

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

ANDERSON HOUSE (The Society of the Cincinnati)

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: ANDERSON HOUSE

Other Name/Site Number: The Society of the Cincinnati National Headquarters, Museum and Library

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 2118 Massachusetts Ave., N.W.

Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Washington

Vicinity: N/A

State: DC County: N/A Code: 001

Zip Code: 20008

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: X

Public-Local: \_\_\_

Public-State: \_\_\_

Public-Federal: \_\_\_

Category of Property

Building(s): X

District: \_\_\_

Site: \_\_\_

Structure: \_\_\_

Object: \_\_\_

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

1

\_\_\_

\_\_\_

1

Noncontributing

\_\_\_ buildings

\_\_\_ sites

\_\_\_ structures

\_\_\_ objects

\_\_\_ Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

**ANDERSON HOUSE (The Society of the Cincinnati)**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

**4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this \_\_\_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Certifying Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Commenting or Other Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

**5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register \_\_\_\_\_
- Determined eligible for the National Register \_\_\_\_\_
- Determined not eligible for the National Register \_\_\_\_\_
- Removed from the National Register \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

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**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

Historic:	DOMESTIC	Sub:	Single Dwelling
Current:	SOCIAL RECREATION & CULTURE EDUCATION LANDSCAPE	Sub:	Meeting Hall Museum Library Garden

**7. DESCRIPTION**

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals: French Renaissance

**MATERIALS:**

Foundation: Granite  
Walls: Limestone  
Roof: Standing Seam Copper and Gray Slate  
Other: Wood (gates)

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**Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**

*The following descriptions are excerpted and adapted from the National Register nomination study written by Nancy C. Taylor and Suzanne Ganachinietz, National Capitol Planning Commission (1968):*

The Larz Anderson House faces northeast on the south side of Massachusetts Avenue between Sheridan and DuPont Circles. This fifty room mansion with its lavish, eclectic interiors was designed by the Boston firm of Little and Browne in the late Renaissance Revival manner (based on 18th century French and English countryhouses) and was constructed between 1902 and 1905.

The house is constructed of brick and stone with partial steel frame and granite base; the roof is of grey slate. The Anderson House consists of four stories plus basement and is basically U-shaped. The central facade is approximately 85 feet long with a 30 foot wide wing on both the east and west sides projecting out 40 feet from the central facade.

The projecting wings are connected by a screen wall forming a forecourt. Access to this court is through two portals which join the screen wall to the east and west wing facades. Two engaged columns (unfluted) flank each of the round arched portals and support a full entablature which is capped by a segmented pediment, all with classical detailing.

The central facade is dominated by a monumental 2-story portico, semi-circular in form. The portico is supported by four Corinthian columns on pedestals and is attached to the main facade by two Corinthian pilasters. The molded architrave supports a plain frieze above which projects a denticulated cornice supporting a balustrade. Above the eaves or cornice line of egg and dart molding capped by a course of dentils is a pediment with a carved tympanum containing the crest or "eagle" of the Society of the Cincinnati.

The first story facade contains alternating bands of projecting ashlar masonry. The main entrance, located in the central section of the north facade, is flanked by two square piers of rusticated, beveled stone with a molded cornice from which springs an arch of flat and splayed voussoirs with a patterned keystone. Narrow, flat arched windows flank the entrance.

The second and third stories of smooth, rusticated walls are separated from the first story by a molded string course. The fenestration of the second floor (not contained within the portico) consists of rectangular windows with flat, bracketed lintels. The fenestration of the third story consists of small, square, double-sash windows. The fenestration within the portico and above the entrance consists of three rectangular flat arched windows with ornamented keystones, framed by rusticated, chamfered coursing. Above the balustrades on the third story is a blind oculus flanked by arched openings.

On the south or rear facade, a terrace is cut above the first story in the central section thus allowing the east and west ends or "wings" to project 15 feet enclosing the terrace. Each of these wings is terminated by 2-story Ionic pilasters, and each contains a Palladian window on the second story. The central facade is five bays wide on the second and third stories, and contains in the center, four 2-story attached Ionic columns supporting an entablature. The first story of coursed projecting masonry contains seven double-door entrances which open out onto a terrace and gardens.

The 4-story house contains approximately fifty rooms and is basically U-shaped in plan. On the first floor are the entrance halls, ante-rooms, (the second anteroom and the billiard room are now museum rooms), the library, and the great hall which is two stories in height. On the second floor are found the dining room, drawing rooms and gallery. The third floor is now used for bedrooms for society members; the fourth floor is now used for conservation,

collections management and museum storage.

[The very opulent, eclectic interiors of this mansion cannot be described within the space limitations of this form. A complete description is on file in the History Division, National Park Service.]

