

Form 10-300
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Washington, D.C.	
COUNTY: District of Columbia	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:
St. John's Church Parish House

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Ashburton House (British Legation)

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
1525 H Street, 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <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
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 type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>Rectory and Office</u>
			Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
St. John's Church--Lafayette Square

STREET AND NUMBER:
1525 H Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: District of Columbia CODE:

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
District of Columbia Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

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

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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 1834 Matthew St. Clair Clarke, former clerk of the House of Representatives, purchased the lot at 1525 H Street and two years later built a house on it at a cost of \$63,000. The finest materials and best-skilled laborers were used during its construction. However Clarke encountered hard times, and marble columns, ordered to give the house a Greek Ionic portico, were sold and shipped to Baltimore. Today these columns adorn the front of the Pratt House, a Maryland landmark.

Joseph Gales bought the house from Clarke and for ten months in 1842 rented it to Lord Ashburton who negotiated much of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty here. Later from 1849 to 1852 it again served as a home for British diplomats and came to be known as the British Legation.

Though the house has changed ownership many times since it was first built, much of the four-story structure retains its original appearance. Certain changes have been made, however, to the building.

Colonel William Freeman, owner of the residence and assistant attorney general, from 1853-56, gave the house's exterior a brownstone finish, added a mansard roof, replaced the original wooden cornice with an iron one, and encased the windows in massive stone frames.

When St. John's Church acquired the home from the American Federation of Labor in 1954, extensive renovation was made to the 3rd and 4th floors to accommodate church classrooms. An elevator was also installed, and one large room on the 2nd floor was partitioned to make two rooms for office space. On the first floor a connecting building between the church and house was constructed. An iron fire escape was installed on the east side of the building. Numerous doors throughout the structure were either replaced or switched around. All furnishings, including chandeliers, are donations from members of the congregation. A linoleum tile floor was installed on all levels. Air conditioning and central heat, though installed, is not obtrusive.

Structural members of the house appear to be original. Six marble- and one wood-manteled fireplaces, four floor-length marble columns on the first floor, lintels above doors, stair railings, and ceiling trim also appear to be authentic.

The basement contains a dining room, kitchen, and meeting rooms.

Presently the house is used as offices and meeting space for St. John's Church.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input 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)

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 Ashburton House, or the British Legation as it had come to be known, was the scene of 10 months of negotiations resulting in the Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842. This agreement resolved the long-standing dispute with Great Britain over major segments of the boundary with Canada. Diplomatic historian ~~Alfred~~ ^{Samuel} Flagg Bemis called this dispute "one of the gravest and most inveterate diplomatic issues of the United States in the generation following the War of 1812."* In addition, these negotiations saw the United States protect and respect the rights of the States in international affairs. Furthermore, the Federal Government stood firm against British impressment of sailors aboard American ships. Great Britain abandoned her claims to 6,500 square miles north of the St. Louis River, which, it was later discovered, contained one of the world's most abundant iron ore deposits--the Mesabi Range.

History

For almost 60 years after the end of the Revolutionary War in America the northeast boundary line between Canada and the United States remained in dispute. In Paris in 1783, British and American diplomats, due to inadequate geographic knowledge, had settled upon a line of division unsatisfactory to both sides. Maps locating the boundary were not annexed to the treaty itself and subsequently disappeared. Attempts to trace on the ground what was stated in a treaty led to disagreement and confrontation between settlers in the disputed areas.

A three-man commission created by Jay's Treaty of 1794 solved part of the problem by determining that a river, the Schoodiac, was the one emptying into the present Bay of Fundy which was listed as the "St. Croix" in the 1783 treaty's document. Thus from the coast to the Aroostook Valley the people knew which country owned which land.

Samuel
 *~~Alfred~~ Flagg Bemis, Diplomatic History of the United States.
 (New York, 1936), p. 254.

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Alfred Flagg Bemis, A Diplomatic History of the United States,
New York, Henry Holt & Company, 1936.

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	°	'	"	°	'	"	38°	54'	01"
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"	77°	02'	09"
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"			
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: less than one acre

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Benjamin Levy, Senior Historian, and Paul Ghioto, Assistant

ORGANIZATION: Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service DATE: 4/13/73

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 _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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(Continuation Sheet)

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8. Significance: (1) St. John's Church Parish House

However, beyond this point, negotiated settlements collapsed for a number of reasons. First, the U.S. Senate rejected an article adopted by an Anglo-American convention in 1803. Second, negotiations at Ghent after the War of 1812 failed. Finally, the State of Maine and the Senate both refused to accept arbitration recommendations by the King of the Netherlands (1827-1831).

When settlers from both sides began to follow the fur traders into the fertile valley of the Aroostook, local rivalries, politics, and personalities clashed and erupted into the "Aroostook War" of 1838-39. An armed U.S. force, commanded by Winfield Scott, managed to restore a truce in the area but it became clear that a permanent settlement of the northeast boundary must be made if further violent confrontation was to be averted.

In England little disposition to settle the issue was made so long as the truculent Lord Palmerston remained Secretary for Foreign Affairs. Palmerston felt no desire to make any concessions to a growing nation whose manners and politics seemed so primitive to that of his own.

Changes of administration in both countries in 1841 saw the Conservative Robert Peel becoming Prime Minister and Lord Aberdeen replacing Palmerston as Foreign Secretary in England while in the United States Harrison, and later Tyler, succeeded Van Buren as President. Such changes saw a new attitude toward reconciliation of differences and later in the same year the U.S. Secretary of State, Daniel Webster, informed Britain that the United States would be willing to consider a new conventional northeastern boundary. Accordingly, in 1842, the British dispatched a special plenipotentiary, Alexander Baring, Lord Ashburton, to negotiate with Webster.

The home of Joseph Gales, editor of the National Intelligencer, was rented by Webster for 10 months as quarters for Ashburton and those accompanying him. It was here at 1525 H Street that much of the negotiations took place, frequently at extravagant dinners and dances.

In addition to Webster and Ashburton, representatives from the States of Massachusetts and Maine also attended and took active parts since it was their present and former boundaries which were at stake in the negotiations.

Since both Ashburton and Webster were dedicated to preserving peace and cultivating friendship between their respective countries, little difficulty was encountered in agreeing upon a compromise boundary.

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8. Significance: (2) St. John's Church Parish House

The major provisions of the treaty included the following:

a. The United States received slightly less territory in the northeast than they would have had they accepted the award of the King of the Netherlands.

b. Britain accepted as final the inaccurately surveyed line of 45° Latitude as the northern boundary of New York and Vermont and yielded to the major part of American claims above the head of the Connecticut River.

c. The United States, not Britain, reimbursed Maine and Massachusetts for territory surrendered and for defense expenses during the long controversy.

d. The boundary line from Lake Huron to Lake of the Woods in the midwest was settled.

e. Certain rivers were made open to navigation by both sides.

f. The United States and Great Britain agreed to maintain a joint cruising squadron on the coast of Africa to help suppress the slave trade.

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