

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

YLR - 9/17/97
NRHP - 12/15/97

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Calvert Manor

other names/site number DHR File No. 00-2265

2. Location

street & number 1925-1927 North Calvert Street not for publication N/A

city or town N/A vicinity N/A

state Virginia code VA county Arlington code 013 zip code 22201

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

M. Catherine Jones 10/20/97
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain): _____	_____	_____

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
[X] C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
[X] G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1948

Significant Dates

1948

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Mesrobian, Mihran

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- [X] State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

VA Dept. Of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA

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Continuation Sheet

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Calvert Manor
Arlington County, VA

Narrative Description

Calvert Manor is a three-story walk-up garden apartment building located in northeastern Arlington County on North Calvert Street near Lee Highway. The building is constructed of concrete block bearing walls with red brick facing, highlighted by light-colored cast stone, cement brick details, and vertical bands of glass block. It was designed by Washington, D.C., architect Mihran Mesrobian and built in 1948, and employs *moderne* elements which are characteristic of Mesrobian's later work.

Calvert Manor has two main entrances off of the front (west) facade leading to separate wings of the building, a low parapet surrounding a flat roof, and a partially exposed basement. The asymmetrical front facade incorporates a variety of shapes and textures to lend substantial action to an otherwise stark mass. The north wing is characterized by a bay front rising the height of the building. The bay windows are separated between floors by panels of light-colored cast stone. At the entrance to the south wing, a peaked roof tops the interior stair hall, creating the impression of a tower rising above the parapet. This roof is sheathed with slate tiles and capped with a copper finial. The verticality of each stair hall is further emphasized by three long narrow bands of glass blocks extending down from the parapet. The front facade also is penetrated by a wide variety of window openings containing original metal casements. These include small bull's-eyes and small rectangles, each framed completely by cast-stone surrounds, as well as larger picture windows, bay windows, and, at the north wing, corner windows. Except for a row of glass block windows in the north wing, all other windows in the building are also metal casements. The two main entrances to the building at the base of either stair hall are covered by small aluminum marquees and contain the original divided-light wooden doors and sidelights. Each of the major exterior vertical features of the building, such as stair towers, bay front, corners, and pilasters, are highlighted with light-colored cement brick quoins, rising from the top of the basement to the bottom of the parapet. Double bands of light-colored cement bricks encircle the building at the basement and parapet lines. The parapet is capped by a cast-stone coping and is penetrated by several decorative cast-stone grilles. A cast-stone lion perches at the parapet line of the south facade, presenting a bit of visual interest to the public passing the building along Lee Highway, one of the county's major transportation arteries.

Calvert Manor is built on an irregularly shaped, gently sloping lot on a residential street. The street is primarily developed with apartment buildings and townhouses built in the 1950s through 1980s. The lot is well-maintained and planted simply with grass, shrubs, and trees, as per the original landscaping plan. An original parking lot continues to serve the residents at the

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Calvert Manor
Arlington County, VA

Narrative Description (continued)

north end of the lot. An original clothes drying yard at the rear of the building was removed in May 1997.

The interior of the building is comfortable but unadorned, with few decorative details or inessential spaces. The stair towers contain open stairs with simple cast-iron bannisters and terrazzo flooring at the landings and treads. Bannisters are decorated with small cast-iron medallions. All original apartments on the first through third floors are accessed directly from the stair landings through original one-panel Kalamein doors (wood core covered with galvanized metal). There are a total of twenty-two original apartments in the building, including a janitor's unit; a twenty-third apartment was subsequently created out of a basement playroom. Apartment floors are wood parquet and walls are plaster. The two center apartments on each of the first, second, and third floors contain French doors that enclose small pullman kitchens.

Original architectural drawings and landscaping plans are extant.

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Calvert Manor
Arlington County, VA

Narrative Statement of Significance

Calvert Manor, built in 1948, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as a locally significant work by Mihran Mesrobian, a prominent Washington, D.C. architect. Mesrobian is best known for his high-style apartment buildings and hotels built in the 1920s and early 1930s in Washington, D.C.; Calvert Manor, however, is a fine example of Mesrobian's later work in Northern Virginia. Designed in the *moderne* style, which had become characteristic of Mesrobian's work in the Virginia suburbs, Calvert Manor stands out among the many lower-rent apartment house projects built in Arlington County following World War II.

During the 1940s, Mesrobian's work followed America's move to the suburbs, as he designed more than a dozen apartment buildings and shopping centers in Northern Virginia (see enclosed list). Calvert Manor is one of the last intact examples of these and, stylistically, one of the most interesting. The building successfully incorporates elements of the *moderne* into a more traditional residential setting: these include corner casement windows, an emphasis on the vertical and horizontal lines of the building, and the use of contrasting light and dark colored masonry. Low-cost materials such as concrete block, cast stone, cement brick, and glass block allowed the architect to accomplish the merit of his design while ensuring the economy of the project. Although apartments are small and unadorned, amenities such as a parking lot, on-site laundry, outdoor drying yard, a live-in janitor's unit, and a communal playroom clearly indicate Mesrobian's concern for the comfort and well-being of the working-class residents.