On the first floor is the great hall or ballroom (30' x 60'). It is two stories high with each story separated by a molded frieze of red Verona marble which is carried on the east end of the room by four spiral red marble columns on pedestals terminating in plaster Corinthian capitals. The columns support a balcony reached from the main floor of the ballroom by a staircase cantilevered from the north wall. The west wall contains a fireplace of Late Renaissance decorative elements flanked by arched doorways with projecting acanthus casing, panelled jambs and soffit and an acanthus keystone. The wall surface is divided into panels bordered by beveled acanthus moldings; the ceiling is coffered, bordered by a corbel-supported cornice. The fields of the caissons are filled with gold ornamental plaster work on white ground. The floor edge is laid in multicolor marble. On the second story level of the west wall, the wall composition comprises five French windows in casings and which are generally on the axis of the doorways below.

To the east of the main entrance is a stair hall with three doorways located on the east, south and west sides in red Verona marble casings. On the north are two windows in molded wooden casings. The wall surfaces are lined with cream painted wooden panelling continuing through the stairwell. The floor is laid in white marble squares on end and interspersed with small yellow Siena marble squares at the corners. To the left of the stairs is an enclosed shaft for an elevator in a wooden cage. The bracketed stairs, consisting of a quarter-turn with landing, mount to the third floor with the iron railing in the shape of vases in an 18th century design. The stairway has mahogany carved hand rails. The underside of the stairs is panelled in wood the same as the wall surfaces of the Hall. The stairwell finishes on the third floor with an elliptic drum pierced by four arched windows and topped by a flat encased glass ceiling.

The great stair hall is located on the western side of the first floor, and contains mural trompe l'oeil painting in grisaille of architectural, sculptural and other motifs inspired by classical antiquity. The north end of this room contains a double row of three columns leading to the grand staircase.

On the second floor are found the drawing rooms. The first or French drawing room is in the style of the late period of Louis XIV. The vertical panels framing the carved white mantle on the north wall, the overdoors and the coved ceiling contain lavish gold ornamental plaster. The second or English drawing room contains lavish gold ornamental plasterwork on white. This is especially true of the panels of jambs, intrados, and lunettes of the two arched marble doorways which flank the fireplace. The ceiling is in the style of English Rococo.

The Olmsted Gallery (16' x 79') (or Long Gallery) runs the length of the great hall plus part of the dining room. On the east and west ends are two double doorways, each with molded white-veined brown marble casing. The doors on the east, leading to the stair hall, are elaborately carved quartered oak with semi-circular overdoors or lunettes. The doors to the west differ from the eastern ones in that they are of mahogany. The southern door of this pair leads to the French parlor while the northern one gives access to the Key Room and great staircase. There are also two marble doorways with mahogany on the south wall, one leading to the Dining Room, the other to the Balcony or Musician's Tribune above the great hall. There is a small door in the guise of a wall panel at the north side of the western end of the hall. It is opened by a concealed mechanism and leads through a narrow passageway to stairs mounting to the private apartment of Larz Anderson on the third floor. (In this passageway is one of the French windows opening to the Great Hall.)

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On the north side of this gallery, the windows have quartered oak triple panelled window shutters and window seats which conceal heating and ventilation installations. The panelling on the walls is mainly square and oblong, edged by egg-and-dart moldings, and they are covered with 17th century Flemish tapestries. The gallery has an ornamental plaster cove ceiling and the floor is of five different kinds of marble.

The dining room is one of the most richly conceived rooms in the house. This room is panelled on the east, south and west in quartered oak. The north wall contains a fireplace framed in molded marble and flanked by Corinthian engaged columns. The doors on either side of the fireplace are cased in white-veined brown marble, surmounted by an entablature with an acanthus keystone flanked by foliate sprays. Above the egg and dart molding above these doors are deep set patterned niches with arched tops where the keystone motif is repeated, and the spandrels are filled with festoons issuing from the top center. There are classical busts located in the niches. The cornice is of concave molding with both egg and dart and rosette borders. The ornamental plaster ceiling divides into an elliptic border with fruit carved in high relief, within a chamfered oblong border with naturalistic and foliate ornament. Two transverse panels at each end frame acanthus scrolls and a wreath enclosing a coat of arms in the center. The floor is of dark white veined and red Verona marble.

Three rooms in the house contain painted murals by H.Siddons Mowbray: the first floor anteroom or "Choir Stall" room to the west of the front entrance; the west end of the first floor Wintergarden Room; and the Key Room on the west end of the second floor at the top of the great staircase. The entire complex is in an excellent state of preservation.

