

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>Pennsylvania</b>
COUNTY: <b>Dauphin</b>
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

**1. NAME**

COMMON: <b>John Harris Mansion</b>
AND/OR HISTORIC: <b>Simon Cameron House</b>

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER: <b>219 South Front Street</b>			
CITY OR TOWN: <b>Harrisburg</b>		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: <b>17</b>	
STATE <b>Pennsylvania</b>	CODE	COUNTY: <b>Dauphin</b>	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"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<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) <b>Historical Society office</b>

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME: <b>Historical Society of Dauphin County</b>	STATE:
STREET AND NUMBER: <b>219 South Front Street</b>	
CITY OR TOWN: <b>Harrisburg</b>	
STATE: <b>Pennsylvania</b>	

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: <b>Recorder of Deeds, Dauphin County Courthouse</b>	COUNTY:
STREET AND NUMBER: <b>Front and Market Streets</b>	
CITY OR TOWN: <b>Harrisburg</b>	
STATE: <b>Pennsylvania</b>	

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY: <b>National Register of Historic Places</b>	ENTRY NUMBER
DATE OF SURVEY: <b>1972</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Federal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local	
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: <b>National Register of Historic Places</b>	
STREET AND NUMBER: <b>1100 L Street, N.W.</b>	
CITY OR TOWN: <b>Washington</b>	
STATE: <b>D.C.</b>	

DATE
FOR NPS USE ONLY

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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

The John Harris Mansion. Fronting on the Susquehanna River, the John Harris Mansion is a 2 1/2-story, gable-roofed dwelling. John Harris, the founder of Harrisburg, built the nearly square, rock-faced limestone front section of the house in 1764-66. Following his death in 1791, the mansion passed through various owners and even housed the Pennsylvania Female College between 1854 and 1861. After Simon Cameron returned from Russia at the end of 1862, he purchased the former college and used it as his winter home until his death in 1889. Among the owners, Cameron made the most extensive alterations. He built the two-story rear wing and added a one-story bay window to the southeast side of the main section. Also, he removed a detached one-story kitchen, which a covered walkway had originally connected to the southeast side of the house. Various other Cameron alterations helped transform the Georgian-style dwelling into a High Victorian mansion. After the turn of the century, Cameron's grandson Richard Cameron Haldeman added a second story to the southeast bay and erected a matching two-story bay on the opposite side. In 1941 Cameron-Haldeman heirs deeded the building to the Historical Society of Dauphin County, which uses it as its headquarters and a local history museum.

Today, the house resembles an offcenter "T". A one-story wooden porch with fluted columns extends across its four-bay-wide front section. Three arched dormers face the riverfront, and five gabled dormers overlook the rear. Most windows are six-over-six sash, and those in the main section have wooden shutters. Four brick interior chimneys top the main section. The two-story rear extension is of brick-and-frame construction, except for the rearmost portion, which is stone. This latter section has a frame second-floor porch on the southeast and northeast sides.

On the paneled front double doors, the handle mounting is still engraved with the name "Simon Cameron." Beyond these doors is a small anteroom and another set of double doors that lead into a central hall. Originally two rooms stood to either side of the hall, but Cameron removed the partition between the southeast rooms to make a vast drawing room. At the same time, he lowered the first-floor level about 3 feet to create Victorian 15-foot ceilings on the first story. On the front porch, a close look at the exterior wall reveals the original level.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

(continued)

**SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **circa 1863-1889**

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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As one of the foremost spoilsmen of President Ulysses S. Grant's "kitchen cabinet," Simon Cameron capped a career that spanned more than 30 years on the national scene. Cameron and his Pennsylvania machine, models for 19th-century politicians, thrived on personal loyalty and a system of patronage rewards and punishments. An opportunist, too, Cameron was originally a Democrat but switched to the Republican Party and emerged as one of its national leaders in 1857. Four years later he became Secretary of War in the Lincoln administration. Though he was censured for his conduct of the War Department, Cameron won election to the Senate in 1867, and during Grant's first term, Cameron entered the exclusive circle of successful party bosses and master spoilsmen that surrounded the President. After banishing the reform element from the party and defeating it at the polls in 1872, Cameron and the other Republican "Stalwarts" reigned unchecked and unchallenged. In later years, Cameron's son J. Donald became Secretary of War and then succeeded his father in the Senate, thus continuing the Cameron machine.

From about 1863 until 1889, Simon Cameron's winter residence was a 2 1/2-story, gable-roofed mansion built of rock-faced limestone. John Harris, the founder of Harrisburg, erected the front portion of the house in 1764-66. Subsequently, Cameron added a two-story rear wing and made other alterations that transformed the originally Georgian structure into a High Victorian mansion. In 1941 Cameron heirs deeded the building to the Historical Society of Dauphin County, and ever since, the society has used it as its headquarters and a local history museum.

