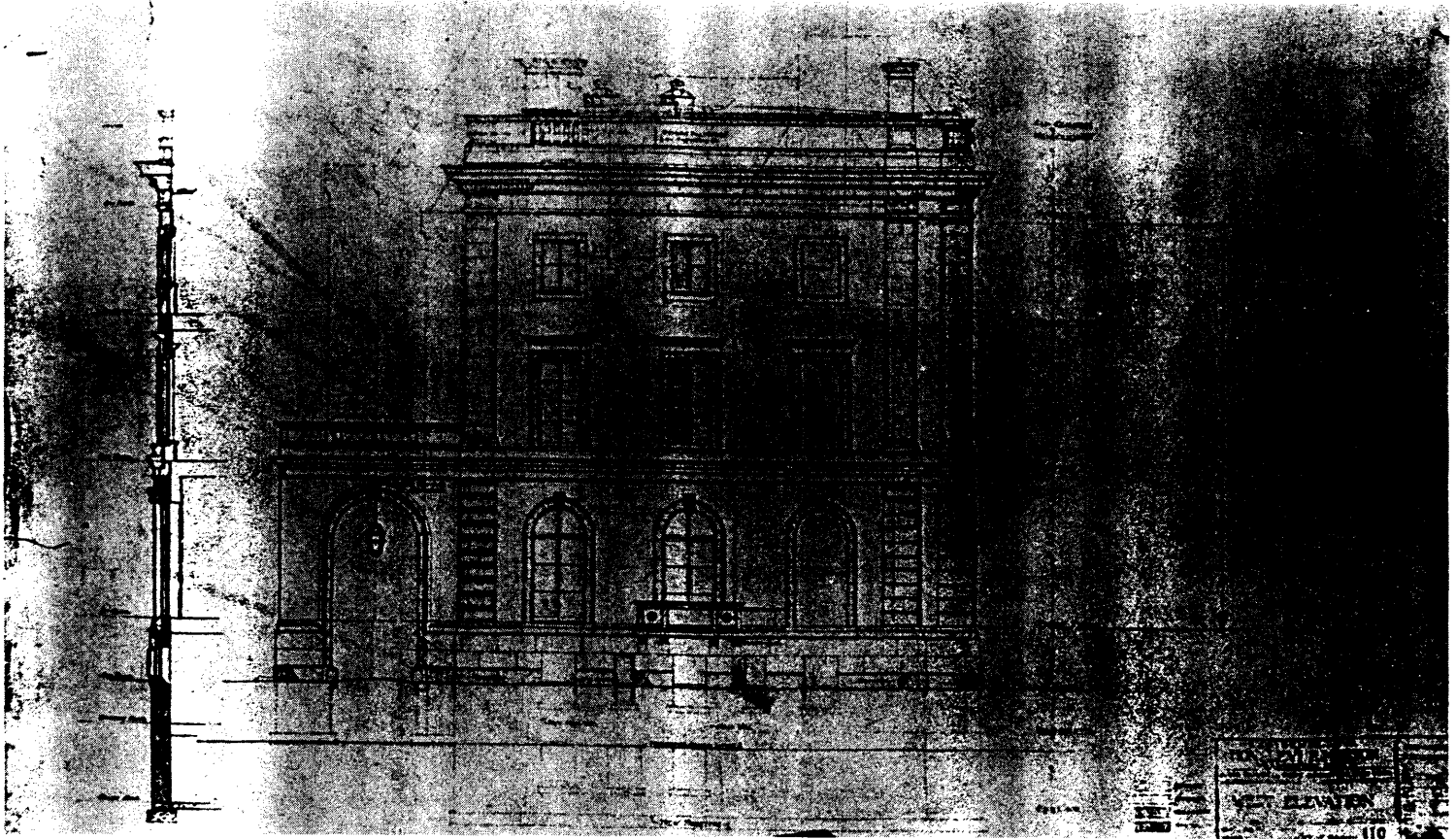
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

BRODHEAD-BELL-MORTON RESIDENCE
1500 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.
Washington D.C.

Section number MAPS Page 2

Scott Circle Elevation
National Paint and Coatings Assn., Inc. Compare with 1905 photo.



SOURCE: Commission of Fine Arts, Massachusetts Avenue Architecture,
U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C.
1975, p. 51.

