

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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 Watterston House other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 224 2nd Street, S.E. not for publication N/A city, town Washington vicinity N/A state District of Columbia code D.C. county N/A code zip code 20003

3. Classification

Table with 3 columns: Ownership of Property, Category of Property, and Number of Resources within Property. Includes checkboxes for private/public ownership and building/site/structure/object categories.

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. Signature of certifying official D.C. State Historic Preservation Officer Date 1/12/92

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. determined eligible for the National Register. determined not eligible for the National Register. removed from the National Register. other, (explain:) Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 1/12/92

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: Single Dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Organizational

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Federal

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls brick

roof \_\_\_\_\_

other \_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The large, elegant Watterston House is located on Capitol Hill in a National Register Historic District (listed in 1976). The district is notable for its rich collection of nineteenth and early twentieth century residential structures and its proximity to such important public buildings as the Capitol, the Supreme Court, and the Library of Congress. The Watterston House, across from the Library's James Madison Annex, is a fine example of an early nineteenth century Federal townhouse "on the Hill".

Overall, the Watterston House appears to have been built before 1819, and possibly as early as 1813; it was enlarged before 1877 by the one-story brick addition at the southwest corner. In 1906 the house was enlarged once again, when owner Patrick Kennelly raised the roof 4<sup>1/2</sup> feet and added a three-story square bay at the rear.

The width of the main (west) facade (composed of the three-bay main block and the one-bay addition) is approximately 38 feet. The building (which sits on a slight rise) is three stories high with a raised basement. It is built of red brick laid in Flemish bond; there is a slight change in the brick work where the facade was raised four and a half feet in 1906. The one-story addition to the south, also of red brick, is laid in common bond.

The basement is raised and has a stuccoed wall surface. The ground floor door is paneled and flanked by louvered shutters. The two windows to the south of the door are rectangular, with 6/6 lights and plain lintels.

Across the main facade is a narrow cast iron porch, a twentieth century replacement for the original wooden porch. It is reached by stone steps and a cast iron staircase with decorative risers. The original brick piers under the gallery have been covered with stucco.

**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

c.1802-1859

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

c.1802,1859

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

none

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

Watterston, George

Architect/Builder

Watterston, George (Builder)

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

The Watterston house (constructed sometime between 1802 and 1819) is architecturally significant because it is a notable example of a large, elegant, early nineteenth century Capitol Hill Federal townhouse which has retained its architectural integrity. It is historically significant because of its association in the nineteenth century with one of the Federal City's most distinguished citizens, George Watterston, who held the post of Librarian of Congress from 1815 to 1829 and took a major role in the political and literary life of the Capital. In addition, he was a founder of numerous civic organizations, including the Washington Monument Society.

The house was probably constructed by George Watterston, who lived in it from approximately 1819 until his death in 1854. The land upon which the Watterston House stands was part of a very large tract owned by Daniel Carroll of Duddington in 1796, but there is no deed in the District of Columbia's land records which describes Carroll's sale of the property, which, in 1819, is listed in the city's assessment records as owned by George Watterston. The house is not listed in the 1801-02 Washington building census, but is included in the next available survey of Washington buildings, the 1822 City Directory, as Watterston's residence. Since this is the only property Watterston owned in 1819, one can assume that the house was constructed between 1802 and 1819.

Watterston's biographer, Julia Kennedy, says that he established a home on Capitol Hill in 1811, but provides no documentation to support her claim. Watterston's father, David, was a builder who had been employed in the 1790s in the building of the Capitol, and it is quite possible that he also constructed his son George's house.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Attached

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

- Primary location of additional data:
- State historic preservation office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property 0.165 ac

UTM References

A 

1	8	3	2	6	2	2	0	4	3	0	5	8	6	5
Zone		Easting						Northing						

B 

Zone		Easting						Northing						

C 

Zone		Easting						Northing						

D 

Zone		Easting						Northing						

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the property are the lot lines which define Lot 7 of Square 762.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The subject property occupies all of lot 7 of square 762. It is situated on the lot with which it has been historically associated.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Lois Snyderman, Historic Preservation Consultant  
 organization N/A date February 28, 1990  
 street & number 8804 Spring Valley Road telephone (301) 654-6423  
 city or town Chevy Chase state Maryland zip code 20815

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The entrance door (which is located in the northernmost bay) was widened by a foot in 1906; it now has a double door with wooden tracery transom lights and is flanked by louvered wooden shutters. The windows, which are also shuttered, extend down to the floor of the porch and contain 9/9 light double-hung sash; the lintels are in the Greek Revival style. The entrance door to the addition is smaller than the main door; it also has a wooden tracery transom light and is flanked by louvered wooden shutters.