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**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Bradley, Erwin Stanley, Simon Cameron, Lincoln's Secretary of War: A Political Biography (Philadelphia, 1966).  
 Historical Society of Dauphin County, Harris's Ferry and The Historic John Harris Mansion (Harrisburg, circa 1966).  
 Josephson, Matthew, The Politicos, 1865-1896 (New York, 1938).  
 Williams, T. Harry, Lincoln and the Radicals (Madison, 1941).

**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
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"	40°	15'	24"
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"	76°	52'	44"
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"			
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **less than 1 acre**

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
**Cathy A. Alexander, Assistant Editor**

ORGANIZATION: **American Association for State and Local History**      DATE: **Sept. 1, 1974**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**1315 Eighth Avenue South**

CITY OR TOWN: **Nashville**      STATE: **Tennessee**      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.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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7. Description (cont'd.)

Although the Historical Society of Dauphin County uses the drawing room for meetings, the room still retains many items from Cameron's occupancy. These include two fireplaces built of Italian marble, four mirrors that were imported from France, four upholstered chairs, intricate hardwood flooring, and two French doors. The French doors open into the solarium that Cameron added to the house. On the northwest side of the first-floor hall are a front room, which contains a marble fireplace that is a Cameron addition, and the library. Cameron's bookshelves cover the paneled walls of the library, and the room contains his Senate desk.

To the rear of these first-floor rooms lie those created by the rear extension: the dining room; the solarium or conservatory; the kitchen; and the pantries. Behind the library is a hall where Cameron erected a dramatic curved open stairway. It has a carved newel and ornamental balusters. Opposite the stair hall is an entrance to the eight-bay-long, two-bay-wide solarium. Most of its large windows are six-over-six sash, but two eight-over-six arched sash windows bring in light also. The dining room has a marble fireplace and contains two china closets, one of which holds the Camerons' French porcelain service. At the rear, the kitchen now displays the historical society's collection of American culinary implements. When Cameron purchased the house, he added gas, water, and hot-air furnaces.

Busts of Cameron and his wife stand on the stair landing between the first and second floors. An arched window trimmed in stained glass graces the landing, too. On the second story, the front portion of the house contains three museum bedrooms and other exhibit rooms, and the rear extension holds living quarters for the caretaker. The 20th-century northwest bay contains a modern bathroom. An 18th-century enclosed, dogleg stairway mounts to the attic, which level Cameron did not alter at all. The attic now contains museum exhibits and storage areas.

A stone wall topped by a wrought iron fence encloses the front lawn of the mansion. On the northwest side stands a small garden gazebo that Cameron built. Today, it shelters a bell from the Dauphin County Courthouse. The mansion is open to visitors daily between 1:00 and 4:30 p.m.

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7. Description (cont'd.)

Other Structures. To the rear of the mansion stands the one-story, hipped-roof former carriage house. Its front facade contains three large, arched wooden double doors and an entrance door. One red brick chimney tops the building. To the right of the carriage house is a two-story, four-bay-wide brick building that may have served as Cameron's office. Currently, it is occupied by the Boy Scouts of America.

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8. Significance (cont'd.)

Biography

In 1799 at Maytown, Pa., Charles and Martha Cameron's third son, Simon, was born. About 9 years later, Charles, a poor tailor, decided to try his fortune in Sunbury, Pa. After 2 years, he and Martha moved again, and Charles died soon thereafter. Before departing Sunbury, the elder Camerons had left their children with more prosperous families in the town. Thus, Peter Grahl, a childless physician, and his wife raised Simon in their home. Shortly before Grahl's death in 1816, Simon became a printer's apprentice.

Simon completed his apprenticeship in the State capital, Harrisburg, and there he met James D. Ingham, then secretary of the Commonwealth. Ingham gave Cameron printing employment and encouraged the young man's interest in Democratic Party politics. In 1822 Cameron purchased part ownership in a Harrisburg newspaper and married Margaretta Brua, daughter of a local bank director. During the 1820's and 1830's Cameron's young family grew wealthy from his canal contracts, railroad interests, iron partnerships, banking, and investments.

In spite of his business activities, Cameron remained drawn to politics. In 1829 Gov. John A. Schulze appointed him to his first public office, adjutant general of Pennsylvania, but Cameron held this post for less than a year. About 1838, with the help of his powerful Democratic benefactor, Pennsylvania Senator James Buchanan, Cameron obtained a Federal commission to adjust debts due the Winnebago Indian tribe. Stories of corruption tainted Cameron's office, though, creating his lasting reputation and derogatory nicknames, "Old Winnebago" and "Great Winnebago Chief."

The Winnebago incident resulted in Cameron's forced but temporary retirement from public life. During this period, Pennsylvania party affiliations were growing increasingly fluid, and by 1845, when Buchanan left the Senate to enter James K. Polk's Cabinet, Cameron decided that he could exploit the situation to win the vacant seat. As a wealthy businessman in favor of high tariffs, he appealed to the State's protectionist Whig Party, and also he drew support from bolting Democrats who owed him years of personal and political favors. After Cameron defeated the regular Democratic candidate, he and Buchanan became bitter political enemies, and the epithet "opportunist" stuck to the former throughout his subsequent career.

