

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC Gunston Hall

AND/OR COMMON Gunston Hall Manor

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
Gunston Hall Manor

CITY, TOWN Lorton NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 10th

VICINITY OF

STATE Virginia CODE 51 COUNTY Fairfax CODE 059

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Commonwealth of Virginia

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN Richmond VICINITY OF STATE Virginia

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Fairfax Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN Fairfax, STATE Virginia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE 1936-38 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN Washington STATE D. C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED	(restored)	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Built between 1755 and 1758, Gunston Hall is a one and one-half story cottage set on a high foundation broken by windows lighting the basement. Constructed of brick laid in Flemish bond, its simplicity is set off by stone quoins and a modillioned cornice across the two fronts, which at the gable ends ascends the rake in place of a barge board. The gable roof is pierced by five dormers with triangular pediments and balanced by two tall interior chimneys at each end.

While the design of the exterior of the five bay structure is attributed to George Mason, the north and south porches were designed and executed by William Buckland (see #8), as was all of the strikingly beautiful interior woodwork of the house. The north porch has two pairs of Doric columns supporting an arched central bay surmounted by a broad pediment. The south porch (the river side) is a unique piece of Colonial Gothic: an engaged octagon with five of its eight faces exposed. The octagon is embellished with Doric pilasters and frieze; the ogee arches between the pilasters were probably suggested by the illustration of an "octangular umbrella" in Batty Langley's 1742 Gothic Architecture Improved by Rules and Proportions in Many Grand Designs.¹

The gable ends of the building each have three double-hung sash windows, six over six, in the second story, as well as a bulls' eye window lighting the attic. The east gable end has an entrance to the hall between the library and the Mason's bedroom, for access to both dining areas from the kitchen yard, which has been reconstructed just to the east of the house. Pilasters flank the door, a semi-circular fan light matching the design of the one over the north entrance, but slightly smaller, is over the door, and the whole is topped by a pediment. Three steps lead up to the door. On the west gable end, a small projecting entrance, looking remarkably like a dog house, gives access to the cellar. It is built of brick and has a gable roof of its own with a dentil running up the eaves.

The interior, elaborately decorated by Buckland, has a basic center hall plan, with two rooms on each side. (See accompanying floor plan). Entering the north door, one sees a wide hall running the length of the house, bisected by a curious pair of elliptical arches. The spandrel between them is a pendant single triglyph with baroque scrolls, from the spring of which hangs a carved drop. The archway leads to a double-run staircase up the east wall. The stair treads are unusually narrow, accommodating only two balusters to each step. The balusters are unusually heavy but are nonetheless graceful because of the tall tapering fluted shafts. The brackets are carved with simple acanthus scrolls. The walls of the hallway are the only ones in the house that have full paneling.

1. A copy of Langley's book appears in Buckland's 1774 inventory. Langley was the first Englishman to treat the Gothic style in a scholarly manner. Calder Loth and Julius Trousdale Sadler, Jr., The Only Proper Style: Gothic Architecture in America, (New York, 1975), pp. 12-13.

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 type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES	1755-58 (house) 1725-92 (Mason)	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	George Mason/William Buckland
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Gunston Hall was the home of George Mason, gentleman, planter, and constitutional theorist, a man as influential as any other in building the theoretical underpinnings of the American Revolution and of the Constitution of 1787. He was a model member of the landed gentry, serving on the bench, in the parish vestry, in the Assembly, as well as in the Constitutional Convention of 1787.

Biography

George Mason (1725-1792) was the fourth of that name and line in Virginia, his fore-bearer having settled on 900 acres in the Northern Neck of Virginia on a grant dated 1655. By the time the fourth George Mason came into his inheritance, there were 5,000 acres in the estate. Because of the early death of his father, he was under the guardianship of his mother, Ann Thomson Mason, and his uncle, John Mercer of "Marlborough." Mason's early years were spent in Mercer's library which was rich in the law, accounting for Mason's wide legal knowledge throughout his later career.

In 1750 he married Anne Eilbeck of Charles County, Maryland. They had nine children, five boys and four girls. They began their manor house, Gunston Hall, in 1754, Mason himself planning the shape of the building, the floor plan, and the materials of construction. In 1755 his brother Thomson Mason brought 21 year old William Buckland (see below) back with him on a four year indenture to do the woodwork at the hall. Gunston Hall was completed in 1758 and remains a magnificent example of the joiner's art, the public rooms particularly possessing elaborate decorations of unusual beauty.