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**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:  
Nationally: X Statewide: \_\_\_ Locally: \_\_\_

Applicable National Register Criteria: A \_\_\_ B \_\_\_ C X D \_\_\_

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A \_\_\_ B \_\_\_ C \_\_\_ D \_\_\_ E \_\_\_ F \_\_\_ G \_\_\_

NHL Criteria: 4

NHL Theme(s): (1987) XVI. Architecture  
M. Period Revivals  
7. Renaissance (1890-1915)

(1994) III. Expressing Cultural Values  
5. Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Urban Design

Areas of Significance: Architecture

Period(s) of Significance: 1902-1905

Significant Dates: 1905

Significant Person(s):

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Arthur Little (1852-1925)  
Herbert Browne (1860-1946)  
Connery and Wentworth, Builder

**State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.**

Originally a private residence commissioned for lavish entertaining, this limestone, detached structure is one of the largest and costliest homes in the city. The dissimilar facades of the north entrance with its court and the south garden elevation are attributable to the English manner during the first half of the 18th century. In addition, each major interior space is designed as a stylistic entity.

Designed by Little & Browne of Boston, this 50-room Late Renaissance Revival-style "house" with its opulent eclectic interiors is an outstanding example of the early 20th century urban mansion. The Washington residence of Ambassador Larz and Isabel Anderson from 1905 until 1937, the house now serves as the national headquarters of the Society of the Cincinnati, the nation's oldest patriotic order.

(*Massachusetts Avenue Architecture: Northwest Washington, District of Columbia* published by the Commission of Fine Arts, District of Columbia, was the primary source for the following text.)

The massive limestone structure was designed as a "ceremonial" mansion in a vaguely English Baroque-French Renaissance revival style. The heavy exterior massing is not repeated within, where the principal public rooms are located on the first and second floors. Anderson House is the masterpiece of the Boston architects Arthur Little and Herbert W.C. Browne.

Arthur Little (1852-1925) was the senior partner in the firm of Little & Browne, Boston, Massachusetts. He was graduated in architecture from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1875 and continued his studies in France. After extensive travelling in Europe, he returned to Boston. In 1877, he started his own practice and in 1889 formed a partnership with Herbert W.C. Browne.

Mr. Little's best known works were in the field of domestic architecture. He designed urban and country homes as well as large suburban estates.... During the early part of this century his firm designed the residence, stables and gardens at Prides Crossing, Mass., for William S. Spaulding; also at Prides Crossing, estates of Henry Clay Frick, Edwin C. Swift and Robert S. Bradley; and the home of Hon. George von L. Meyer (former ambassador to Italy) at Hamilton.... The firm's outstanding architectural achievement, however, was at 2118 Massachusetts Avenue between 1902 and 1905. [The Anderson House.]

Herbert W.C. Browne (1860-1946) was a partner in the firm of Little & Browne for over fifty years. He attended the Boston Museum School of Fine Arts, and then toured Europe and studied architecture in Paris and Florence. Before the partnership was formed, Browne worked in the office of Jacques & Rantoul, Boston.... During his practice Mr. Browne acquired a clientele comprising many socially prominent persons for whom he designed fine homes. Among the most important were a residence in Washington for the Hon. Stephen D. Elkins, former U.S. Senator from Virginia; Mrs. Wirt Dexter's house in Chicago (c. 1900) and later a Commonwealth Avenue residence in Boston, [and] the E.W. Bliss house in New York.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Henry F. Withey and Elsie R. Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)*, Los Angeles: New Age Publishing Co., 1956, pp. 374,

In fact, most of the contemporary obituaries refer to the firm's outstanding achievement as the designers of the palatial residence of the late Larz Anderson in Washington, DC.

The house and its elaborate interiors cost \$800,000 to build. The Andersons filled it with furniture, tapestries, paintings and objects gathered in their world travels.

In December of 1909, H. Siddons Mowbray (1858-1928) completed a number of mural decorations for the Larz Anderson House in Washington, DC. By that time, Mowbray was an established and successful mural painter and had executed important commissions both for public and private buildings. Among his most prominent decorative projects were those in New York City, which included a frieze for the Appellate Court House completed by 1900, murals for the University Club Library completed in 1904 and for the Rotunda and East Room of The Pierpont Morgan Library completed in 1905.<sup>2</sup>

Larz Anderson III, the son of Maj. Gen. Nicholas Longworth Anderson, was born in Paris in 1866, attended European schools and later Harvard, ultimately entering the U.S. diplomatic service. In 1897, Larz married Isabel Weld Perkins of Boston, daughter of Commodore George Hamilton Perkins and heiress to her grandfather's \$17,000,000 fortune.

Isabel Weld Perkins Anderson, as the wife of a distinguished diplomat, enjoyed an important social position as well as respect as an author and philanthropist as a result of service in World War I. She authored plays, poetry, fiction, and a number of travel books. She also edited her husband's journals and her father-in-law General Nicholas Longworth Anderson's journals.

During the Spanish American War, Larz Anderson served as a Captain and then as Assistant Adjutant General of the Second Army Corps. After the war, until 1911, he devoted himself to outside interests, passing most of the time with his wife in Washington and Boston, where they were prominent in society.

