

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	MAR 17 1980
DATE ENTERED	MAY 6 1980

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

President's Park South

AND/OR COMMON

The Ellipse and adjacent parkland

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

*Constitution Ave.*

Between the White House and Washington Monument grounds

CITY, TOWN

Washington

VICINITY OF

STATE

D.C.

CODE

11

COUNTY

CODE

001

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

**PRESENT USE**

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

**4 AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: *(if applicable)*

National Capital Region, National Park Service

STREET & NUMBER

1100 Ohio Drive, S.W.

CITY, TOWN

Washington

VICINITY OF

STATE

D.C. 20242

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

(same as above)

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" 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		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The President's Park South includes the area bounded by State Place, South Executive Avenue, and Alexander Hamilton Place on the north, 15th Street N.W. on the east, Constitution Avenue N.W. on the south, and 17th Street N.W. on the west. The land is mostly open lawn sloping gently from north to south, with a variety of deciduous and some coniferous trees planted outside the central area. That area, the Ellipse, is formed by an oval roadway directly south of the enclosed White House grounds. The Ellipse touches the curving South Executive Avenue on the north and circles close to Constitution Avenue on the south, from which it is accessible by a very short segment of 16th Street N.W. The long axis of the Ellipse, some 1050 feet, runs east-west; the short axis is approximately 900 feet. E Street N.W. cuts across the park just north of the tangency of the Ellipse and South Executive Avenue, running concurrently with the latter along the southernmost portion of its arc. Other short roadways join the Ellipse with the intersections of 15th and E, 15th and Constitution, and 17th and Constitution. The overall park plan is formally symmetrical, divided by the north-south axis running through the White House.

A number of monuments and other features contribute to the character of the President's Park South. They are as follows:

The General William Tecumseh Sherman Monument was erected in 1903 in the block at the northeast corner of the park formed by Alexander Hamilton Place, 15th Street, E Street, and Executive Avenue, known as Sherman Square. A 14-foot bronze equestrian statue of the famous Civil War commander faces north atop a tall granite pedestal. The pedestal displays bronze groupings on the east and west representing Peace and War, eight bas reliefs, and a number of inscriptions. It rises from a broader base with flights of steps on the four sides and life-size statues of infantry, artillery, cavalry, and engineer soldiers at the corners. On the surrounding plaza at the foot of the steps was a six-foot-wide tile mosaic containing the names of Sherman's engagements; this deteriorated and was replaced by terrazzo in the mid-1970s. The sculptor, Carl Rohlf-Smith, died in 1900 before the monument was completed. Under the direction of his widow, Sara, the sculpture pieces were finished by Lauritz Jensen, Sigvald Asbjornsen, Stephen Sinding, and Mrs. Theodore Alice Ruggles Kitson. The cost of the monument, one of Washington's most elaborate Civil War memorials, was largely borne by the Government with contributions from the Society of the Army of the Tennessee. (The Sherman Monument is also included in the National Register listing of Civil War Monuments in Washington, D.C.)

The First Division Monument, designed by Cass Gilbert, was erected in 1924 in the northwest corner of the park between State Place and E Street, balancing the Sherman Monument in the northeast corner. A pink Milford granite column supports a gilded bronze Victory figure by Daniel Chester French. The 15-foot winged female, perched on a sphere and bearing a flag, brings the overall height of the monument to 80 feet. Bronze plates at the base of the column list the names of the First Division soldiers killed in World War I. The division's World War II and Vietnam dead have been

(continued)

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similarly honored on tablets in exedra form. The World War II extension on the west, designed by Cass Gilbert, Jr., was added in 1957; the matching Vietnam extension on the east was added in 1977. All funding was provided by the Memorial Association of the First Division.

The Butt-Millet Memorial Fountain was erected in the angle between E Street and the western portion of Ellipse Drive in 1913. An eight-foot marble shaft rises from an octagonal basin and bears two low relief panels representing Art and Military Valor, the former for the artist Francis Millet, the latter for Major Archibald W. Butt, military aide to Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William H. Taft. The octagonal base of the shaft is decorated with 16 carved rosette panels and is surmounted by a circular fountain dish with a memorial inscription on its rim. The socially prominent Butt and Millet lost their lives on the Titanic in 1912, after which their friends joined to contribute this memorial. The sculptor was Daniel Chester French; the architect was Thomas Hastings.