Mason ran his plantation himself and regarded his periods of public service as necessary intrusions of duty into his peaceful country life. His first service was to his country and parish: he was a trustee of the Town of Alexandria (1754-1779), a justice of the peace until 1789, a vestryman of Truro Parish (1748-1785), and he supervised the building of Pohick Church. His participation in a wider sphere began when he became a member of the Ohio Company in 1752. His first state paper, Extracts from the Virginia Charters, with Some Remarks Upon Them (1773), was a study of Virginia's constitutional claims to the Northwest Territory after the Crown had abrogated the company's charter.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Continuation Sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 555.672 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,8	31,25,4,0	4,28,19,1,0	B	1,8	31,30,6,0	4,28,07,1,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1,8	31,11,0,0	4,28,10,0,0	D	1,8	31,11,6,0	4,28,20,2,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See Continuation Sheet

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

Marilyn Larew, Historian

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey Division, National Park Service

DATE

February 1978

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street, N.W.

TELEPHONE

523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington,

STATE

D. C.

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

Landmark Designated: 82C19.1960
 date
 Boundary Certified:
George J. ...
 date
 Mar 15, 1978

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Wm. ...

DATE

4/3/78

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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The public rooms of the house are on the west side. To the southwest is the reknowned Palladian Room, perhaps the most important example of carved decoration of its period in the entire country. The chair rail, the baseboard, the entablatures and pilasters of the doors and windows, and the trim of the oval, arched-top cupboards are all profusely ornamented. The doors, windows, and cabinets have frames composed of fluted Doric pilasters, the windows and doors being crowned with full entablatures. Above the doors rise broken pediments, and similar pediments enclose the arches of the cabinets which flank the fireplace. The cornice is also richly carved. The woodwork is painted a soft putty color, with the baseboard and the interior of the cabinets a darker shade. The walls are covered with crimson silk damask. The present mantel is not original; during the restoration carried out by Mr. Louis Hertle, the Victorian mantels were removed and compatible ones were manufactured using details from the carving in the room. Recent restoration has removed this mantelshelf and the heavy overmantel (which is the one illustrated in most photographs of the room). The marble mantel now in place is a family piece, probably French, c. 1792. It has caryatids supporting the mantel shelf and three swags across the frieze. A copy of the Hesselius portrait of Anne Mason graces the area over the mantel. The Palladian Room was the formal parlor. It is furnished with Queen Anne and Chippendale pieces.

To the northwest is the Chinese Chippendale Room, a room unique in Virginia. Far simpler than the Palladian Room, it has exquisitely light carving adorning the doors and windows with entablatures cresting the concave scallops. The mantel is a conjectural one, using motives from the other carved decoration in the room, the consols being copies of the keystone over the doors. The dado is sheathed with moulded cap and base. The window embrasures are shuttered, and window seats are formed by recessed panels in the dado. The room was the formal dining room and is furnished with a Queen Anne table and serving table and Chippendale chairs with ribbon backs and ball and claw front feet. A copy of a copy of the portrait of George Mason by Hesselius adorns the area over the mantel.

The family rooms are on the east side of the house. To the south is the family sitting-room, dining room, and library, one of those all purpose colonial rooms. During the ownership of Louis Hertle, it was used as a dining room. This room has the only original mantelpiece in the house; all of the woodwork in the room is original except the wood panel doors in the closets flanking the fireplace. The simplicity of the decoration in this room is in contrast to the elaborate work in the public rooms.

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Between the family sitting room and the master bedroom to the northeast is a transverse service hall opening to the east to a porch and walkway to the kitchen building and on the west to the main hall just north of the double arch leading to the staircase. A service staircase in the north wall of the hall has been removed.

The northeast room, or master bedroom, has deep closets flanking the fireplace. The simplicity of the woodwork here recalls that in the family sitting-room.

In the hall at the head of the stairs three elliptical arches, echoing the double arches in the downstairs hall, are supported by three posts. Facing the bannister one sees, across the stairwell, a bit of coffered ceiling between two dormer windows. The upstairs hall was used as a musicians' gallery for dances that were held in the wide downstairs hall, the coffered ceiling providing a sounding board to project the music into the hall.

There are six small, low-pitched rooms on the second floor with dormer windows and a central hall that runs from gable to gable. These were bedrooms for the children and the governess. There is an attic above.

The grounds south of the house are richly landscaped. The boxwood allee is original; the formal gardens have been restored by the Garden Club of Virginia. There is a two mile nature trail east of the main building. A cemetery containing the graves of George Mason and his first wife, Anne, is also maintained on the grounds. All of the outbuildings are recent reconstructions. Structures which do not contribute to the significance of the landmark include the visitors' center, two modern gazebos in the garden, and all of the managerial buildings: director's home, manager's home, another employee home, two garages, the maintenance building and the public restrooms.

Gunston Hall passed from the Mason family in 1867 and went from owner to owner until 1912 when it was purchased by Louis Hertle. Mr. Hertle did some restoration on the house and grounds. In 1932 he conveyed title to the Commonwealth of Virginia in fulfillment of the wish of his late wife so that the plantation could be preserved as a shrine to the ideals of George Mason. The house and grounds are maintained by the National Society of Colonial Dames and are open to the public.

