

SEWALL-BELMONT HOUSE
(Alva Belmont House)
(National Women's Party Headquarters)
Sewall-Belmont House National Historic Site
144 Constitution Avenue, Northeast
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS DC-821
DC, WASH, 686-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SEWALL-BELMONT HOUSE

HABS No. DC-821

Location: 144 Constitution Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C.

Present Owner: National Woman's Party

Present Occupant: National Woman's Party

Present Use: Headquarters for the National Woman's Party

Significance: The Sewall-Belmont House, built ca. 1800 for Robert Sewall in the newly formed city of Washington, has been home to the National Woman's Party since 1929. Sewall's brick federal-period town house, with its center-hall Georgian plan, is one of the oldest standing residences on Capitol Hill, and includes a kitchen wing that predates the main structure. Coinciding with the completion of the house was Robert Sewall's inheritance of the family's tobacco plantation in Maryland; he chose to live at the latter. Sewall rented his town house to Albert Gallatin, then Secretary of the Treasury. It was while living here that Gallatin transacted the negotiations that led to the Louisiana Purchase. During the British invasion of the city in 1814, the Sewall house was burned; by 1820, it had been rebuilt. The house remained in the Sewall family for generations, serving as their in-town dwelling. Following the death of Robert Sewall's granddaughter Ellen Daingerfield in 1912, the house stood empty and fell into disrepair. Renovations began in 1922 when it was acquired by Vermont senator, Porter Dale.

Purchased by Alva Belmont in 1929 as a headquarters, the Sewall house became the staging ground in the party's lobby for an equal rights amendment. The Congressional Union was formed in 1913 by Alice Paul to address the issue of women's suffrage and to provide the National American Woman Suffrage Association with a Washington-based presence; shortly thereafter, in 1914, she formed the National Woman's Party in order to more aggressively lobby for federal action regarding women's suffrage. Paul, a social worker with a doctoral degree, is credited as being the most prominent figure in the final phase of the battle for a constitutional amendment granting women the right to vote. Her innovative techniques and dynamic personality revitalized the movement, and eventually persuaded Capitol Hill law makers to pass the Susan B. Anthony amendment guaranteeing women's suffrage. Under Paul's continued leadership, the party then turned its attention towards the larger issue of complete equality of the sexes under law. As the only extant structure associated with the National Woman's Party, the Sewall-Belmont House continues to serve as an active headquarters, as well as a museum and research library. In 1974, it was designated a National Historic Landmark for its historical connections to Alice Paul and the woman's movement.

Historian: Scott G. Shultz, Ranger, National Capital Parks -Central, 1998.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: Based on land records and biographical materials available for those who owned the property during the period, the first building campaign took place around 1750. The next phase probably occurred at the turn of the century; again, this date is suggested by original land and tax records. Finally, city tax records indicate a third period of construction in ca. 1820.¹

2. Architect: Unknown, but recent evidence points to architect Leonard Harbaugh. This theory is based on the architect's prior association with the owner, work done within the Catholic community, opportunity, and architectural style.

Leonard Harbaugh (1749-1822) began his career in Baltimore in 1775 where he was involved in a number of projects. These included building Baltimore's first apartment building and a stone archway underneath the two-story city courthouse to make a way for Calvert Street.² The Baltimore newspapers of the period often refer to Harbaugh as a master builder and inventor.³

Harbaugh first appears in documentation as doing work outside Baltimore in 1786, where his name appears in the ledger book of Robert Darnell. In the ledger book Harbaugh is cited as the builder who completed "His Lordship's Kindness." In 1787, Harbaugh built "Ivy Neck" for James Cheston.⁴ This home was ten miles south of Annapolis on the Rhode River in Anne Arundle County, Maryland.⁵

Harbaugh first appeared in Washington in 1792. The city commissioners hired him to build a bridge over Rock Creek. Later, in 1792, the city commissioners approved his design for the United States Capitol, but because of criticism of the design of his Rock Creek Bridge, William Thornton was awarded the contract.⁶ The following year (1793), Holy Trinity Church in Georgetown was built by Leonard Harbaugh, from whom a detailed construction bill still exists.⁷ Indications are Harbaugh went on to construct Old North, the oldest building on the Georgetown University campus.⁸

¹Please see Historic Context section below.

² Jeanne F. Butler, Capitol Studies - Competition 1792: Designing a Nation's Capitol, (Washington, D.C., 1976), p. 80.

³ Butler, p. 80.

⁴ Mills Lane, Architecture of the Old South, Maryland (1991).