The three windows on the second floor are 6/6 light double-hung sash with bullseye lintels and plain sills; they are flanked by wooden louvered shutters. The third floor windows are smaller, rectangular, 6/6 light double-hung sash with identical lintels and shutters.

When the roof was raised in 1906 the original pitched roof was changed to a flat roof and a galvanized iron cornice was added; the cornice is decorated with garlands. Just below the cornice is a narrow band of decorative plasterwork. There are three unornamented brick chimneys.

The south facade of the house is stuccoed and there is one 6/6 double-hung sash window at the second story (in the westernmost bay) and one at the third (in the easternmost bay).

The one-story brick addition at the south elevation has a false-front cornice. A wood-sided semi-hexagonal projecting bay with three narrow 6/6 windows has been added to the south side of the addition, which has a rear entrance.

There is a three-story bay with a flat roof at the rear northeast corner; the outline of the bay can be seen on a 1908 building permit for the erection of a stable, so it was in place by that time. There are two 4/4 windows with brick lintels and plain sills in each story and an entrance to the basement on its west side.

The interior of the Watterston House, which could not be viewed, features a side entrance hall with a double living room to the right of the hall. The major interior features of the house are its graceful mahogany staircase, arched stairhall, decorative cornices, and marble mantelled fireplaces.

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A recent real estate brochure described the house as containing fourteen pine-floored rooms. The raised basement has a dining room, shower room, stair gallery and small foyer. Both the dining room and kitchen have fireplaces. The kitchen (located at the rear of the house) accesses the garden.

On the main level, double doors open to an entrance foyer (approximately 6'x 42') which leads through an arched opening to a stairhall. The archway has side pilasters and a keystone. A mahogany stairrail leads to the second floor. At the rear of the stairhall is an elevator and powder room. To the right, off the entrance foyer, are double living rooms (approximately 17' x 18' and 17' x 17') with decorative cornices, fireplaces with marble mantelpieces and slate hearths, and medallioned chandeliers. A library which runs the depth of the house is entered from the rear living room and accesses the rear patio and garden.

The second floor (third level) has one room which is approximately 14' x 18', a second room which has been divided into two rooms, one approximately 7' x 9' and the other approximately 7' x 16', and a third room which was the master bath and is now used as an office. The room at the rear of the second floor has a pressed tin ceiling and all three have fireplaces with wood mantels.<sup>(1)</sup>

The garden of the Watterston house once extended to C Street; it now ends at an alley. There is a brick and slate patio at the rear of the house. At the rear of the garden is the stable and garages built by Patrick H. Kennelly, who bought the property from the Watterston family in 1905.

The large two-story, shed-roof brick stable which Kennelly built in 1908 now has double garage doors across its entrance. Attached to the south wall of the stable is a row of six one-story, shed-roof brick garages which were added in 1916 by Mr. Kennelly.

The stable and garages (all of which open to the alley at the rear of the property) are part of the historical development of the Watterston House and are, therefore, contributing structures.

Although the Watterston House has been altered, it has retained its architectural integrity and remains a fine example of an early Federal structure.

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(1) Watterston House, Sotheby's International Realty, June 1991.

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Capitol Hill, where the Watterston house is located, was selected as the site of the Capitol building in 1791, when it was largely farmland. Construction of the capitol went slowly and commercial development of the surrounding area also lagged:

"In spite of ambitions of early landowners and speculators, Capitol Hill was slow to develop. Residential construction was limited to clusters around the Capitol, Marine Barracks, and the Navy Yard, with New Jersey Avenue developing as a residential corridor, linking the Capitol and the Navy Yard. The rest remained farmland until after the Civil War when development to meet Washington's growing middle class followed the main avenues, including East Capitol Street."(p.2, E.J. Miller)

The earliest inhabitants of "the Hill", as it is known locally, were the men who built the Capitol, a mixture of white and black, native and foreign-born, craftsmen and laborers. In 1799, the Navy Yard was opened and the possibility of work at the Yard attracted an influx of new residents to the Hill.