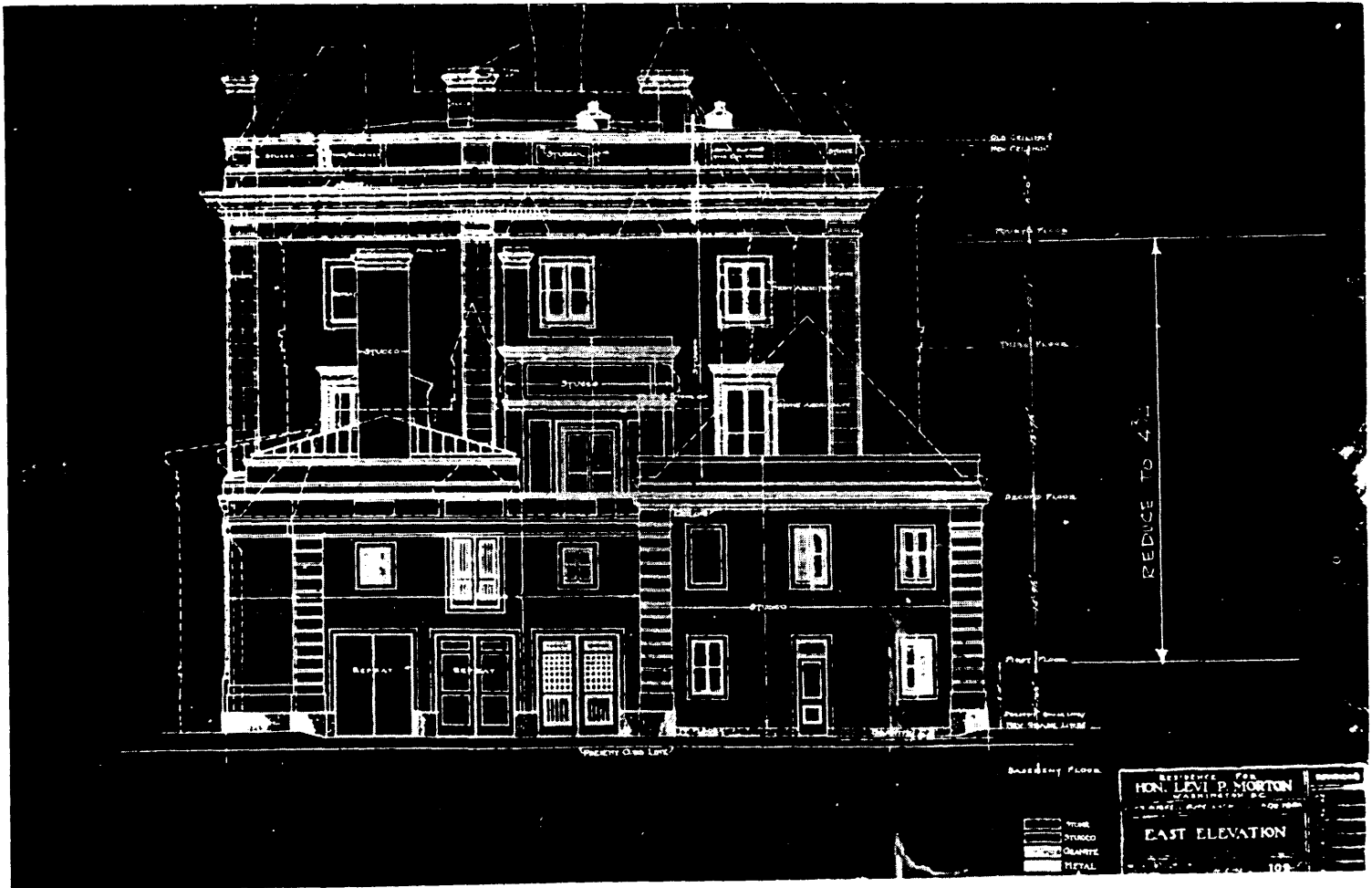
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

BRODHEAD-BELL-MORTON RESIDENCE
1500 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.
Washington D.C.

Section number MAPS Page 3

15th Street Elevation, 1912
National Paint and Coatings Assn., Inc.