⁵ Ibid. Please note that Ivy Neck burned about thirty years ago.

⁶ W.B. Bryan, History of the Nation's Capitol from its Foundations through Adoption of the Organic Act, Book One (1914-1916), p. 312.

⁷ William W. Warner, At Peace with All their Neighbors (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1994), p.22.

⁸ Joan Lemp, "The Treasure on The Hill."

Even though Harbaugh's Rock Creek project was a failure, the city commissioners did not forget him. On June 23, 1798, he was awarded the contract to build the Executive Office Building, which flanked the White House on the East Side.⁹ This building was to house the Treasury Department. Architect George Hadfield had been given the first contract to construct the Treasury Building, but his negative report on Thornton's design of the Capitol caused the President to remove him.¹⁰ Harbaugh was then contracted to complete the project. Harbaugh made several changes to Hadfield's design. In fact, the design so pleased both the President and the commissioners that they agreed it should be repeated in a twin building to be known as the War Office.¹¹ The War Office flanked the White House on the West Side. By the end of 1801, both buildings were complete. Harbaugh then turned his attention to completing the canal and lock system at Great Falls, Virginia.¹²

Nothing in all his public work in Washington suggests that Harbaugh built the Sewall house. However, close examination of the side entrances (east and west sides) of the Treasury and War Buildings reveal details that may tie Harbaugh to Sewall. The front entrance in the Sewall house and side entrances of the government buildings are almost identical. All the basements are raised with stairs leading along side the building up to the front entrance. Underneath the front door is another doorway leading to a partially sunken basement. This design appears to be indicative of his designs and suggests that the same architect designed all three buildings.

There is other evidence that connects Harbaugh to Sewall. Harbaugh's work on "His Lordship's Kindness" brought him into contact with Sewall. Robert Sewall was the nephew of Robert Darnell and inherited Darnell's estate upon his uncle's death in 1803. If Sewall liked the work Harbaugh did on His Lordship's Kindness he may have used the architect to build his house in town. Harbaugh, moreover, was in Washington during the time the Sewall house was constructed.

In addition to Harbaugh's presence in the city, it is said that the townhouse of Robert Sewall is the oldest Catholic house in the District of Columbia.¹³ While Harbaugh was probably not a Catholic, he did have close personal and professional ties to the Catholic community.¹⁴ His projects included the building of Holy Trinity and Old North; he also sent several of his children to Georgetown University. That Darnell and Sewall were practicing Catholics is demonstrated by the inclusion of a Catholic chapel and bedroom for a priest in one of the wings at His Lordship's Kindness. It is possible then that Sewall choose this prominent Washington architect to construct his townhouse because of his public works, private commission (at His Lordship's Kindness), and understanding of Catholicism demonstrated therein.

⁹ Warner, p. 125.

¹⁰ Warner, p. 126.

¹¹ Warner, p. 126-127.

¹² Warner, p. 128.

¹³ Effie Gwynn Bowie, Across the Years In Prince George's County (Clearfield, 1916), p. 584.

¹⁴ Warner, p. 22.

3. Original and subsequent owners, occupants, uses:¹⁵

*Owners: Robert Sewall (1799-1820), Polly Brent Sewall and daughters (1820-1838), Robert Darnell Sewall (1838-1853), Susan and Ellen Daingerfield (1853-1912), Senator Porter Dale (1922-1929), and Alva Belmont and the National Woman's Party (1929-present).

*Other occupants: Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin (1801-1813), U.S. Senator from Maryland and U.S. Attorney General Reverdy Johnson, U.S. Senator from Virginia John Strode Barbour (1871-1892).

*Use of the property has been a private residence and headquarters for the National Woman's Party.

4. Builder, contractor, and suppliers: Unknown.

5. Original plans and construction: Unfortunately, there are no early descriptions of the house and the first known photograph shows the structure in ca. 1880's. In this photograph, the Sewall-Belmont House appears very much as it does today, except for several windows on the East side of the main section. These windows were added during the 1929 renovation. Other early photographs show a porch built over the main entrance, but later pictures from the mid-twentieth century show the porch removed.

6. Alterations and additions: Robert Sewall built the main section of the house in 1799-1800. Sewall repaired the house ca. 1820 after the British attempted to burn it in August 1814; moreover, a stable may have been added to the property at this time. Susan and Ellen Daingerfield made the next major alteration to the front of the house in 1879 with an addition of a partial mansard roof to the front of the house. Porter Dale in 1923 repaired and enclosed a porch on the back of the house, installed three baths and laid new floors, added three new windows to the west side, put a new sink in the kitchen, and painted the interior and exterior. The National Woman's Party, in 1929, added three new windows to the main section of the house on the east side, a new bathroom between the second floor bedrooms known as the "West Virginia" room and "Alice Paul" bedroom today, a new door for the kitchen, and new double doors for the library.¹⁶ Other documentary records of alterations (if any) made by the Woman's Party are missing.