Although Arlington County had experienced a residential building boom in the 1920s along with the rest of the nation, no one had anticipated the influx of government, military, and service industry workers into the county during World War II and the immediate post-war years. Arlington faced a critical shortage of decent, affordable housing during the 1940s as it more than doubled its pre-war population of 57,000 in 1940 to 135,000 in 1950. Like many other large-scale, post-war residential projects in Arlington County and throughout the nation, Calvert Manor received a Federal Housing Administration guaranteed loan to ensure the success of its financing.

Mesrobian, born in Turkey of Armenian parents in 1889, was professionally active in the United States from the 1920s until about 1950. His work in Washington, D.C., includes the Sheraton-Carlton Hotel, the Hay-Adams Hotel, Wardman Towers, and Sedgwick Gardens. The first three properties were built in the 1920s in a classic *beaux arts* style, for which Mesrobian received formal training at the traditional French-based Academie des Beaux Arts in Istanbul. Sedgwick Gardens, built in 1931, took on a more contemporary *moderne* look,

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Calvert Manor
Arlington County, VA

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

however, a style which would influence Mesrobian's designs to the end of his career and is well-represented by Calvert Manor.

Calvert Manor was owned by Mesrobian until his death in 1975, and, then by the architect's sons, Ralfe and Ara Mesrobian until 1997. Ralfe Mesrobian is himself an architect with a successful practice in Charlotte, NC.

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Calvert Manor
Arlington County, VA

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

MIHRAN MESROBIAN IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA (1940-1950)
(All properties located in Arlington County unless otherwise indicated.)

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>
1940	Apartment building, 1233 N. Court House Rd.
1940	N. Glebe Shopping Center, 71-89 N. Glebe Road at Lee Hwy.
1940	Shopping center, Lee Hwy. and Old Dominion Rd.
1941	Apartment building, 1301 N. Court House Rd. (demolished 1981)
1941	Acme Store, 1746 Lee Hwy. (demolished 1972)
1941-42	Lee Gardens South (now Sheffield Court), 10th Street and Arlington Blvd.
1943	Apartment building, 1201 N. Court House Rd.
1943	Wakefield Apartments, 1215-1223 N. Court House Rd.
1946	1610 DeWitt (two-family house), in Alexandria, VA
1946	Wakefield Shopping Center (now Court House Square), 1319-1321 N. Court House Rd.
1948	Powhatan Shopping Center, Powhatan and Monroe (demolished ca. 1960), in Alexandria, VA
1948	Calvert Manor, 1925-1927 N. Calvert St.
1949	Barcroft Shopping Center, 4801-21 Columbia Pike
1949-50	Lee Gardens North (now Woodbury Park), 10th St. and Arlington Blvd.
1950	Chesterbrook Gardens, bounded by Kirby, Ivy, and Chesterfield, in Fairfax, VA

Excerpted from "Mihran Mesrobian's Suburban Virginia Garden Apartments and Shopping Centers," by Sara Amy Leach, unpublished, December 1994.

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Calvert Manor
Arlington County, VA

Bibliography

Leach, Sara Amy. "Mihran Mesrobian's Suburban Virginia Garden Apartments and Shopping Centers." Unpublished. December 1994.

Mesrobian, Caroline Isabelle. "A Selection of the Architectural Oeuvre of Mihran Mesrobian: Beaux Arts Architect, Washington, D.C." M.A. Thesis, Tulane University, 1978.

Mesrobian, Mihran. "FHA Rental Housing Project # 000-42032 Calvert Manor." Original architectural plans, 1947.

Rose, C. B., Jr. *Arlington County, Virginia: A History*. Arlington County, VA: Arlington Historical Society, 1976.

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Calvert Manor
Arlington County, VA

Verbal Boundary Description

The property referred to in this nomination is described in the land records of Arlington County, Virginia, as follows:

All of Lot Two and Sublot 1B of the "Resubdivision of Parcel B, part of the property of Maude C. Heys, being a part of original Lot Three (3), John W. Clark Estate," as recorded in Deed Book 849, page 481, and Deed Book 1702, page 31, of the land records of Arlington County, Virginia.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries chosen for this nomination encompass the land on North Calvert Street in Arlington County, Virginia, which was acquired by Mihran and Zabelle Mesrobian in 1947 for construction of Calvert Manor and the adjacent parking lot.

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Calvert Manor
Arlington County, VA

All photographs are of:

CALVERT MANOR
1925-1927 North Calvert Street
Arlington County, Virginia
VDHR File Number: 00-2265

Photographer: Jeffrey Shrimpton
Date: December 1996

Negative Number: 15769

All negatives are stored with the Department of Historic Resources collection at the Virginia State Library and Archives.