The Second Division Memorial was erected by that division's memorial association in 1936 on Constitution Avenue between 16th and 17th Streets. A great open portal is flanked by wings on which are inscribed the names of the division's battles during the First World War. Rising before the portal is an 18-foot flaming sword of gilded bronze clasped in a fist. The hilt bears the division insignia. The sculptor was James Earle Fraser; the architect was John Russell Pope. Two additional low wings topped by flagpoles were dedicated in 1962 in commemoration of the division's dead in World War II and Korea.

The Zero Milestone was placed by the Lee Highway Association in 1923 on the sidewalk at the north edge of the Ellipse. The four-foot shaft of pink North Carolina granite is the official starting point for the measurement of highway distances from Washington. Inscriptions on the sides attest to this role and commemorate the starting point of the first and second transcontinental motor convoys in 1919-20. Atop the shaft is a bronze compass. Horace Peaslee was the architect.

The Original Patentees of the District of Columbia Memorial stands at the edge of the sidewalk on 15th Street midway between Constitution Avenue and E Street. Designed by Delos Smith, it was erected in 1936 by the National Society, Daughters of the American Colonists. The Indiana granite base, 2-1/2 feet high and 3 feet square, bears the names of the 18 original patentees of land prior to 1700. Above it rises a granite shaft 4-1/2 feet high and 2 feet square on which are relief panels of corn, tobacco, a turkey, and a fish carved by Carl Mose symbolizing the livelihood of the early settlers.

(continued)

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The Boy Scout Commemorative Tribute, by sculptor Donald DeLue and architect William Henry Deacy, is located just west of the Original Patentees Memorial. Atop a six-foot hexagonal granite pedestal, a seven-foot bronze Boy Scout strides forward under the inspiration of larger classically draped bronze figures representing Manhood and Womanhood. In front of the pedestal is a sunken 40-foot-long oval pool surrounded by a commemorative inscription and 12 wooden benches. The work, financed by the contributions of Boy Scouts and their leaders, was dedicated in 1964.

The Haupt Fountains stand at either side of the small segment of 16th Street between the Ellipse and Constitution Avenue. Each is an enormous slab of Minnesota rainbow granite 18 feet square, nearly a foot thick, and weighing 55 tons. Gordon Newell carved into their polished top surfaces large dishes from which shoot jets of water. The fountains are not memorials, but landscape beautification features framing a formal south entrance to the President's Park. They were donated by Enid Annenberg Haupt, editor of Seventeen Magazine, and erected in 1968 by the First Lady's Committee for a More Beautiful Capital. Nathaniel Owings was the architect.

The National Christmas Tree has been a seasonal feature of the Ellipse since 1923. Until 1973 a large freshly cut tree was erected each year and removed afterward. In that year a tree was planted at the north edge of the Ellipse just east of the north-south axis through the White House. It and a subsequent "permanent" tree did not survive. The present attempt at a permanent tree, a 30-foot Colorado blue spruce, was planted in the same location in 1978. A low stone wall rings its base and a bronze plaque identifies it.

The Bulfinch Gatehouses, located on the west grounds of the U.S. Capitol from 1828 to 1874, were moved to the President's Park South in 1880. The two gatehouses stand at the corners of 15th and Constitution and 17th and Constitution. (They are on the National Register individually in the U.S. Capitol Gatehouses and Gateposts listing, where they are described in full.)

The President's Park South experiences heavy public use as a staging area for daily tours of the White House. Semi-permanent covered bleachers are installed on the east side of the Ellipse during the spring and summer to accommodate the waiting crowds. The park is also used for local athletic games; its sports facilities include a baseball diamond on the west side of the Ellipse and a volleyball court between the Ellipse and 17th Street.

# 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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1791, 1851

BUILDER/ARCHITECT P.C. L'Enfant; A.J. Downing

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The President's Park South is significant as an important element of Pierre Charles L'Enfant's 1791 plan for Washington and as the primary remnant of Andrew Jackson Downing's 1851 landscape design for the Mall and adjoining area.

L'Enfant's plan prescribed the creation of a "President's park" extending from the Executive Mansion south to a "Canal through Tiber Creek" along the alignment of present Constitution Avenue. This greensward would join a longer green swath (the Mall) running westward from the Capitol, with the axes of the two intersecting at a monument to George Washington. Neither the L'Enfant plan nor the 1792 Andrew Elliecott map stemming from it specified the internal layout of the area below the White House.