B. Historical Context

The history of the Sewall-Belmont House dates to the very beginnings of British Colonial Maryland and so, then, to the history of the United States. The dwelling, located at the corner of Constitution Avenue and Second Street, N.E. in Washington, D.C., is today headquarters of the National Woman's Party. The exact date of its construction is unknown, but architectural evidence reveals that it was built, added on to, and altered during different time periods, and by extension, different individuals. The original structure on the property, located to the rear of the present house, was built between the early to mid-eighteenth century. The front portion of the existing house, facing south on Constitution Avenue, was constructed in 1799-1800 by prominent Maryland landowner Robert Sewall. Since then, the Sewall-

¹⁵Please see, Bowie, p. 582-591.

¹⁶Please see the measured drawings that accompany this report (HABS No. DC-821, sheets 3-10).

Belmont House has been the home of three United States Senators, a Secretary of the Treasury, and an U.S. Attorney General. In recent years it has been the home of the National Woman's Party and the struggle for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment has come from within its brick walls.

Location, Location, Location

The Sewall-Belmont House is built on land granted by King Charles I of England to Cecil Calvert, the second Lord Baltimore. Calvert never ventured to the British colonies in North America but appointed his brother, Leonard Calvert, in 1634, as Deputy Governor of the grant that is today the state of Maryland. Maryland was to be a place where English Catholics could worship free from government or public persecution.

Calvert encouraged settlement in Maryland. Counties were established. Within the county, the colonial courts divided counties into smaller entities, known as "hundreds." One of the hundreds created, extending from the mouth of the Oxon Branch, opposite Alexandria, to Little Falls, included the present national capital.¹⁷ It was called New Scotland Hundred. Years later, on a tract carved out of New Scotland Hundred, the Sewall-Belmont House would be constructed.

On February 12, 1663, the third Lord Baltimore granted a patent of land to the clerk of the county court of Charles County, Maryland, George Thompson, 1,000 acres named Duddington Manor, 500 acres called New Troy, and 300 acres named Duddington Pasture.¹⁸ The entire 1,800 acres came under the name Duddington Manor.¹⁹ Thompson called his land after a manor owned by relatives in Somerset shire, England.²⁰

On November 9, 1670, Thompson leased, "for 1,000 years and an annual rent of forty thousand pounds of tobacco and one peppercorn, if demanded, all of Duddington Manor to Thomas Notley."²¹ Notley, who for a time was Deputy Governor of Maryland, patented the land on March 1, 1671, under a new name, 'Cerne Abbey Manor.' Cerne Abbey was a name important to Notley's boyhood in England. Notley had spent much of his youth at the manor of the abbot of Cerne in Dorsetshire, England.²²

Notley died in 1679 and his will of April 3 of that year left all of 'Cerne Abbey Manor' to his godson, Notley Rosier (1673-1727). Rosier, incidently, was a stepson of the third Lord Baltimore and a grandson of Lady Baltimore by a previous marriage.²³ He was only six years old when he inherited the property; Rosier's age at inheritance probably accounts for the lack of documentary evidence surrounding Cerne Abbey. Not until September 10, 1716, is the property mentioned. At that time, Rosier changed the name of the parcel from Cerne Abbey back to Duddington Manor.

¹⁷Margaret Brent Downing, The Early Proprietors of Capitol Hill (Annapolis, MD: Colonial Historical Society, 1918), p. 1.

¹⁸Bessie Wilmarth Gahn, Original Patentees of Washington Prior to 1700 (Silver Spring, MD, 1936), p. 26.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Please note: Of the 1800 acres known as "Duddington Manor," it was on the "New Troy" tract that the house would be constructed.

²¹Downing, p. 2.

²²Gahn, pp. 26-27.

²³Gahn, p. 27.

Notley Rosier married Jane Digges and their daughter, Ann Rosier, married Daniel Carroll (1707-1734). Ann was widowed at an early age, but gave birth to a son, Charles Carroll (1729-1773), before her first husband's death. Ann Rosier Carroll then married widower, Colonel Benjamin Young (d. 1754), the Commissioner of Crown Lands. Ann and Benjamin Young had a son, Notley Young (1736-1802).