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Mason was extraordinarily averse to holding public office, but he served in the House of Burgesses in 1759 and again in 1775, taking George Washington's place after the latter was elected Commander in Chief of the Continental Army. His major contributions to the cause, however, were intellectual. From the time of the passage of the Stamp Act (1765) he had been engaged in an expanding defense of colonial rights. In response to the Coercive Acts, he wrote the Fairfax Resolves calling for joint colonial action, which were passed by his county and by the convention at Williamsburg, and which contributed to the position taken by the Continental Congress. Mason was valued as an adviser by many Virginians seemingly more active in revolutionary events. In 1775 he served on the committee of safety which governed Virginia after the flight of Lord Dunmore. His 1776 Virginia Declaration of Rights was perhaps his most influential document, affecting Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of 1787, and the revolutionary debates in France, as well. His contributions to the first Virginia state constitution were substantial, and the 1776 document served the state until 1830.

While he served in the Virginia Assembly (1776-1780), he worked for the disestablishment of the Church of England, helped to organize defense measures for the state, as well as Virginia-claimed land in Kentucky and the Northwest, and served on the secret committee which approved George Rogers Clark's conquest of the Northwest. He was, by his study of Virginia's claims to the land above the Ohio, as well as by his work toward its conquest and protection, partially responsible for the addition of that vast trans-montaine area to the Nation.

After becoming dissatisfied with the operation of the Articles of Confederation, he served as a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1787, where he labored long and hard to bring in a liberal document. He was dissatisfied with the completed constitution because it failed to outlaw the slave trade immediately, because it gave too much power to Congress, and because it had no Bill of Rights, so he refused to sign it and went home to work against its ratification. In the struggle over ratification, the Virginia convention suggested a group of ammendments to the new United States Constitution (the Bill of Rights).

After his work on the Constitution Mason refused to be drawn back into the public arena, preferring instead to live his life out at Gunston Hall. He died there October 7, 1792, having quietly done as much as any other man in that remarkable generation to secure a rule of reason and law for his compatriots and to see to it that the rights he helped to forge were written into our state papers.

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William Buckland

William Buckland was born at Oxford, England, on August 14, 1734. At 13 he was apprenticed to his uncle, James Buckland, in London. The uncle was a master joiner and proprietor of a bookstore in Paternoster Row which specialized in architectural books. Buckland was brought to Virginia by Thomson Mason in 1755 and was indentured for four years to serve as a carpenter and joiner in the building of George Mason's Gunston Hall where he did all the carving and joining. When Gunston Hall was completed in 1758 he was released from his indenture. In 1762 he was working in the neighborhood of Richmond. Among other work he did a mantel-piece for Robert Carter of Nomini Hall and a jail in Richmond County. Documents suggest that he had a fairly large workshop at that time. Around 1770 he was working in Annapolis, Maryland, although there is no proof that he ever moved there. His work there included some on the Senate Chamber in the State House and the design of the Hammond-Harwood House (c. 1774). Other houses--the Scott House (c. 1768), the Chase House (1769-74), the Rideout and Paca Houses (c. 1770), and the Brice House (c. 1740? or 1773?)--have been attributed to him. It is assumed that he died in Annapolis in 1774. Buckland brought a new sophistication to American architecture and interior decoration because of his thorough familiarity with the best in contemporary English architecture.

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PAGE 1

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"George Mason," Dictionary of American Biography, XII.

Hugh Morrison, Early American Architecture, From the First Colonial Settlements to the National Period, (New York, 1953).

Thomas Tileston Waterman, The Mansions of Virginia, 1706-1776, (New York, 1945).

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Gunston Hall today comprises about one-tenth of the original Mason holdings on Gunston Neck. The landmark boundary is that of the original Mason property in the possession of the Commonwealth of Virginia and administered by the National Society of Colonial Dames, to wit:

As is stated in Deed Book B-11, Page 388, Fairfax County Courthouse: "Gunston Hall consists of 555.672 acres. Four tracts of land, one 418 acres upon which is located the Gunston Hall House; one of 42.95 acres; one of 50 acres; and one of 104 acres--a total of 614.95 acres, less a tract of 59.278 acres, together with a 15 foot outlet."

Beginning at the junction of State Routes 242 and 600 (near Shiloh Church and Cemetery), proceed south for approximately 700 feet; thence in a southwesterly direction for approximately 700 feet; thence south for approximately 2,000 feet; thence east for approximately 4,600 feet; thence northeast for approximately 1200 feet to the water line of Gunston Cove; thence north along the water line of Gunston Cove for approximately 400 feet; thence west for approximately 1,200 feet; thence in a northerly direction for approximately 2,600 feet; thence west for approximately 3,150 feet to the point of beginning.