

*already on HR*

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED FEB 13 1980  
DATE ENTERED *Approved 4/16/80*

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

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Arlington House

AND/OR COMMON

The Robert E. Lee Memorial

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Arlington National Cemetery

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Arlington

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

10th

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Virginia

CODE

51

COUNTY

Arlington

CODE

013

**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.

Arlington County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Arlington

STATE

Virginia

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1940

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

## 7 DESCRIPTION

### CONDITION

### CHECK ONE

### CHECK ONE

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Arlington House is a Greek revival structure composed of a large two-story central section flanked by two one-story wings. The long axis of the house runs north-south; the front facade faces Washington, D.C., to the east across the Potomac River. The house was built by George Washington Parke Custis, foster son of George Washington, on an 1100-acre tract inherited from his father, John Parke Custis.

Construction began in 1803 on the one-story north wing which, with a matching south wing constructed in 1804, would frame the two-story central section completed about 1817-18. It is believed that George Hadfield, second architect of the Capitol and designer of the Washington City Hall, was architect of Arlington House.

The house is constructed of locally made brick with the exterior stuccoed and scribed to simulate ashlar stonework. Originally the rear (west) facade of the central section was not stuccoed; it was so treated by the Army in the late 19th century. Sometime before the 1860s the stucco was marbelized, as shown in 1864 Civil War photographs. It was again marbelized during the 1967 and 1974 repainting of the house.

The most prominent feature of the house is the large (16' by 52') portico across the central section, formed by eight large stuccoed and marbelized brick Doric columns supporting a massive pediment. Adding to the impression of grandeur are the recessed arched windows on the front and sides of the flanking wings.

Centered under the portico is a large double door opening on a central hall which bisects the house and is terminated at the rear with another pair of large double doors. The central hall is flanked by two large rooms. That on the north is divided by three open arches separating the family parlor in the front from the dining room at the rear. The room on the south, the "White Parlor," was not completed until 1855 under the direction of the Lees. Among its outstanding features are two matching mantelpieces carved with an oak leaf design and purchased for the room by Lee.

The room adjacent to the White Parlor in the south wing was used as a formal dining room and later as a painting studio for George Washington Parke Custis. Following his death it was used as a workroom and painting studio by Mrs. Lee, who called it her morning room. Immediately south of this room at the end of the wing is a smaller room used as an office by G.W.P. Custis and R.E. Lee. The large double connecting doors are surmounted by a fanlight. A door on its west wall gives access to the west-facing conservatory and through it to the grounds. Lacking a fireplace, the office was heated by a stove. The conservatory, located along the west elevation of the south wing at ground level, is about four feet

(continued)

# 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 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 type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input 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 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 1803-61

BUILDER/ARCHITECT George Hadfield

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The principal significance of Arlington House, as defined by congressional legislation, lies in its association with Robert E. Lee--hence its legislated designation "Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial." It is also significant for its prior association with George Washington Parke Custis, step-grandson and adopted son of George Washington, and as an outstanding example of early Greek revival architecture.

G.W.P. Custis inherited the 1100-acre estate from his father, the only surviving son of Martha Washington. Like John Parke Custis, G.W.P. Custis was raised at Mount Vernon, and he dedicated much of his life to perpetuating the memory of George Washington. From circumstantial evidence, it appears that he commissioned George Hadfield, second architect of the U.S. Capitol, to design Arlington House. According to architectural historian Ralph Hammett, this was only the third representation of the Greek revival style in the United States.

Robert E. Lee, who was related to Custis's wife, was a frequent visitor to Arlington from childhood until his marriage to Custis's only daughter, Mary, when he was 25 years old. For the next 30 years the Lees considered Arlington their home. His U.S. Army career would take him and his family to all parts of the country, but they returned to Arlington whenever his Corps of Engineers duties permitted. Lee was usually able to spend at least some of the winter months at Arlington and passed 25 Christmas holidays there. Mary Lee frequently remained home with her parents in his absences, and six of the seven Lee children were born at Arlington.

In the Lee bedroom on April 19, 1861, Lee made his fateful decision to resign his U.S. Army commission rather than take up arms against his native state following Virginia's secession from the Union. On April 22 he left Arlington forever. His wife and children also departed in early May upon learning that Federal troops were about to occupy the area.

During the war years many of the family possessions left behind were lost or stolen while the military occupation of Arlington resulted in considerable damage to its woodland, described by a prewar English visitor as "some of the finest woods I have yet seen in America." Roads were cut to accommodate the flow of supplies and soldiers and several military works were constructed on the estate to help protect Arlington Heights.

(continued)

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Ralph Hammett. Architecture in the United States: A Survey of American Styles Since 1776. New York: Wiley, 1976.

Murray H. Nelligan. Custis-Lee Mansion, The Robert E. Lee Memorial. National Park Service Historical Handbook No. 6. Washington: National Park Service, 1962.

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 27.91

**ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,8	3,2,0,3,0,0	4,3,0,5,7,1,0	B	1,8	3,2,0,1,9,0	4,3,0,5,1,9,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1,8	3,1,9,7,0,0	4,3,0,5,4,7,0	D	1,8	3,1,9,8,4,0	4,3,0,5,6,7,0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The National Register boundary encompasses all land adjacent to Arlington House under National Park Service jurisdiction. This land borders the Fort Myer Military Reservation on the west and is elsewhere surrounded by Arlington National Cemetery. See accompanying maps.