When Notley Rosier died in 1727 he left his large land holdings to his daughter, Ann Rosier Carroll Young, making her the matron of Duddington Manor. It was her sons, Charles Carroll and Notley Young, that were the last manorial owners of the vast tract which covered Capitol Hill, Southwest Washington, the Navy Yard, Southeast Washington, and a large tract north of the Capitol and the Congressional Library of today.²⁴

On August 17, 1758, Charles Carroll deeded all of Duddington Manor to his mother, Ann Young. On the same day, Ann Young divided all her property between her two sons, Charles Carroll and Notley Young.²⁵ Charles received the largest tract including the Capitol Hill area.

Charles Carroll died in 1773, and he left all his land to his nine-year-old son Daniel Carroll of Duddington. Portions of Daniel Carroll's land were included in the area surveyed to be the new nation's capital; that part was given to the federal government in 1791. The capital was called Washington City after the hero of the American Revolution and first president, George Washington.

The appointed city commissioners divided the newly surveyed land into city squares. Each square then was subdivided into lots. On October 18, 1793, Daniel Carroll of Duddington purchased lot 1 in square 725 for \$266.66, and Robert Sewall purchased lot 2 in square 725 for \$429.33.²⁶ Also on October 18th the federal government gave a tract (lot 32 in square 725) back to the original proprietor (who was, you recall, Daniel Carroll of Duddington).²⁷ Moreover, on September 14, 1796, the city commissioners ceded back all of City Square 725 to Carroll.²⁸ On January 29, 1799, Robert Sewall purchased city lots 1 and 32 within square 725 from Daniel Carroll of Duddington for \$600.²⁹

Building the Sewall-Belmont House

Turn of the century maps of the city as well as current map lots 1,2, and 32 in square 725 reveals the location of the structure known as the Sewall-Belmont House. The first city tax assessment in the year 1800 shows the value of improvements to lots 1,2, and 32 to be \$3,500.³⁰ Although the kind of improvement made was not noted, I suggest that such a large increase of value to the newly surveyed city lots means that a house of considerable size was built on the property.

²⁴Downing, p.5.

²⁵ Liber P, Folio 166, Land Records, Prince George's County, Maryland Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland

²⁶ Title of United States to Lands in District of Columbia (Washington, D.C.: Land Records & Graphics Sec. Engineering Branch National Capital Parks National Park Service, 1916), p. 26.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Records within the National Archives, Land Record Section, District of Columbia, Tax Record Group 351, pp. 252-253. Also, perhaps Sewall already had a vested interest, such as a house, in the parcel; whatever his motive, something about the lot was enough to warrant buying it back from Carroll in 1799. - vbpb

³⁰Ibid., pp. 359-361.

The tax records for 1799-1800, suggesting a dwelling was built on lot 1 in square 725, is the first indication that any structure was built on the property. Careful examination of the house, however, shows that while it appears to be one structure, it is actually the older kitchen wing, main building, with additions. It is evident from the brickwork and interior designs that the section facing Second Street Northeast, on the West Side, and is used today as the kitchen was built much earlier than 1800. Evidence comes from the type of bricks used, workmanship, and the fact that the bricks do not align with the masonry in the rest of the building.³¹ Secondary sources list the date for this small brick section to be anywhere from 1680 to 1750. No sufficient documentation has ever been found to substantiate these claims, and while careful physical examination may shed some light, the structure has been greatly altered. Certainly this first section was not built before 1700, since this part of Maryland was uninhabited before that time.³²

Using the parameters of 1700 to 1750 for the kitchen wing's construction, the responsible parties would have been Notley Rosier or his daughter, Anne Rosier Carroll Young, for they owned the land on which the house was erected. There is no documentary evidence to suggest that either Notley Rosier or his daughter built the first house, but I propose that Benjamin Young may have contributed to its construction. Although Anne Rosier Carroll was Benjamin Young's second wife, he already had a number of children by his first wife. Young also was a considerable landowner before marrying the widow Anne Rosier Carroll. Their marriage only increased his land holdings. Young's biographer noted that near the end of his life he gave tracts of land to his children and built homes for them. It is very possible, then, that Young had the first house built (that today is the kitchen of the Sewall-Belmont House) for one of his children.³³

This first section (built no later than 1770) was sitting on the property when Robert Sewall purchased lots 1,2, and 32 in square 725. After purchasing the lot, Sewall built the largest part of the house with its front facing south on Constitution Avenue (until 1933 Constitution Avenue was called B Street) at the corner of Second Street, Northeast. Sewall's house, known through the tax records in 1800 for Washington City as a \$3,500 improvement to the property, appears in the *Historical Map of the City of Washington, District of Columbia, View of the City and Location of the Houses in the Year 1801-1802, The Beginnings of Washington*, by Artemas C. Harmon. This map clearly shows a house at the corner of B and Second Streets, Northeast. It can also be inferred that Sewall's house was of substantial size and superior craftsmanship and materials because of who lived in it. For example, Thomas Jefferson's Secretary of the Treasury, Albert Gallatin, lived in the house from 1801-1813. Sewall leased the house to

³¹Personal Communication, Catherine C. Lavoie, Summer 1998.

