

STATE:  
**District of Columbia**  
COUNTY:  
  
FOR NPS USE ONLY  
ENTRY NUMBER      DATE

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
**Volta Bureau (Alexander Graham Bell)**  
AND/OR HISTORIC:  
**Volta Bureau**

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**1537 35th Street NW.** (alternate address: 3417 Volta Place, NW)  
CITY OR TOWN:  
**(Georgetown) Washington**  
STATE: **D.C.**      CODE:      COUNTY:      CODE:

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP			STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Public <input type="checkbox"/>	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/>	Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes:	
Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/>	Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	In Process <input type="checkbox"/>	Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/>	Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Object <input type="checkbox"/>	Both <input type="checkbox"/>	Being Considered <input type="checkbox"/>	Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/>	Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/>	
No: <input type="checkbox"/>					

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/>	Government <input type="checkbox"/>	Park <input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation <input type="checkbox"/>	Comments <input type="checkbox"/>
Commercial <input type="checkbox"/>	Industrial <input type="checkbox"/>	Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Specify) <input type="checkbox"/>	
Educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Military <input type="checkbox"/>	Religious <input type="checkbox"/>		
Entertainment <input type="checkbox"/>	Museum <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Scientific <input type="checkbox"/>		

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNERS NAME:  
**Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf, Volta Bureau**  
STREET AND NUMBER:  
**3417 Volta Place NW.**  
CITY OR TOWN: **Washington**      STATE: **D.C.**      CODE:

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
**Recorder of Deeds**  
STREET AND NUMBER:  
**6th and D Streets NW.**  
CITY OR TOWN: **Washington**      STATE: **D.C.**      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:

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**7. DESCRIPTION**

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (*if known*) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

*(This area is left blank for describing the present and original physical appearance.)*

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)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |   |                                       |  |  |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| Aboriginal                              | Education <input 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"/>           | _____                                    |
| Art <input type="checkbox"/>            | Landscape <input type="checkbox"/>    | Social/Humanitarian <input type="checkbox"/> | _____                                    |
| Commerce <input type="checkbox"/>       | Architecture <input type="checkbox"/> | Theater <input type="checkbox"/>             | _____                                    |
| Communications <input type="checkbox"/> | Literature <input type="checkbox"/>   | Transportation <input type="checkbox"/>      | _____                                    |
| Conservation <input type="checkbox"/>   | Military <input type="checkbox"/>     |  |  |
|   | Music <input type="checkbox"/>        |  |  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Include Personages, Dates, Events, Etc.)

In 1887 the Volta Associates sold their record patents to the American Gramophone Company, and Alexander Graham Bell took part of his share of the profits to found the Volta Bureau as an instrument "for the increase and diffusion of knowledge relating to the Deaf." At first the Bureau was housed in his father's residence at 1527 35th Street. The Bureau was intended to serve as a center of information relating to all classes and ages of deaf and hard of hearing persons. Soon the work involved in the Volta Bureau had increased to such a volume that Bell made plans to erect a structure to house the institution. In 1893 he built the neoclassic yellow brick and sandstone structure for the Volta Bureau at 1537 35th Street NW., which still stands. The Volta Bureau continues its work in aiding the deaf.

History

Alexander Graham Bell, the inventor of the telephone and the outstanding figure of his generation in the education of the deaf, was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, on March 3, 1847. Both his grandfather and father were teachers of speech and young Bell worked with them. In 1870 the Bell family came to Canada and settled at Brantford, Ontario. In April 1871 Bell began work at Miss Sarah Fuller's special day school for the deaf, the first of its kind in the world, in Boston, Massachusetts. In 1872 he opened a private normal class in Boston to which institutions could send teachers for training in the use of Visible Speech, a system of symbols which his father had invented by which the position of the vocal organs in speech was indicated. Early in 1873 he was appointed professor of vocal physiology and the mechanics of speech of Boston University. There he also started a normal class for the training of the deaf. His lectures attracted wide attention and in 1878 he gave a course at the University of Oxford. His normal work became still more extensive through a series of conventions of teachers of speech to the deaf, which he started and led. His work also became more intensive as he took a number of private pupils. One of these was the five-year old son of Thomas Sanders of Haverhill, Massachusetts, who was born deaf. Bell had charge of the child's entire education for more than three years, 1873-76, living with him at the home of the grandmother in Salem.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Blank area for Major Bibliographical References.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN ONE ACRE		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