In 1800, when the Federal government moved to Washington, only one wing of the Capitol had been built and there were only a few boardinghouses and taverns to serve the legislators; the area was generally considered an unattractive place to live.

The population of the Hill grew between 1820 and 1850, as more craftsmen arrived to work on the Capitol, burned in 1814 by the British. The Civil War brought an influx of Union troops and wartime prosperity, and the population of the Hill (always a varied mix of classes and races) increased rapidly from the mid 1800s to the early 1900s.

At the time of the construction of the Watterston House most of Capitol Hill was vacant farmland and residential construction was generally limited to simple workers' housing. Daniel Carroll had already constructed the Hill's first mansion, Duddington, and a few large homes had been built along the river by merchants developing new trade routes with the East Indies. Watterston's house was, therefore, one of the early mansions on the Hill.

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George Watterston was an early settler in the city, arriving as a child in the 1790s; he became one of its leading citizens. In 1815 Watterston was appointed the third Librarian of Congress, and he was the first to hold that post without the additional responsibility of being Clerk of the House.

Although Watterston served in the important post of Librarian of Congress, it was in his role as public-spirited citizen that he had the greatest impact on the development of the city. He served as the President of the Board of Aldermen in 1822 and represented the Fourth Ward in the City Council in 1835 and 1836. He was also a member of the Select Committee to welcome General Lafayette in 1824, and Commissioner of Draining Low Grounds.

In addition, George Watterston spent much of his life serving in non-governmental institutions. He was one of the organizers of the Washington Botanical Society in 1817 and helped establish the Columbian Horticultural Society in 1833. Probably Watterston's most noteworthy civic contribution was his role as a founder and first Secretary of the Washington Monument Society; he lived to see the great shaft reach the height of some 150 feet.

After vacating the post of Librarian of Congress in 1829, Watterston remained active in the political and literary world, and was appointed as editor of the National Journal in 1830. As a lifelong resident of Washington, Watterston took great interest in its history and wrote two early guidebooks to the city, A Picture of Washington (1841) and A New Guide to Washington (1842).

Watterston also wrote pamphlets and articles on landscape gardening, politics, and historical topics, but his most impressive literary efforts were as a novelist. The realism of some of his works (e.g. The Lawyer, 1808) distinguished him from the romantic novelists of the period, and he was the first author to lay "his plots in the infant Capital of his nation...the first of a long line of authors who have since found in the social life of Washington ample grist for their literary mills." (p.10, J. Kennedy)

Watterston's many activities made him an important social figure in the Capital. He was an organizer of the 1841 Inaugural Ball, and his daughter, Eliza, who lived with him, was a good friend of President James Buchanan. In an 1852 letter to Eliza, Buchanan apologized for being unable "to pay you a visit on Capitol Hill, but I was obliged to return immediately to my hotel". The Watterston home was, in all likelihood, a meeting place for many leading Washington figures.



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George Watterston died in 1859 and, although the house at 224 Second Street, S.E. remained in the family's ownership, there is no record that they lived there until 1870, when George's son David is listed as residing at that address. David Watterson (who changed the spelling of the family name) was a civil engineer and a member of Washington's Common Council in 1856, but he did not attain his father's stature as a public figure. The younger Watterson lived in the house until his death in 1903. Neighbors reported that "he dressed for dinner each evening and was served his meal in solemn but lonely splendor by a well-trained servant". (p.34, Places and Persons)

Capitol Hill has always had an interesting mixture of classes and races, with middle and working-class citizens living next to important political and social figures; the Kennellys (who acquired the property in 1904) were part of that middle class. Mr. Kennelly is listed as an auctioneer in Boyd's Directory, and as one of the partners in the firm of Magrath and Kennelly, located at 205 11th Street, N.W. A Directory ad for 1905 announces that there will be a "sale of horses, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday." (Boyd's p.668). The large two-story stable erected by Mr. Kennelly was, no doubt, built to accommodate his horses. Other Kennelly family members worked as draftsmen and clerks.

From 1900 until 1967 the Watterston house had only two owners, Patrick Kennelly (1905-1944) and F.C. Curtis (from 1944-1967); nothing could be uncovered about Mr. Curtis.

The house changed hands twice between 1967-1979 and, in 1979, was sold at auction to the Watterston House Associates, the current owner. It is now occupied by The Cato Institute, a public policy research organization founded in 1977.