³²Priscilla W. McNeil, "Rock Creek Hundred, Land Conveyed for the Federal City," Washington History: Magazine of the Historical Society of Washington, D.C., 98 (1991), p. 35.

³³Expanding the biographer's suggestion & Shultz's speculation, please note: While Benjamin Young may have held significant acreage and devised parcels to his children, the land of Duddington Manor was held in right of his wife or belonged outright to her son Charles Carroll. It is possible that Young acted as guardian for Carroll, and so, his actions of giving land and building dwellings for the children could include his step-son and step-son's property. However, even this understanding of Young's role is questionable considering his widow's actions in 1758. At that time, her son Charles Carroll deeded his property to her and she immediately divided the property between both her sons. Carroll, however, received the largest portion of Duddington Manor. Perhaps, then, Young provided for his first wife's children in the manner suggested by his biographer, leaving Anne Rosier to provide for her children. -
vbp

Gallatin until the Secretary left for Ghent, Belgium to be part of the peace mission that ended the War of 1812.

During Gallatin's stay in the house, Robert Sewall and his family lived on the estate near Clinton, Maryland, called "Poplar Hill" and known as "His Lordships Kindness" today. Sewall inherited this property, soon after the completion of his Washington house, in 1803 upon the death of his uncle, Robert Darnell. Reviewing Darnell's ledger book for the years 1785 to 1824, located at the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore, all the entries referred to His Lordship's Kindness and none to the dwelling in Washington. This is even true when Sewall began making entries in 1803. It is evident from the entries in this book that Sewall spent considerable time administering this Clinton estate. It is also evident that His Lordship's Kindness was his primary residence, leaving the Washington dwelling empty and available for Gallatin to lease.

After Gallatin left Sewall's townhouse in 1813, Robert Sewall assigned his son, William to look after the house.³⁴ The information on the Sewall family's return to Poplar Hill and William's call to service is contained in the 1819 Report of the Senate's Committee of Claims. It is not known whether William Sewall ever lived in the house because he enlisted in Commodore Barney's American flotillamen.³⁵ The flotillamen were responsible for helping protect the nation's capital from British invasion during the War of 1812.

In August 1814, the British army invaded Maryland. After their victory at Bladensburg on the 24th, they marched towards Washington. Their intent was to burn the government buildings in the city. From the Sewall house came the only organized resistance to the British invasion on Washington on August 24, 1814.³⁶ British soldiers entering Washington on that August day apparently stopped near the Sewall house to obtain water for themselves and their horses. At this point shots were fired at the British. Different accounts from primary and secondary sources claim that the shots came from the house, from near the house, or from the garden of the house. Sources also vary on how many shots were fired and how many deaths or injuries occurred. Accounts differ from no loss of life to two killed and several wounded. It is pretty certain that at least one shot was fired because all sources record the death of British General Ross's horse. An unidentified source told the Washington Post that,

In front of the Sewall house, an intoxicated man concealed in the garden shot at Gen. Ross; he missed but killed the horse, Ross thereupon, ordered his followers "to burn the house". A fire was started in the house but no great damage was done.³⁷

Other sources claim the house was burned to the ground. Thus it may never be known what exactly the British did to the house, but it is evident the house was impacted. In 1815 Sewall filed a claim for reimbursement of damages for the house and furniture. The Secretary of War, the Commissioner of Claims, and the U.S. Congress heard the claim. The claim was denied in 1819, because it could not be proven that the American commander had ordered soldiers into the house. No witnesses came forward to

³⁴Sonia Pressman Fuentes, House of History (Washington, D.C.), p. 8.

³⁵ Pressman-Fuentes, p. 8.

³⁶ 'National Intelligencer' newspaper, Washington, D.C., August 31, 1814."