SOURCE: Commission of Fine Arts, Massachusetts Avenue Architecture,
U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C.
1975, p. 51.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

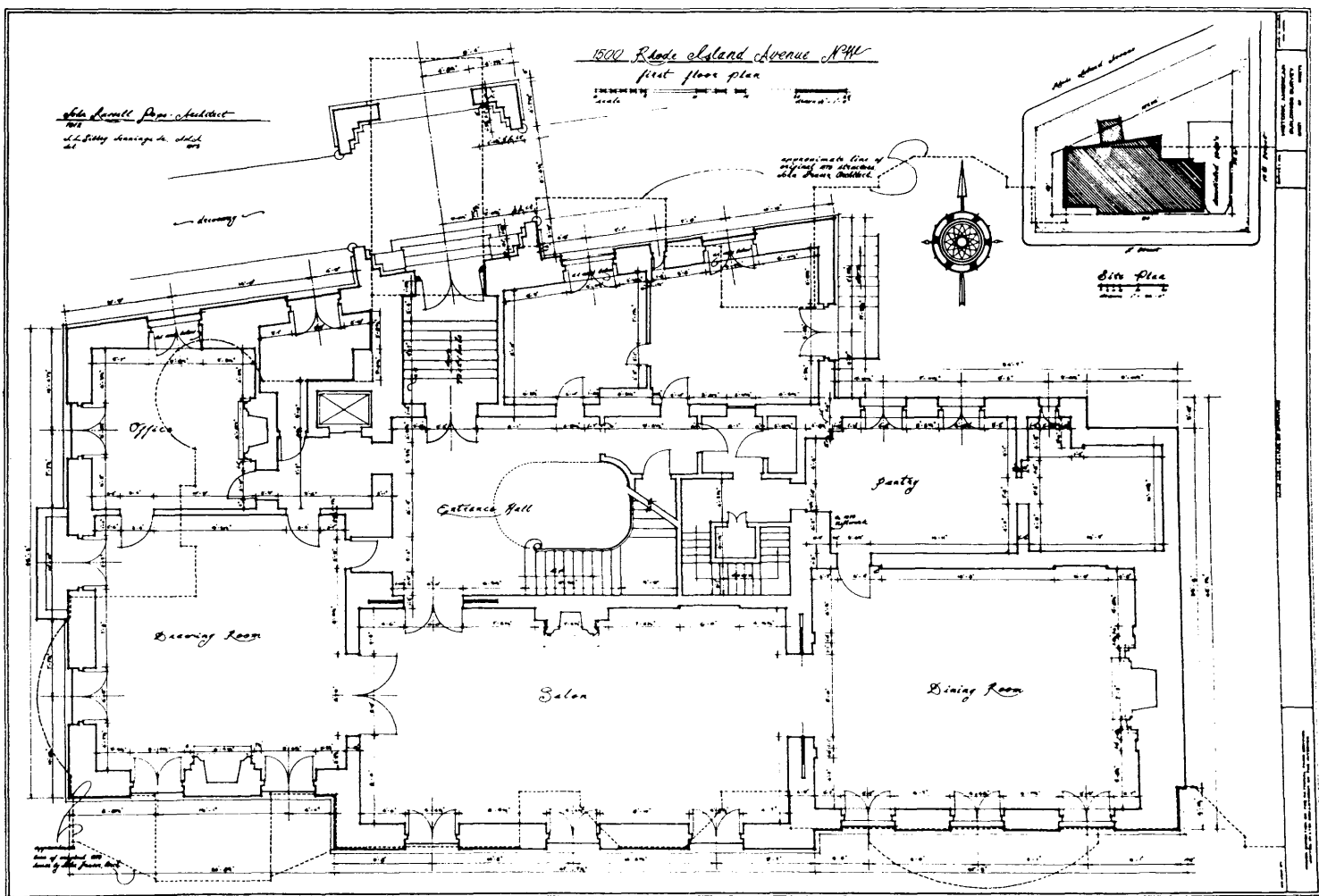
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

BRODHEAD-BELL-MORTON RESIDENCE
1500 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.
Washington D.C.

Section number MAPS Page 4

64

1500 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.