The Watterston House is listed in the Washington, D.C. Catalog of the Historic American Buildings Survey.

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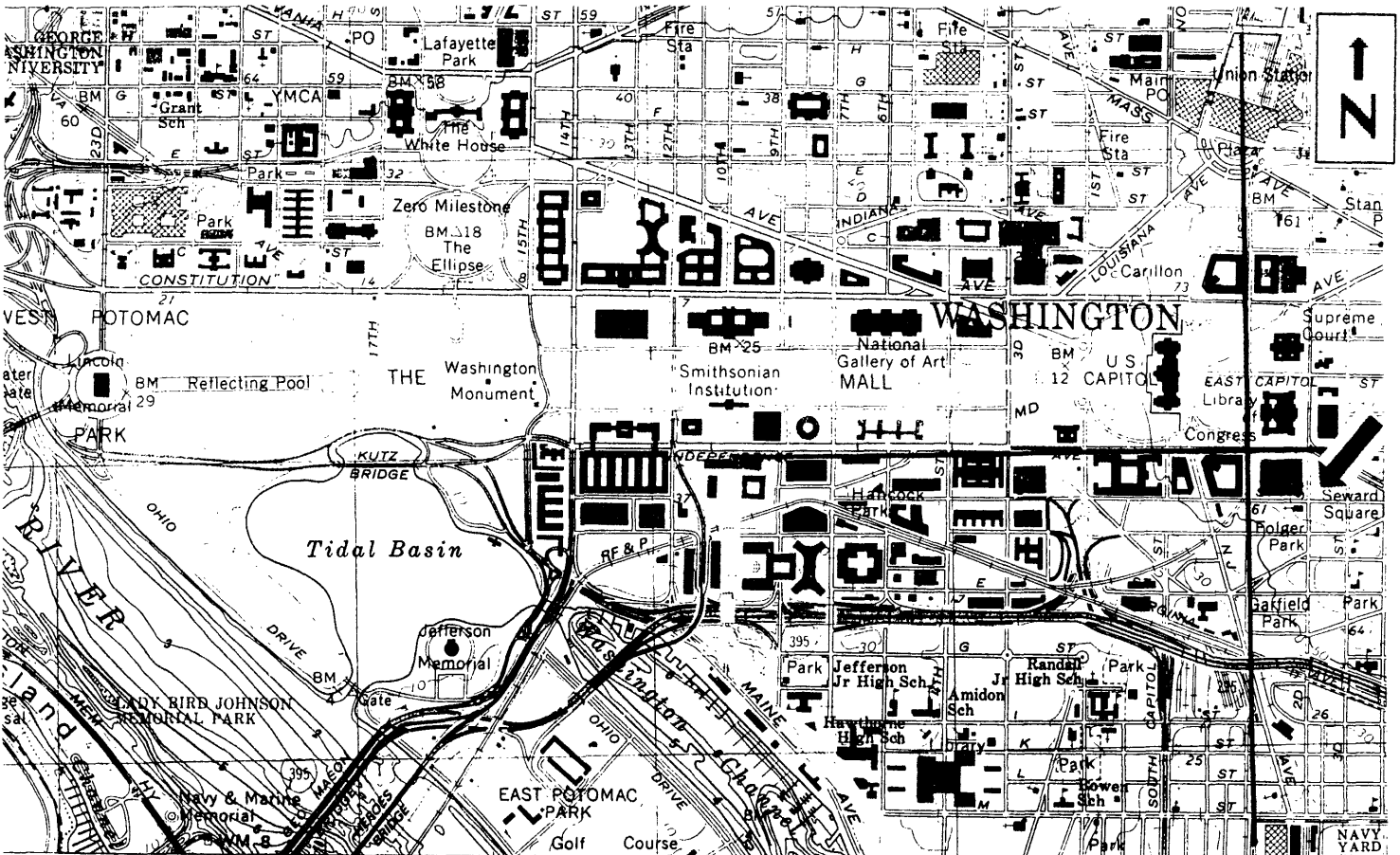
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Detail of USGS map. Refer to section 10 for UTM data.

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### Photo Inventory

1. Main (west) facade
2. Ironwork, main (west) facade
3. South facade
4. Rear (east) facade & addition,  
northeast corner
5. Streetscape (north)