³⁷ 'Washington Post' newspaper, Washington, D.C., September 15, 1929.

verify Sewall's claim. Again, in 1847 the issue came before the Senate Committee on Claims and this time it was found the Sewall family was due compensation.³⁸

The Committee (of 1847) relied upon the affidavit of December 14, 1816, from a Lawson Clark, an American, who stated that he was standing at the door of the house when three of Barney's sailors were taken out of the house for firing on the British, and that their officer was with them.³⁹ The committee accepted the claim that the house had been occupied by order of that officer. The claim came within the purview of the Act of April 9, 1816, that authorized payment for property destroyed by the enemy while the property was in military service under the authority of an American officer.⁴⁰

Regardless of the compensation sought from the federal government and its denial (in 1819), Sewall repaired his Washington townhouse. Work was completed prior to 1820, or at least enough progress was made for it to be inhabited by Sewall in December. That month, on December 16th, Robert Sewall died in his dwelling in Washington city. His obituary read, "Died, on Saturday 16th inst., at his home in this city after a long and distressing illness, which he bore with fortitude and resignation of a Christian, Robert Sewall, Esq. of Poplar Hill, Prince George's County, Md."⁴¹ Moreover, in 1824, Washington City tax assessors recorded a \$4,000 improvement to the property.⁴² Although this may indicate a rebuilding of the house, it also could mean the addition of a stable along with house repairs. Reinforcing the latter interpretation is the Harmon's *Historical Map of the City of Washington*; this map placed the house, but no stable, on the property. The next map of Washington that included locations of structures was the Boschke Map. Drawn in 1853, the Boschke Map is the earliest accounting of Washington's built environment. By the time of 1853 document, a stable appeared on the Sewall property for it was recorded along with the house.

After 1824, improvements to the Sewall property do not appear until the tax records of 1879. It is reasonable to believe this 1824 improvement involved the building of a stable. It also supports the theory that little damage was done by the British and the \$4,000 improvement was for repairs or reconstruction of original house valued at \$3500 in 1800's, and a stable. The stable, at this time, was not attached to the rest of the house. It was located behind the kitchen section, along Second Street, N.E. on the north side of the property.

Re-fashioning the Sewall-Belmont House

Robert Sewall died on December 16, 1820, at the age of fifty-five. His will dated December 1820 and recorded February 6, 1821, assigns his Washington home to his wife and daughters. It read, "that the house in which I at present live in this city - should be kept for the residence of my wife and daughters as long as they choose to occupy it, or until my said daughters are successfully married or unfortunately die." He also said that in the event of the marriage of any daughter, "three months after marriage this

³⁸Sonia Pressman-Fuentes, 'House of History', (Washington, D.C., 1997), p. 8.

³⁹Pressman-Fuentes, p. 8.

⁴⁰ Pressman-Fuentes, p. 8. Upon further research there is no proof that compensation was paid the Sewall family. Questions are raised about Sewall's claim. Why was Lawson Clark's affidavit accepted in 1847, and not in 1819? Why is there no evidence that the federal government compensated the Sewalls?

⁴¹National Intelligencer, Washington, D.C., December 19, 1820.

⁴²National Archives, Washington, D.C., General Assessment Books, Volume 2.

indulgence ceases.” Sewall concluded by saying that when his widow and daughters should cease to live on the property, it should be sold and the proceeds divided between them and their survivors.⁴³

Exactly which daughters lived in the house and for how long is difficult to tell. Searching the family graveyard at “His Lordship's Kindness” where Robert Sewall's grave is located, along with his wife's and their six daughters and three sons, a number of interesting things were discovered. Sewall's wife, Polly, outlived her husband by two years. She died on July 23, 1822, at age fifty. Two of their daughters, Anna and Catherine, died before their parents. Of the remaining four daughters, Eliza died in 1823 at age twenty five, Mary died in 1831 at age twenty four, Anne died in 1831 at age thirty one, and Susan died in 1837 at age thirty four.

Only Mary and Susan are known to have married. Mary married Philip Barton Key, but she died before having any children. Susan wedded Henry Daingerfield of Alexandria, Virginia. Henry and Susan Daingerfield had two daughters, Susan and Ellen. Upon Susan (Sewall) Daingerfield's death all the direct heirs to the Sewall house were dead. According to Mrs. Daingerfield's will, she left the house to her oldest brother, Robert Darnell Sewall. Further evidence of this comes from Washington tax records from the years 1824 to 1869, where Robert Sewall is listed as the owner of the property.⁴⁴ Robert Darnell Sewall had the estate, His Lordship's Kindness, willed to him by his father and this was his primary residence. There is no evidence to suggest that he lived in the Washington town home.