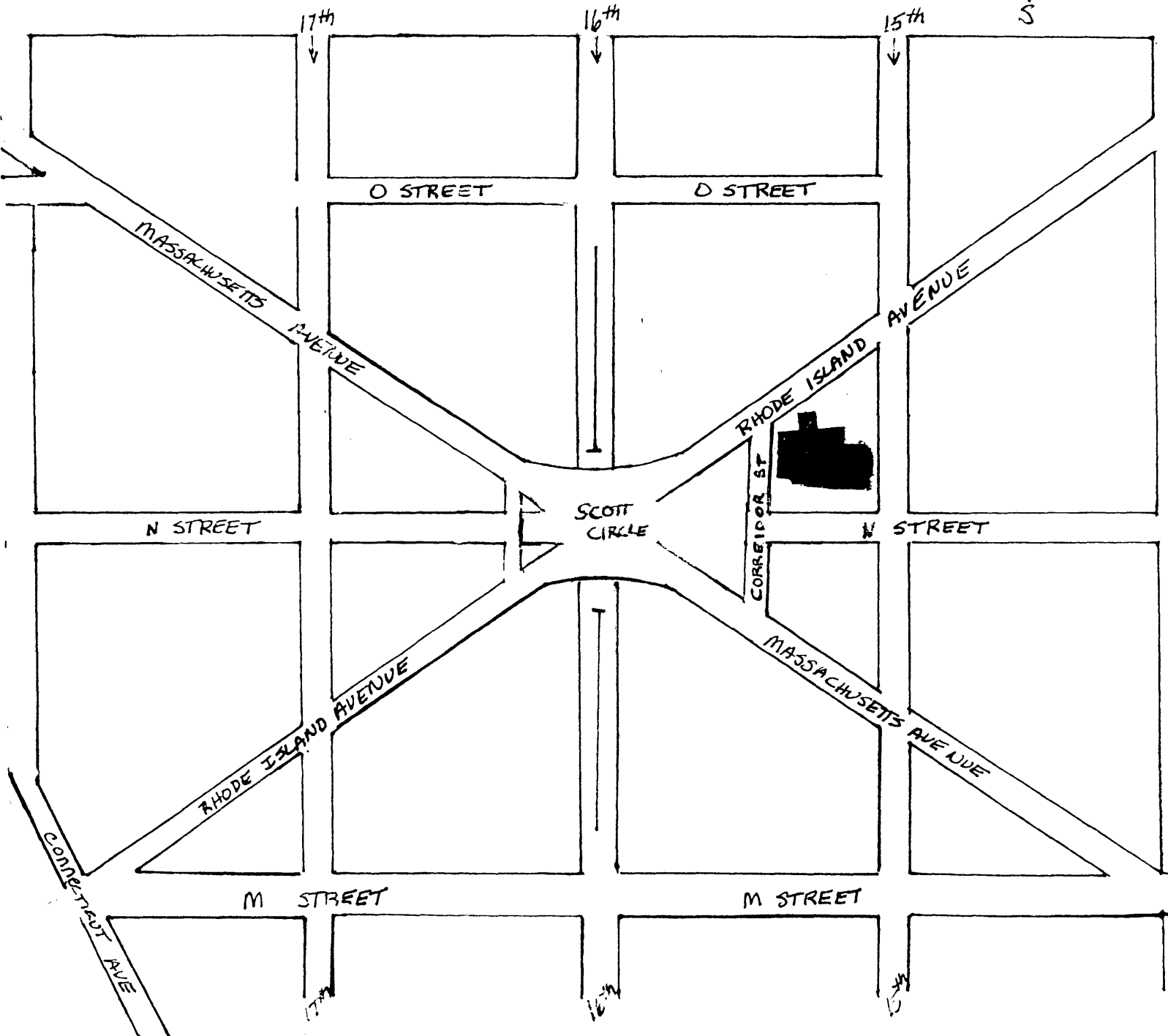
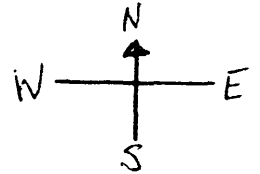
SOURCE: Commission of Fine Arts, Massachusetts Avenue Architecture,
U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C.
1975, p. 64.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

BRODHEAD-BELL-MORTON RESIDENCE
1500 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.
Washington D.C.