ORGANIZATION \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

STREET AND NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY OR TOWN: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ 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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8. Significance

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Along with the teaching of the deaf, Bell was greatly interested in invention. During the years 1873-76, he experimented along three-related lines to invent a phonautograph; a multiple telegraph; and an electric speaking telegraph or telephone, having started work in this field at the age of 18. Bell and his associate, Thomas A. Watson, designed an instrument which they called the harmonic telegraph while working at their shop at 109 Court Street, Boston, in 1875. On March 3, 1876, his 29th birthday, Bell received the first telephone patent, No. 174,465 for his invention. At first the telephone was merely a curiosity, and Bell and Watson had to give many public demonstrations before the invention was accepted. The Bell Telephone Association was organized in 1877, and in 1878, the first telephone exchange was opened at New Haven, Connecticut.

On July 11, 1877, Bell married the 18-year old Mabel G. Hubbard, who had been deaf from early childhood. In August he and his bride sailed for Europe to introduce the telephone into England and France. While in England he also gave considerable attention to the education of the deaf. He returned to the United States in the fall of 1878 and that winter moved to Washington, D.C.

Bell in Washington, 1879-1922

In 1880 the French Government awarded Bell the Volta Prize of 50,000 francs, for the invention of the electric speaking telephone. Bell used this money to found the "Volta Laboratory" where scientific research could be undertaken. Associated with him were his cousin Chichester A. Bell and Sumner Tainter. From 1880 to 1885 the Volta Laboratory was located in a building (no longer standing) on L Street in Washington. Bell was interested in Edison's invention for recording sound, the phonograph. But Edison's tinfoil records left much to be desired. According to the members of the Volta Laboratory Association invented an improved recorder a flat wax record, a wax cylinder record, and an improved reproducer, and jointly received patents for these improvements on May 4, 1886.

When Bell first came to Washington he lived in a brick house that is still located at 1500 Rhode Island Avenue NW., at Scott's Circle. This structure was badly damaged by a fire in the 1880's (the house has been completely changed). Following this disaster Bell moved to a house that he built at 1355 Connecticut Avenue NW., where he resided until his death in 1922. (This house was demolished prior to 1937). In 1881 Bell's father, Alexander Meville Bell, left Canada and took up residence in a three-story brick house that his son owned and still stands at 1527 35th Street in Georgetown, where the father and his second wife lived during their lifetime.

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8. Significance

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In 1885 Bell moved the Volta Laboratory from the L Street building to the two-story brick carriage house in the rear of his father's residence at 1527 35th Street. The Volta Lab remained at the carriage house location until Bell's death in 1922. During this later period (1885-1922) Bell invented the photophone, an apparatus for transmitting speech over a ray of light by means of the variable electric resistance of selenium to light and shade. He also invented the induction balance for locating metallic objects in the human body, first used on President Garfield, and the telephone probe, which he developed from the former invention. These Bell did not patent but gave to the world. He also invented an audiometer.

In 1887 the Volta Associates sold their record patents to the American Gramophone Company, and Bell took part of his share of the profits to found the Volta Bureau as an instrument "for the increase and diffusion of knowledge relating to the Deaf." At first the Bureau was housed in his father's residence at 1527 35th Street. The Bureau, intended to serve as a center of information relating to all classes and ages of deaf and hard of hearing persons, worked in close cooperation with the American Association for the Promotion of the Teaching of Speech to the Deaf (known since 1956 as the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf), organized in 1890, of which Bell was elected president and to which he gave more than \$300,000. The Volta Bureau officially merged with this Association in 1908.

Soon the work involved in the Volta Bureau had increased to such a volume that Bell made plans to erect a structure to specifically house the institution. In 1893 he built the neoclassic yellow brick and sandstone structure for the Volta Bureau at 1537 35th Street, which still stands on the corner of Volta Place and 35th Street, opposite to his father's house and Bell's carriage house laboratory.

During the last 25 years of his life, Bell was chiefly interested in aviation. In 1883 he was a cofounder of Science, now the organ of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. From 1896 to 1904 Bell was president of the National Geographic Society and from 1898 to 1922 a regent of the Smithsonian Institution. A gift of his in 1891 started that institution's Astrophysical Observatory, and in 1907 he founded the Aerial Experiment Association, of which he was president and to which he gave \$50,000. Bell died on August 2, 1922, and was buried on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, where he had a large summer estate.