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

Anna Seagraves, Ann Fuqua, Nicholas Veloz

ORGANIZATION George Washington Memorial Parkway

DATE

National Capital Region, National Park Service

1/15/80

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

Turkey Run Park

(703) 557-3635

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

McLean,

Virginia 22101

**12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION**

Not Applicable--Documentation of existing  
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION National Register  
property.  
YES\_\_\_ 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

Assistant Director,

TITLE

*[Signature]*

Sgt. F. Ross Holland, Jr.

DATE

2/4/80

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 9/16/80

DATE 2-16-80

Regional Coordinator

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lower than the level of the adjacent rooms. It has "glazed walls" consisting of four large arched windows on the west facade and windows and a glazed door on the south.

Along the west side of the central portion and the north wing is a series of halls, service areas, and a pantry. From this area the main stairs and a rear stair ascend to the second floor. At the juncture of these halls and the main central hall, adjacent to the foot of the main stairs, are three frescoes in the area above the arches around the intersecting walls. These hunting and other animal scenes are attributed to G.W.P. Custis.

In the north wing along the west side is the pantry and a stairway to the basement. In the northeast corner of the wing is a schoolroom, which may have been Mrs. Lee's room as a child. Next to it on the east facade is the bedroom of her parents. Between this bedroom and the family parlor is a guest room. The Custis bedroom and the guest room are accessible by an inner hall running from the schoolroom to the family parlor.

Directly below the Custis bedroom and accessible by the pantry stairs is a large winter kitchen with a large central fireplace. The fireplace divides the kitchen into two areas, with the rear portion being used as a laundry. Adjacent to the kitchen and directly under the pantry is a large open corridor providing access to the outside through two doors and to a wine cellar adjacent to the kitchen.

The main staircase is typical of those of classic revival houses in that its location was de-emphasized by placing it slightly off the central hall. The second floor to which it ascends also has a central hall opening to rooms on either side. The Lee bedroom is immediately adjacent to the stairs on the south side; a small dressing room adjoins it over the stairs in the southwest corner. The southeastern room on the floor is a bedroom used by the Lee boys. The Lee daughters occupied the two bedrooms on the north side of the hall, containing marble mantelpieces of a plain design. The younger girls used a small connecting room at the rear for dressing and play.

Many of the present Arlington House furnishings are original to or historically associated with the property during its occupancy by the Custis and Lee families. Significant items include furniture, paintings, ceramics, glassware, silver, books, and textiles in use in the house prior to 1861. Such objects, individually identified in the Arlington House museum catalog, are considered integral to the property for purposes of the National Register. The acquisition of original furnishings is an ongoing project and will continue as pieces become available.

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Two outbuildings contemporary with the construction of the main house lie perpendicular to the long axis of the house on the west near the ends of the wings. The north building housed the summer kitchen and contained slave quarters; it is now adapted as a sales facility. The south building, a storeroom, smoke room, and slave quarters, has been historically refurnished. Both buildings are brick on 40' by 20' stone foundations and are stuccoed in rough texture. The nonconnecting rooms in each structure are reached by three evenly spaced doors facing a central court or drive. Windows at the rear of each room except the smoke room provide natural light. Pilasters and arches decorate the gable ends of the two buildings.

Two other structures on the property postdate 1861 and thus do not contribute to its legislatively defined significance as a memorial to Robert E. Lee. Some 200 feet from the north end of the mansion is a two-story brick building built by the Army in the 1880s as a potting house for Arlington National Cemetery. It measures 22' by 32' and is topped by a hipped roof with ornamented ridge line and small gabled vents on each side. Brick pilasters are at the corners and divide the two bays on the short sides and the three bays on the long sides; they support a brick modillion cornice. Segmental arches cap the windows and doors. The building currently serves as a small park museum. Just north of the north outbuilding described above is a 19' by 21' rest room building constructed by the Army in 1925. Its stuccoed brick exterior and gabled roof with white trim articulating the pediment mimic the historic outbuildings.

During the lifetime of G.W.P. Custis, a large portion of Arlington was maintained as a gentleman's country estate. Most of its acreage comprised "The Park," a virgin woodland of ancient oaks and groves of walnut, chestnut, and elm trees extending from the Georgetown and Alexandria Road along the river to the western edge of the estate. Most of this land is now within Arlington National Cemetery and the George Washington Memorial Parkway. During the Lees' residency, the carriage drive to the mansion came up along the south and eastern edge of the flower garden south of the house and across the front of the house. This approach from behind and beside the garden is now maintained by Arlington National Cemetery and used as a footpath.

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In 1863 Congress levied a tax on all confiscated properties, including Arlington, requiring that owners personally appear to make payment. A relative attempted to pay the Arlington taxes for Mrs. Lee, who was ill and behind Confederate lines, but payment was rejected. Arlington was put up for sale for non-payment of taxes in January 1864 and was purchased by the U.S. Government. In May 1864 Secretary of War Edwin Stanton ordered that a national cemetery be established at Arlington, and the first burials took place that month. The house became headquarters for Arlington National Cemetery, continuing in that use until the late 1920s.

Until 1924 no official action had been taken to restore the house as a memorial to Robert E. Lee. Steps had been taken previously, however, to protect the integrity of the grounds immediately surrounding the house. The burial of distinguished generals on the front lawn had been halted and burials around Mrs. Lee's flower garden had long since ceased. In 1928, following its authorization by Congress as a memorial to Lee, the house began to be restored by the War Department. In 1933 the house and immediate grounds were transferred to the National Park Service. By that time some structural changes made since 1861 had been reversed and many rooms had been partially furnished. Since then, further structural changes based on historical research have been made, and many of the original furnishings have been identified and acquired.