During the mid-nineteenth century it is impossible to tell who may have lived in the house and what changes may have been done to it. It is almost certain that it was rented since it had a good location on Capitol Hill. The only evidence of this comes from Robert Darnell Sewall's will. Sewall died March 18, 1853, at age sixty. The excerpt is as follows:

but my house and lot of ground thereto attached situated on Capitol Hill in the said city of Washington recently in the occupancy of the Hon. Reverdy Johnson I give and devise to my two nieces Susan S. Daingerfield and Ellen C. Daingerfield their heirs and assigns forever as tenants in common and not as joint tenants share and share alike.⁴⁵

The above mentioned Reverdy Johnson was a U.S. Senator from Maryland (1845-1849). On March 8, 1849, President Zachary Taylor appointed Johnson Attorney General of the United States.

The first evidence that Ellen and Susan Daingerfield owned the house and property comes from city tax records of 1869-1871 where the owner is listed as Daingerfield.⁴⁶ In 1878-1879, the property is listed as owned by Susan S. and Ellen C. Daingerfield.⁴⁷ Also, in 1879 appears the first improvement to the property since 1824. The value of improvement is listed as \$5,500.⁴⁸ There is a strong possibility that this improvement was the addition of a partial mansard roof.

⁴³ Will of Robert Sewall, Maryland Hall of Records, Annapolis, MD, Book TT, February 6, 1821, p. 284.

⁴⁴National Archives, Washington, D.C., General Assessment Books 1824, 1829-33, 1838, 1843, 1853, 1857.

⁴⁵From the will of Robert Darnell Sewall, Maryland Hall of Records, P.G. County Wills, Liber P.C., Drawn up December 31, 1852, Probated April 6, 1853, Folio 494-497.

⁴⁶National Archives, Washington, D.C., General Assessment Books, 1878-1879.

⁴⁷Ibid., 1878-1879.

⁴⁸Ibid.

Mansard roofs first appeared in the United States during the Second Empire architectural period (1855-1885). Mansard roofs can also be seen during the Richardsonian Romanesque period (1880-1900) and Beaux-Arts period (1885-1900).⁴⁹ Mansard roofs also appeared frequently as additions to existing buildings, as stated in Virginia and Lee McAlester's, A Field Guide to American Houses.

The mansard (roof) is particularly well suited to renovation work of pitched roof houses because the upper story can be enlarged without adding extra weight to the structure. The conversion to a mansard roof provides a floor area on the upper floor that can be identical to the main floor area.⁵⁰

The mansard roof on the Sewall house is only a half mansard. Only the front part or the side facing south on Constitution Avenue has a mansard design. The back part of the roof is sloped which shows the possibility of an original low gabled roof. When this half mansard was added is unknown, but it created more livable space – and did so through a distinctive, mid to late nineteenth-century architectural feature. Probably after the Sewall townhouse became the Daingerfield's permanent residence, the family needed to create additional livable rooms for guests or servants.

The next documentary reference to the house appears in 1886. Susan Daingerfield married John Strode Barbour in 1865. Barbour was a railroad magnate and United States Senator from Virginia. On February 5, 1886, this notice appeared in a local newspaper: "A few days ago, Mrs. Barbour, wife of Hon. John S. Barbour, had a serious fall at her home in Washington. Her many friends are grieved to hear that her condition is very serious."⁵¹ On February 12, Friday, notice of her death was posted in the paper. It stated she "died last Saturday afternoon."⁵²

Barbour continued to live in the house with his sister-in-law Ellen Daingerfield and his nephew and personal secretary Richard Thompson. Tragedy again came to the house in 1892 with the death of Senator Barbour. The Senator's death was recorded in the *Alexandria Gazette*.

He has resided in the house he died in since he first entered Congress from the Alexandria district many years ago, and since his wife died six years ago, has had his sister-in-law, Miss Daingerfield (his only near relative save a brother, Hon. James Barbour of Culpepper) to preside over his large, old-fashioned, gabled-end house on B Street, northeast.⁵³

Family records show that Ellen Daingerfield spent the last twenty years of her life between the Sewall house and His Lordship's Kindness, the latter being her primary residence. She died in 1912 having never married and with no heirs. Richard Thompson was named executor of her estate.

Between the years 1912 and 1922 the Sewall house was apparently vacant and fell into disrepair. Secondary sources claim the house became known as the "haunted house of Capitol Hill." In 1922, Senator Porter Dale of Vermont purchased the Sewall house from Richard Thompson, the executor.⁵⁴

⁴⁹Virginia and Lee McAlester, A Field Guide to American Houses (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), pp. 240, 300, 378.

