

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Chester A. Arthur Home

AND/OR COMMON  
Chester A. Arthur Home

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
123 Lexington Avenue

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CITY, TOWN  
New York

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

17th

STATE  
New York

CODE  
36

COUNTY  
New York

CODE  
61

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
___DISTRICT	___PUBLIC	X OCCUPIED	___AGRICULTURE ___MUSEUM
X BUILDING(S)	X PRIVATE	___UNOCCUPIED	X COMMERCIAL ___PARK
___STRUCTURE	___BOTH	___WORK IN PROGRESS	___EDUCATIONAL X PRIVATE RESIDENCE
___SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	___ENTERTAINMENT ___RELIGIOUS
___OBJECT	___IN PROCESS	___YES: RESTRICTED	___GOVERNMENT ___SCIENTIFIC
	___BEING CONSIDERED	___YES: UNRESTRICTED	___INDUSTRIAL ___TRANSPORTATION
		X NO	___MILITARY ___OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Mrs. Livia Shank

STREET & NUMBER  
150 East 69th Street

CITY, TOWN  
New York

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE  
New York

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. New York County, Hall of Records

STREET & NUMBER  
31 Chambers Street

CITY, TOWN  
New York

STATE  
New York

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE  
None

DATE

\_\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

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

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Chester A. Arthur Home in New York City is a five-story brownstone building of the Romano-Tuscan mode. A massive cornice supported by ornamental brackets is the crowning feature. The roof behind it is low and invisible to the spectator in the street. The windows are linked by string courses and are in a round arch form. The windows on the second floor are more elaborately treated with a complete entablature above each.

The original entrance, which was on the floor above the ground floor and was reached by a flight of stone steps, has been eliminated; now one enters the building on the ground floor. A grocery store occupies the front part of the house on the ground floor and a beauty shop is above it. The remaining three floors have been divided into apartments, which has produced numerous alterations on these floors. In fact, the entire house has undergone so many alterations since Arthur's death that its integrity is questionable. The once reddish brown exterior has been painted white. The entire building is in poor condition, there being a great need for plastering and painting inside the building. There is no Authur furniture in the house.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Chester Alan Arthur brought a high sense of duty and integrity to the White House, following the tragic death of President Garfield in September, 1881. Although he had risen to political prominence through a powerful Republican machine which depended on the spoils system, Arthur boldly supported civil service reform.

Chester Alan Arthur was born October 5, 1830. Graduating from Union College in Schenectady, New York. In 1848, he moved to New York City to practice law. After an interruption during the Civil War, Arthur returned to New York and entered politics. He advanced through the ranks of Senator Roscoe Conkling's powerful State machine, but he never surrendered his personal honesty.

Once in the White House, Arthur ignored most of his former associates, seeking rather to bring men of ability into his administration. He recommended the passage of a civil service law in his first annual message. Congress was slow to follow suit, but a bill was finally presented to the President in 1883. The bill that Arthur signed removed many Federal positions from the spoils list, forbade compulsory political contributions, and authorized the creation of a commission to enforce the law.

After his term as President, Arthur returned to his five-story brownstone row house at 123 Lexington Avenue. He soon became ill and died here on November 16, 1886. One twenty-three Lexington Avenue has since undergone considerable alteration and is presently divided into apartments.

## BIOGRAPHY

Chester Alan Arthur was born on October 5, 1830, in a small frame building in North Fairfield, Vermont, that no longer stands. His father, a Baptist clergyman, who saw his son become a skeptic, moved from North Fairfield in 1832, eventually settling in Perry, New York, in 1835. Four years later the Arthur family moved from Perry, thus continuing its nomadic existence while Chester was still very young. Nevertheless, the youth acquired an education, being graduated from Union College in Schenectady in 1848. He then moved to New York City to begin a law practice. He served briefly as Quarter Master for the New York Volunteers and returned to law practice in 1863. He also entered politics.

As Arthur became more of a politician and less a lawyer, he advanced in the ranks of Senator Roscoe Conkling's powerful political machine in the Empire State. Even so, he never became a machine politician of the worst type, always exhibiting personal honesty, disdain for blatant corrupt practices, and a strong

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- S. Sydney Bradford, "Chester A. Arthur Home," National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings form 10-317, August, 1964.  
 Chauncey M. Depew, "Leaves From My Autobiography," Scribner's, (December, 1921).  
 George Frederick Howe, Chester A. Authur, A Quarter-Century of Machine Politics, (New York, 1934).  
 Leonard White, The Republican Era: 1869-1901 (New York, 1958).