Photo 1 of 9

View of: west (front) elevation; view
looking southeast

Photo 6 of 9

View of: east (rear) elevation; view looking
southwest

Photo 2 of 9

View of: west elevation, detail of south
entrance; view looking east

Photo 7 of 9

View of: interior, south stair tower; view
looking west

Photo 3 of 9

View of: north elevation; view looking
southwest

Photo 8 of 9

View of: interior, south stair tower; view
looking east

Photo 4 of 9

View of: south elevation; view looking
north

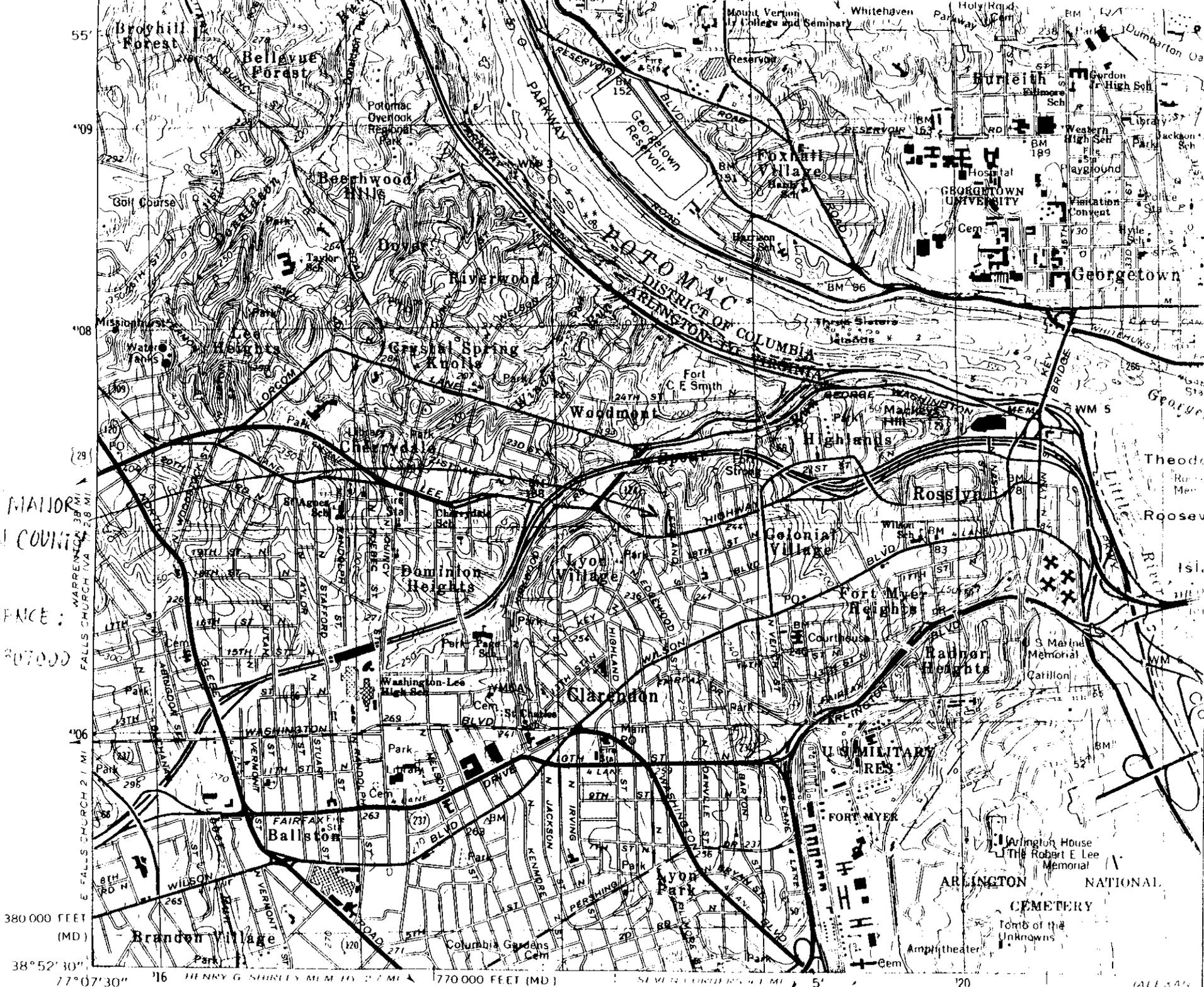
Photo 9 of 9

View of: apartment 203, typical interior;
view looking northeast

Photo 5 of 9

View of: south elevation, detail of cast
stone lion; view looking northeast

CALVEPT MAIOR
ARLINGTON COUNTY
VIRGINIA
DATE REFERENCE:
8/31854D/170700



380 000 FEET
(MD)

38° 52' 30"

177° 07' 30" 16 HENRY G. SHURLEY ALM. 10 2 1/2 MI. 1770 000 FEET (MD)

5' 120