The President's Park South was acquired by the Federal Government in the 1790s as a part of Reservation 1, which also included the sites of the present Lafayette Park, the Treasury and Old Executive Office buildings, and the White House. Well after the White House was built during that decade, the land here remained unlandscaped and descended to an unattractive swamp at the mouth of the Tiber Creek. Conversion of the creek to the Washington City Canal (now Constitution Avenue) after 1810 did little to improve appearances, for the land remained low-lying and the canal ultimately degenerated to an open sewer before it was buried in the early 1870s.

In 1851, however, the noted landscape architect Andrew Jackson Downing prepared a new development plan for the Mall and the President's Park. The Mall portion of his plan, which called for a romantic layout of curving carriage drives bordered by trees, was partially executed but ultimately reversed in the 20th century in favor of the formal east-west linearity of the L'Enfant plan. The President's Park South, on the other hand, has retained the essential character of Downing's design. He drew a large circular drive with intersecting access roads, including one curving southward from the White House grounds in the manner of South Executive Avenue. The center of the circle, which Downing labeled a parade, was open and unbroken; in the remainder of the area were trees and pathways. As executed, Downing's circle was squeezed to an oval to leave more space for the White House grounds, but the basic curvilinearity and road and vegetative patterns of his plan were adhered to. Much fill was added to the southern portion of the park after the Civil War to bring it up to its present grade.

(continued)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

James M. Goode. The Outdoor Sculpture of Washington, D.C. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1974.  
 Frederick Gutheim. Worthy of the Nation; The History of Planning for the National Capital. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1977.  
 George J. Olszewski. The President's Park South. National Park Service, 1970.

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

**ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 52  
 UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>18</u>	<u>323610</u>	<u>4307040</u>	B	<u>18</u>	<u>323600</u>	<u>4306550</u>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	<u>18</u>	<u>323090</u>	<u>4306560</u>	D	<u>18</u>	<u>323100</u>	<u>4307050</u>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at the corner of Alexander Hamilton Place and 15th Street N.W., the boundary goes south to the corner of 15th Street and Constitution Avenue N.W., thence west to the corner of Constitution Avenue and 17th Street N.W., thence north to the corner of 17th Street and State Place, thence east to South Executive Avenue and with the line of South Executive Avenue to Alexander Hamilton Place, thence east on Alexander Hamilton Place to the point of beginning.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Barry Mackintosh, Historian

ORGANIZATION

National Capital Region, National Park Service

DATE

December 13, 1979

STREET & NUMBER

1100 Ohio Drive S.W.

TELEPHONE

(202) 426-6660

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C. 20242

# 12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES X

NO

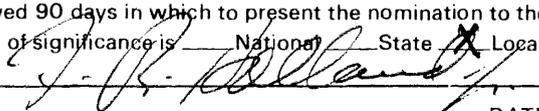
NONE



STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is National State Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE



3/6/80

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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



DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

May 6, 1980

ATTEST:



KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

April 23, 1980

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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The President's Park South evolved in the 20th century as the setting for several monuments and memorials, as described in the preceding section. These were held to its periphery, leaving open the expanse of the Ellipse. The Sherman Monument and the First Division Monument in particular are significant as expressions of the memorial art of their time. Of special importance is the open vista from the White House south through the Ellipse to the Jefferson Memorial, listed separately on the Register.

(Note: The "President's Park North," better known as Lafayette Park, is separately listed in the National Register as part of the Lafayette Square Historic District and thus is not addressed here.)

**SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD**

NRIS Reference Number: 80000347

Date Listed: 5/06/80

President's Park South  
Property Name:

County:            DC  
State:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Multiple Name

-----  
This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

*for* Patrick W. Andrus  
Signature of the Keeper

1/9/91  
Date of Action

=====  
**Amended Items in Nomination:**

When this property was listed in the National Register the nomination form did not specify a level of significance for President's Park South. The Federal Preservation Officer for the National Park Service has evaluated the property and requested that the form be amended to indicate that the park is of national significance. The nomination form is now officially amended to include this information.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**DISTRIBUTION:**

National Register property file  
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

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President's Park South

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION APPROVAL

(6) Keeper Patrick Andrews 1/9/91