They also made at least one trip abroad during this period. While in England, in March 1906, Mr. Anderson wrote:

We have been seeing about the furniture for the English drawing room [in Anderson House] and have been in the hands of Cowtan, who does all Mr. [Pierpont] Morgan's work, and of whom Miss Anne Morgan spoke when she visited our house.<sup>3</sup>

In 1911, President Taft appointed Larz Anderson Minister to Belgium. One year later, he was appointed Ambassador to Japan.

Anderson House was used during World War I for Belgium Relief work, for Red Cross work for the blind, and as housing for French officers. At the time, Larz Anderson was a member of the first Central Belgian Relief Committee, and also a member of the original Red Cross Council of the District of Columbia. In addition, on June 18, 1917, the Belgian mission arrived in Washington and stayed in the Anderson's home.

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83.

<sup>2</sup> Wiles, Stephanie. Master Drawings. *The American Muralist...* Volume 31, No. 1, 1993.

<sup>3</sup> Anderson, Larz. *Letters and Journals of a Diplomat*. Case file: Anderson House, DC. p. 189.

Isabel also participated in Red Cross work in Washington during World War I. Then, in September 1917, she left for Europe for eight months of service in the Red Cross canteen at Epernay, France, and in hospitals on the Belgium and French fronts. For her service Mrs. Anderson was awarded the French Croix de Guerre, the Royal Belgian Medal of Elizabeth with Red Cross, and the American Red Cross Canteen Medal.

From 1905 until 1937, when Anderson died, the house was one of the centers of local and international society. Larz wrote that

Anderson House has had a good deal of experience in entertaining foreign guests, and it has proved a fine setting for the purpose. It was arranged for stately functions of a limited size, and its approaches and successions of rooms make a suitable background.

In the spring of 1929, the Andersons gave several dinners before leaving the city for the summer. The French and Japanese Ambassadors were the guests for one and the Italian and Belgian Ambassadors for another. Larz wrote:

Our dinners proved successful. The house was full of flowers—azaleas, orchids, lillies, and tulips. We remained, I believe, the only house in Washington, except the Embassies, which turned out the servants in full-dress livery, shorts and stockings, buckled shoes, and braided coats. These dinners were swan songs to the old order.<sup>4</sup>

Anderson House was also the setting for a number of glittering state dinners and receptions, such as that given for the King and Queen of Siam in 1931.

When Mr. and Mrs. Anderson built their mansion at 2118 Massachusetts Avenue, NW between 1902 and 1905, it was with the intention that it should eventually become the headquarters of the Society of the Cincinnati. Founded in 1783, the Society of the Cincinnati was composed of commissioned officers of the American Army and Navy and their French allies who fought in the Revolutionary War. The Society was named after Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus (5th century BC) who saved Rome from invaders but refused personal reward. George Washington was the society's first president. Pierre L'Enfant designed the symbol of membership, the Order of the Cincinnati. Membership in the Society, based on primogeniture, is now reserved to one male descendant of each qualified officer of the Revolutionary War. One of the original members was Lt. Col. Richard Clough Anderson (1750-1826) 3rd Virginia Regiment. Col. Anderson's great grandson was Larz Anderson III. In 1938, Mrs. Anderson donated the house with most of its furnishings to the Society of the Cincinnati as a national headquarters.

There were two interruptions in the Society of the Cincinnati's use of the house. In 1941, Washington Refugee Committees worked in the house. In January 1942, the Navy Department took over the house for the duration of the war.

Several first floor rooms have been converted to a National Museum of Relics of the American Revolution. Most of the other rooms of the mansion have been left as they were when the Andersons lived there so that the house itself is a museum of the life style of the wealthy during the early 20th century. In 1967-68, the heating and electricity in the house were modernized, central air conditioning installed, and a new museum gallery created in the basement. In 1994, the basement area became the location of the Society's Research Library which contains over 40,000 titles on the art of warfare in the 18th century and the American Revolution.

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 606.

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## **9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- Previously Listed in the National Register.
- Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
- Designated a National Historic Landmark.
- Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: # HABS 2555
- Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other (Specify Repository):

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Acreage of Property: less than one acre

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing  
A 18 322430 4308660

Verbal Boundary Description:

Square 67, lot 42 as per plat recorded in Surveyor's Office for the District of Columbia.  
Liber 27, folio 25.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes the original lot on which the house and gardens have historically stood and which maintain historic integrity.

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**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

Name/Title: Ms. Katherine Betts, Museum Director  
The Society of the Cincinnati  
Anderson House  
2118 Massachusetts Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20008-2810  
Telephone: 202/785-2040, extension 16  
Date: September 14, 1994

Edited by: Ms. Carolyn Pitts, Architectural Historian  
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Date: December 5, 1994

**NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY**

National Park Service/Washington Office

July 22, 1996