Section number MAPS Page 5

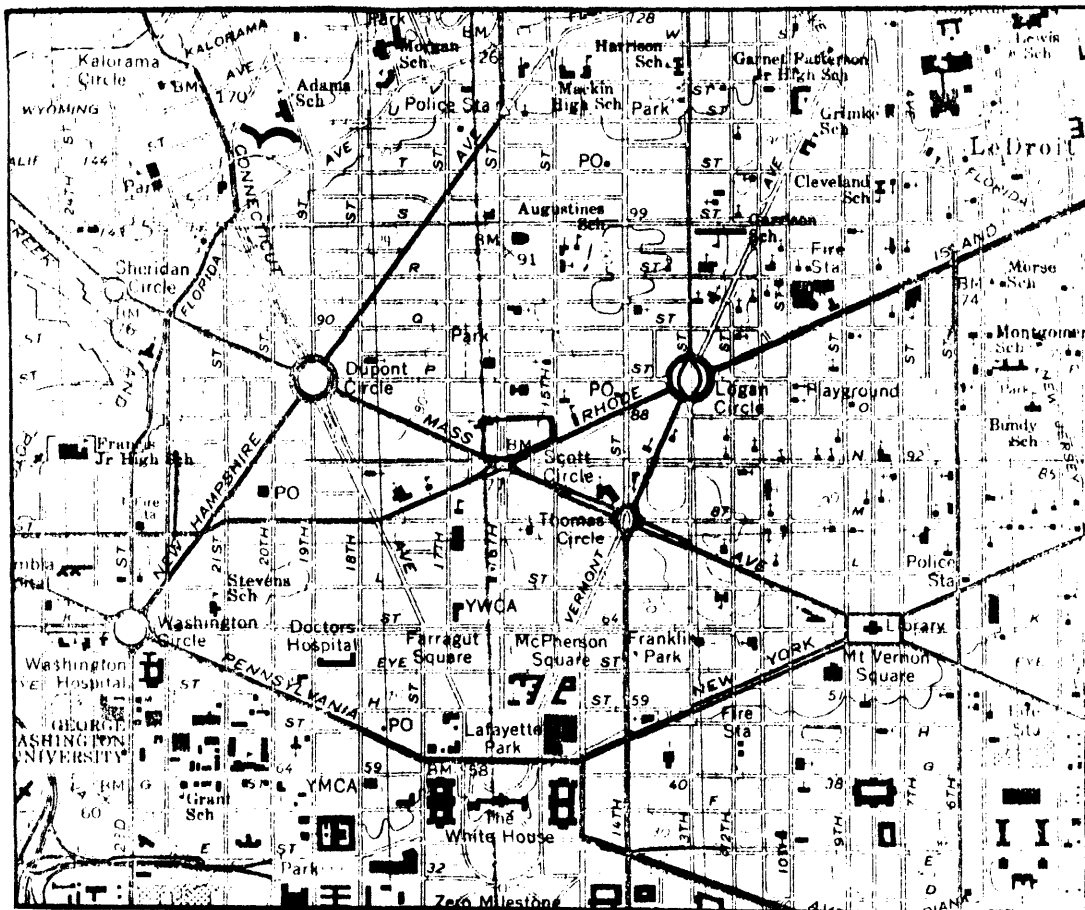
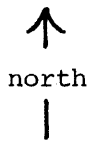


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Brodhead-Bell-Morton Residence
1500 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

Section number _____ MAPS Page 6



Detail of USGS map. Refer to Section 10 for UTM references.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number PHOTO Page 1

BRODHEAD-BELL-MORTON RESIDENCE
1500 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.
Washington D.C.

PHOTOGRAPH BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1 - OVERALL VIEW OF HOUSE AND SITE.
- 2 - BUILDING FROM NORTHEAST CORNER OF SITE.
- 3 - NORTHWEST CORNER OF EXTERIOR, SHOWING ARTICULATED CORNER QUOINS AND DETAILS OF WROUGHT IRON AND STONE BALCONIES ON WEST SIDE. ORIGINAL BRICK FOUNDATION CAN BE SEEN.
- 4 - ENTRY DOORS FROM PORTE-COCHERE. DOUBLE DOORS ARE CAST-IRON AND GLASS WITH SEMICIRCULAR TRANSOM LIGHT.
- 5 - DETAIL OF STAIRWAY WITH DECORATIVE METAL BALUSTRADE INCORPORATING INITIAL "M" AND MAHOGANY HANDRAIL.
- 6 - GRAND SALON. DETAIL OF OVERDOOR PANEL SHOWING CARVED AND METAL-LEAFED PLASTER RELIEF OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS WITH EGG AND DART CORNICE. THE CEILING COVE IS TERMINATED BY BUNDLED REEDING.
- 7 - ONE OF TWO IDENTICAL GRAY-VEINED MARBLE FIREPLACES (IN GRAND SALON AND MASTER BEDROOM) WITH BRASS EMBELLISHMENT WITH MASK AND SPRAY KEY. THE MANTELS WERE THE GIFT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF FRANCE.

All photos (except for photo #2) were taken by Kristina Cook, National Paint & Coatings Association; May, 1987. Photo #2 taken by Maxwell MacKenzie, Architectural Photographer; 1986. All negatives are on file at National Paint & Coatings Association.