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,8	5,8,5,9,1,0	4,5,1,0,4,9,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Arthur House Landmark boundaries are coterminus with the lot boundaries for 123 Lexington Avenue, measuring approximately 25' on its east and west bounds and 100' on the north and south bounds. The lot has not been altered since Authur's occupancy.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY Original form prepared by Richard Greenwood, Historian

NAME / TITLE

Cecil McKithan, Historian

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE

January 1978

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street, N.W.

TELEPHONE

523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington.

STATE

D. C.

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

Landmark Designated: JAN 12, 1978  
 date  
 Boundary Certified: Feb. 1, 1978  
*George F. Emery*

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DATE

*H 28/79*

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personal dignity. In the words of his best biographer, Arthur was a "gentleman boss."<sup>1</sup> Conkling secured the collectorship of the Custom House in New York for his young lieutenant in 1871, which post ranked as one of the great patronage offices in the Nation. During Arthur's tenure of seven years and four months, he hired and fired for political reasons, but shunned any financial trickery. President Rutherford B. Hayes, after a terrific battle with Conkling and his followers, forced the dismissal of Arthur in 1878.

Despite Arthur's personal honesty, many in the Country vented alarm when he became the Republican Party's Vice-Presidential candidate in 1880. Most citizens thought of him as just a machine politician; their **appraisal of him probably** fell lower when John Sherman, one of the party's great men, commented that Arthur's nomination "was inadvisable."<sup>2</sup> Dismay thus accompanied horror upon President James Garfield's death from an assassin's bullet on September 19, 1881, and Arthur's taking the oath of office late that night.

Expecting the worst, the Nation soon discovered that its new President was a dignified and honest individual. A handsome man, the tall and impressive looking Chief Executive exuded courtesy and good manners while conducting himself in exemplary fashion; and much later a man who had known many Presidents said that "Arthur was the only gentleman I ever saw in the White House."<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Arthur ignored most of his former associates. He sought to bring men of ability into his administration and displayed great courage in refusing to appoint many for simply political reasons.

Arthur had risen to prominence through a political machine that had depended on "spoils," but now he supported civil service reform. He joined a sorrowing Nation, horrified at the death of Garfield, in demanding an end to the political distribution of jobs and the compulsory collection of contributions for party use from government workers. In his first annual message, the President recommended the passage of a civil service law, but the Republican dominated Congress enacted such a bill only after it lost many congressional seats in the elections of 1882. When the bill appeared on Arthur's desk early in 1883, he signed it. The law removed many Federal positions from the spoils list, forbade compulsory donations, and authorized the creation of a commission to enforce the act. To the joy of all but the politicians, Arthur appointed a good commission and supported the enforcement of the law. At the same time, it must be said that all patronage did not end in 1883, and Arthur himself continued to use some of the traditional political methods during his Administration.

Arthur's Presidency is noteworthy for several other things besides the reform of the civil service. The president strongly supported the improvement

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of the Navy's fleet, which in late 1881 had only thirty-two ships ready for action. He backed the measure of 1882 that authorized the construction of two steel cruisers, as well as other innovations, and because of that he is called the father of the new Navy. Other of Arthur's actions are also noteworthy. In 1882, he vetoed a "pork-barrel" bill calling for the expenditure of \$18,743,875 on local projects. Irked, Congress repassed the bill. The President also strove to promote fairer treatment of the Indians, seeking to better their schools, but Congress ignored that recommendation.

Arthur, believing he had served the Nation and Republican Party well, hoped for his party's nomination in 1884. Perhaps the country as a whole appreciated his performance as President, but his party did not, and it repudiated him and chose one of its master politicians, James G. Blaine. Disappointed, Arthur became despondent in his last months in the White House. Nevertheless, he had acquitted himself well, and as Harper's Weekly said on March 7, 1885,

It is, indeed, his honor and his praise that he leave the Presidency with a higher political consideration than when he entered it,....4

The ex-President returned to his home at 123 Lexington Avenue and attempted to renew his law practice. Illness soon enfeebled him, though, and he remained a sick man until his death on November 16, 1886.

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<sup>1</sup>George F. Howe, Chester A. Arthur: A Quarter-Century of Machine Politics  
(New York, 1934), 290.

<sup>2</sup>Howe, Arthur, 122.

<sup>3</sup>Chauncey M. Depew, "Leaves from My Autobiography," Scribner's (December, 1921), 672.

<sup>4</sup>Harper's Weekly, XXIX (March 7, 1885), 146.