

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <u>District of Columbia</u>	
COUNTY:	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:
Memorial Continental Hall

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Site of Washington Conference of 1921-22

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
west side of 17th Street, between C and D Streets, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN:
Washington

STATE
District of Columbia

CODE COUNTY: CODE

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>Library</u>

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution

STREET AND NUMBER:
c/o President General, 1776 D Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN:
Washington

STATE:
District of Columbia

CODE

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Recorder of Deeds

STREET AND NUMBER:
6th and D Streets, Northwest

CITY OR TOWN:
Washington

STATE:
District of Columbia

CODE

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:

COUNTY:

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

In 1902, the Daughters of the American Revolution commissioned New York architect Edward Pearce Casey to design for them an appropriate headquarters building and assembly hall in the nation's capital. The cornerstone was laid in 1904, and the edifice completed in 1910. Known as Memorial Continental Hall, this was the first building of the three-part complex now occupying the block bounded by 17th and 18th Streets, Northwest, between C and D Streets. Constitution Hall (1929) and the connecting administration building (1923-1949) complete the ensemble.

During the early years of its existence, Memorial Continental Hall served not only as a meeting place for the annual DAR conferences, but, frequently, for other important occasions of both official and unofficial Washington. Thus it was selected as a suitable and imposing site for the Arms Limitation Conference--the Washington Conference--of 1921. On this occasion, the seats were removed from the sloping main floor and a temporary wooden floor built above it for the roundtable discussions. After the close of the conference, the hall reverted to its original arrangement and continued to serve as the principal DAR place of assembly until the construction of Constitution Hall. In 1943, the older building was loaned to the American Red Cross for emergency wartime work. Five years later, the auditorium was renovated for library use. The stage was removed and the original floor replaced by a level one of reinforced concrete. Stacks were installed on the main floor, and the library was opened in 1949. Further changes occurred in the mid-1960's when the sloping galleries on the east, north, and south were remodeled to accomodate additional stacks and reading tables. As a result, two tiers supplanted the earlier, canted floors.

Built of brick and concrete, sheathed in pale gray Vermont marble, Memorial Continental Hall is a free adaptation of Georgian architecture. The elaboration of surface treatment and the individuality of each facade, however, give the building an un-Georgian element of complexity. Monumental Ionic porticoes grace each of the three street elevations, unified by a continuous modillioned cornice. This cornice is surmounted by a marble balustrade that conceals a recessed third story. Between the advanced end pavillions of the 17th Street facade, the pedimented central portico projects boldly to for a porte-cochere approached by a circular driveway. Beneath the portico, a flight of marble steps ascends to the triple bronze entrance doors. The subsidiary porticos on C and D Streets rest upon wide, balustraded marble terraces accesible from the street level by a flight of steps, or from the interior of the building through French doors in the bays of each portico. The semi-circular south portico, distinguished by its symbolic thirteen columns, is of particular note. Bracketed marble cornices accentuate the main floor windows of the corner pavillions which flank the three porticos.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian | 16th Century | 18th Century | 20th Century
 15th Century | 17th Century | 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) Nov. 12, 1921 - Feb. 6, 1922

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The shattering disillusionment of the 1930's and 1940's fully discredited the results of the Washington Conference for many observers. Writing in the midst of World War II, Walter Lippman reproached himself for having celebrated as a triumph in 1922 what, in 1943, he saw as a disaster.¹ Historians now tend to look more kindly upon this attempt to assure international peace through naval disarmament and mutual pledges of arbitration. In an era of narrow nationalism and limited vision, the Conference was a remarkable and significant attempt to reduce global tension. For a decade it did stabilize the armaments race and establish an embryonic security system in the Pacific. And if pragmatic considerations such as the demand for reduced arms spending was a principal motivating factor for the conference, still, the vision which animated such internationalists as Charles Evans Hughes, under whose "brilliant leadership"² the resulting pacts were concluded, cannot be discounted. "Seldom has any international conference grappled so resolutely with important questions," states diplomatic historian Foster Rhea Dulles.³ It was a "parchment peace," but it was the first time in history that major powers had consented to disarm. Walter Millis, in An End to Arms, pronounces it far-reaching in its implications if only very partially successfully--the most significant disarmament attempt until the Kennedy era. Its limitations were the limitations of its age; its achievements, if abortive, nonetheless portentous.

The Memorial Continental Hall of the Daughters of the American Revolution was the site of the Washington Conference. Though the decor of the great chamber in which the delegates met from November 12, 1921 to February 6, 1922, is unchanged, its present use as a library has necessitated major structural renovations and substantial modification of the room's original character.

¹ Cited in Foster Rhea Dulles, America's Rise to World Power (New York: Harper and Bros., 1954), p. 153.

² Ibid., p. 150.

³ Ibid.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Buell, Raymond L. The Washington Conference. New York: Russell & Russell, 1922.
 Dulles, Foster Rhea. America's Rise to World Power, 1898-1954. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954.
 Ferrell, Robert H. Peace in Their Time: The Origins of the Kellogg-Briand Pact. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952.
 Ichihashi, Yamato. The Washington Conference and After: A Historical Survey. Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1928.
 Millis, Walter. An End to Arms. New York: Atheneum, 1965.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		38° 53' 37"	77° 02' 25"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1/4 acre

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Robert Gamble, Historian; Chris Redburn, Assistant

ORGANIZATION: Historic Sites Survey - National Park Service DATE: August 1972

STREET AND NUMBER: 1100 L - Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: D.C. CODE: _____

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION **NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

 Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

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Memorial Continental Hall
Site of Wash. Conference of 1921-22 *(Continuation Sheet)*

(Number all entries)

(1)

7. Description (Continued)

Inside, fluted pilasters and a delicate bas-relief ceiling enrich the marble foyer, while bull's eye niches above the main openings contain sculptured busts of prominent Revolutionary-period figures. Directly over the foyer is the National Board Room of the DAR, and along the two corridors radiating north and south are period rooms maintained by some of the state DAR chapters.