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8. Significance (cont'd.)

Though active in the Senate's protariff bloc, Cameron was not reelected to a full term in 1849. While his national career now appeared ended, in fact he was consolidating a powerful machine in Pennsylvania. Based on personal loyalty rather than issues or party regularity, this vehicle would propel Cameron onto the national scene again soon. Meanwhile, with Know-Nothing Party backing, he tried unsuccessfully to return to the Senate in 1855. The next year he decided to join the Republican Party. With his personal following and his Know-Nothing support mostly intact, Cameron now prepared for his successful comeback. In 1857, amid rumors of bribery, three Democrats joined the State legislature's Republican minority to give Cameron a U.S. Senate seat. This victory against the odds elevated Cameron to leadership within his adopted party, and only 3 years later, some Republicans supported him for the party's Presidential nomination.

Cameron's part in the 1860 Republican Convention and in the events of the subsequent 2 years remains controversial. Apparently, his convention delegates offered Cameron's votes to Abraham Lincoln's managers in exchange for a Cabinet position. After his election, Lincoln honored his managers' pledge and appointed Cameron Secretary of War, but when the Civil War began, neither the existing bureaucracy nor the new Secretary was prepared. Cameron was an inefficient manager and a poor organizer. Although investigation never proved that he enriched himself, Cameron was accused of corruption and favoritism, too, and because of his moderate views, radically antislavery Congressmen subjected him to special attack. By late 1861, possibly to appease the Radicals, Cameron began independently advocating the use of black troops. Thus, while the Radicals continued to suspect Cameron's sincerity, Lincoln's patience gave out. Early in 1862 the President asked Cameron to resign. To ease his Secretary's departure, Lincoln appointed him U.S. Minister to Russia. Before Cameron sailed, however, the House of Representatives voted to censure his conduct. Thus, in 1862 Cameron's public career reached a new ebb.

Within the next year Cameron returned to Pennsylvania, resigned his diplomatic post, and began his rehabilitation. In 1863, though the State legislature contained a slight Democratic majority, Cameron tried desperately but unsuccessfully to win a Senate seat. The following year

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8. Significance (cont'd.)

Cameron's strong support for Lincoln's reelection won him readmittance to the President's inner circle, if not to his Cabinet. Also, it permitted him to maintain the Federal patronage on which his personal machine depended. After the war's end and Lincoln's death, Cameron supported the new President, Andrew Johnson, for the same reason.

Between 1865 and 1867, Radical Republicanism grew more popular in Pennsylvania, and before long, Cameron's acute political sensitivity warned him to stop supporting the Johnson administration. Thus, although his Federal patronage declined, Cameron maintained his control of the Republican machine. In 1867 he achieved his goal, another term in the Senate, where the following year, he voted guilty in the Johnson impeachment trial.

Now in his 70th year, Senator Cameron wished to guarantee the political future of his son J. Donald (1833-1918), and partially for this reason he aspired to the inner circle of the incoming President, Ulysses S. Grant. Successful, Cameron became a foremost spoilsman of the President's "kitchen cabinet." Made up of various State bosses, this group resolutely drove all would-be reformers from the administration during Grant's first term. Meanwhile, in 1870, for defending the President's aggressive foreign policy in the Senate, Cameron attained the peak of his career in that body, chairmanship of the Foreign Relations Committee. In the postwar Senate, Senator Cameron continued to support protective duties.

The election of 1872 resulted in a resounding victory for Radical Republicanism and for bossism and the spoils system as well. Grant retained the Presidency, but Cameron's efforts to put his son in the Cabinet went unrewarded until 1876, when Donald became Secretary of War. The previous year the House had rescinded its wartime censure of Simon, and so at 77 he had much reason to feel pleased.

As the Secretary of War J. Donald Cameron held in his command the final outcome of the contested Presidential election of 1876. When a Democratic victory appeared likely, he ordered troops into Florida and South Carolina. Protected by Federal bayonets, Republican returning boards in these States did not hesitate to declare for Rutherford B. Hayes.

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8. Significance (cont'd.)

Afterward the Camerons expected Hayes to express his gratitude by retaining Donald in his Cabinet. Hayes did not keep Donald, however, and early in 1877, largely because of this disappointment, Simon retired from public life. Within 2 weeks the obedient, Cameron-dominated legislature elected J. Donald to his father's Senate seat.

In retirement, Simon Cameron continued to wield strong, behind-the-scenes influence, while his heir, who served three subsequent full terms in the Senate, and such successors as Matthew Stanley Quay and Boies Penrose ran the machine. Simon Cameron lived for 12 more years and devoted most of his days to his extensive properties and investments. Although he died in 1889, his Republican machine survived and functioned well into the 20th century.