Conversion to use as a library has modified but not destroyed the character of the auditorium in which the Washington Conference occurred. Basically square in shape, the auditorium is covered by a coffered ceiling, into which are set leaded skylights of ground glass, carried by four elliptical arches springing from the dentilled cornice surrounding the room. The blind arch above the proscenium echoes the deeply-coffered spans above the three galleries. The original ornamental iron railing bordering the lower tier of the gallery was duplicated in the installation of the second, recessed tier seven years ago.

Enframed by the proscenium, two pairs of unused boxes, each topped by a canopy bearing a carved eagle, flanks the space formerly occupied by the stage. A plaque presented to the DAR by the United States Government on November 12, 1922, to commemorate the Washington Conference, is mounted on the rear wall of the former stage area beneath a portrait of George Washington. In part, it reads:

In response to an invitation by the President of the United States, delegates from the United States, The British Empire, France, Italy, Japan assembled in this auditorium November 12, 1921, for a conference on the limitation of armament together with delegates from Belgium, China, The Netherlands, and Portugal invited to participate in the discussion of Pacific and Far Eastern questions.

The tablet then enumerates the agreements signed at the close of the conference.

Museum wings, connected to the central space by a series of sliding glass doors, flank the lateral walls of the auditorium behind the north and south porticos. In the south museum wing is an original oil painting of the auditorium executed during the Conference.

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Memorial Continental Hall
Site of Wash. Conference of 1921-22 (Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

(1)

8. Significance (Continued)

HISTORY

Americans, like Europeans, wanted assurance of world peace after the armistice of 1918. Yet this hope, and the related hope for reduced arms spending was soon threatened by the naval armaments race between Britain--who still ruled the high seas, the United States, and Japan. America feared the Anglo-Japanese alliance in the Pacific; Britain, the American challenge; and Japan, the undermining of her interests in China and the western Pacific.

Little support existed in the United States for the ruinous arms race, while a vocal segment of the American public still sought international cooperation as a means to world peace. However, it was Senator Borah, an ardent isolationist as well as a pacifist, who introduced a resolution into the Congress early in 1921 urging the government to begin disarmament negotiations with the British and the Japanese. The resolution passed the Senate on May 25, and the House on June 29. Despite the opposition of President Harding, the resolution had struck a responsive chord in a war-weary, economy-minded nation, as well as abroad. Harding capitulated, and, under the leadership of his able and idealistic Secretary of State, Charles Evans Hughes, who was sympathetic to the resolution, an international conference attended by delegates from nine nations convened at Washington on November 12, 1922.

Three treaties resulted from the negotiations. The Five Power Naval Treaty, signed by Japan, Great Britain, the United States, France, and Italy on February 1, 1922, placed a freeze on the construction of capital ships for ten years, provided for the destruction of fixed amounts of existing shipping tonnage, limited the size of auxiliary ships and aircraft carriers, and banned the fortification of outlying island possessions in the Pacific.

A Four Power Treaty pledged the United States, England, France, and Japan to respect the existing spheres of influence in the Pacific and to confer jointly over any disputes. It also provided for the dissolution of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance when the Treaty was signed. Thus American fears were placated.

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Memorial Continental Hall
Site of Wash. Conference of 1921-22 *(Continuation Sheet)*

(Number all entries)

(2)

8. Significance (Continued)

The third and final compact to emerge from the Washington Conference was the Nine Power Treaty, signed by all the participants on February 6, 1922. It provided that the independent sovereignty of China would be respected, that China would be allowed to establish its own stable government, that no country would there be allowed special privileges, and that Japan would return the Shantung Peninsula to Chinese control.

Although these agreements ultimately failed, they constituted an important and unique step in the international relations of the time. Public acclaim was enthusiastic, and the conference ended amidst a mood of optimism and confidence. In such laudatory works as H.G. Wells' Washington and the Hope of Peace, intellectuals joined the popular response throughout the world to what was felt to be a giant stride away from the threat of warfare. Although these expectations proved naively unrealistic, the three treaties together had the important short-term effect of cementing the status quo in the Far East. They decreased Japan's fear of encroachment from the United States, and gave the U.S. a quota for naval construction that it did not reach until 1938--a fact which has been cited in arguing the validity of the treaties both for their time and the mood of the American people. Moreover, the conference established a precedent which would be recalled years later in the sober experience of still another and worse world conflict than that known to the delegates who met at Washington.

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Memorial Continental Hall
Site of Wash. Conference 1921-22 (Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

9. Major Bibliography References (Continued)

Sprout, Harold and Margaret. Toward A New Order of Sea Power.
Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943.

Sullivan, Mark. The Great Adventure at Washington. Garden City, N.Y.:
Doubleday and Page Co., 1922.

Vinson, John C. The Parchment Peace: The United States Senate and
the Washington Conference, 1921-22. Athens: University of
Georgia Press, 1955.

Wells, H.G. Washington and the Hope of Peace. London: W. Collins Sons
and Co., Ltd., 1922.