⁵⁰ Website, www.cedarbureau.org/mansard.htm, p. 1.

⁵¹'Prince George's Enquirer' newspaper, February 5, 1886.

⁵²'Prince George's Enquirer' newspaper, February 12, 1886.

⁴⁹'Alexandria Gazette' newspaper, May 14, 1892, columns 4 and 5, p. 2.

⁵⁴Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Liber 5090, Folio 233.

During the next seven years Dale made a number of improvements to the house. On July 12, 1923, Senator Porter Dale commissioned the repair of a porch on the rear of the house. He also had it enclosed and had a retaining wall built of 13" brick. Dale hoped the wall would "prevent the rear of yard from washing down on the front yard." The permit cites an estimated cost of \$300.00 to make these repairs; also listed as "Architect and builder," was J.G. Herbert of 1944 Naylor St., SE, Washington, D.C.⁵⁵

The following month (August, 1923), Senator Porter Dale commissioned the "installation of three baths and lay new floors, also to build three new windows in brick wall (not party wall) to put new sink in kitchen, and paint the interior and exterior of the building. The baths are to be placed in rooms that are at ? print ? in place." Again the permit filed by Dale records J.G. Herbert as the architect and builder. The expense involved, however, was considerably higher. The estimated cost of the improvements came to \$800.00.⁵⁶ For the third building permit, dated July 29, 1924, Senator Porter Dale commissioned the repair of the iron fence "now in place." The fence measured 3' in height. The construction was executed by Norris S. Walls of 2435 Nichols Avenue, SE, in Washington, D.C.⁵⁷ In addition to his building projects, Porter Dale planted five hundred rose bushes in the garden and when in bloom there were over four thousand blossoms.⁵⁸

Despite the many improvements Dale made to the house and grounds, he considered selling it as early as 1927. National Woman's Party (NWP) records have a signed contract between the Party and Senator Dale. The contract stated that the NWP intended to purchase the house if the property they were now occupying was condemned and they were forced to move.⁵⁹ In 1927, the Woman's Party was in the Old Capitol Building, which was the proposed site for the new Supreme Court Building.

The sale was not completed until May 21, 1929, when Alva Belmont, a leader in the women's suffrage movement and member of NWP, purchased the house for \$100,000.⁶⁰ Belmont kept extensive scrapbooks of NWP activities, which are located in the library in the house. In her scrapbook dated 1928-1930 an article appears from an unknown periodical which stated that remodeling the Sewall house would begin the first week of August 1929. According to the article, remodeling work will be under the direction of Kenyon Hayden Rector of Columbus, Ohio, an architect and founder of the National Woman's Party.⁶¹

⁵⁵National Archives, Washington, D.C., Building Permit #1923, Roll 228, July, 12, 1923.

⁵⁶National Archives, Washington, D.C., Building Permit #2065, Roll 228, August 25, 1923.

⁵⁷National Archives, Washington, D.C., Building Permit # 1061, Roll 266, July 29, 1924.

⁵⁸Looking for the building plans for these permits I contacted the District of Columbia Archives and was instructed to contact the National Archives in College Park, Maryland, for actual architectural plans. Upon contacting the National Archives, I was informed by a senior archivist that the District government had destroyed all plans for this period.

⁵⁹Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, NWP papers, Liber C.H.B., folio 298.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, folio 301.

⁶¹"New Woman's Party Headquarters," (Periodical Unknown), July 27, 1929, p. 195. I contacted the Sewall-Belmont house looking for the Rector plans and was informed that they had no knowledge of any such plans. If Kenyon Rector plans exist for the house they may be located at the National Park Service MARS facility in Maryland. The NWP sent over two hundred un-cataloged boxes to MARS several years ago. Upon further investigation it was discovered that Kenyon Rector's home in Columbus is privately owned. On her death in 1972 all her records were forwarded to the NWP headquarters in Washington. It is unknown what Rector did to the house.

At the time the article appeared about Kenyon Hayden Rector, decorator Madeleine McCandless signed a contract with the National Woman's Party to make alterations to the residence.⁶² Considering that Rector's plans can not be located perhaps McCandless was hired instead. McCandless's drawings are on file at the Historic American Building Survey (HABS). Reviewing her plans the following work was done: First floor (east side) facing Second Street, Northeast - a new window for council room, a new door for the kitchen. (West Side) facing garden - new double doors in library. Second floor (East Side) facing Second Street, Northeast - new window for bedroom number three, new bathroom between bedroom number three and number four. (West Side) facing garden - new window for bedroom number one.

The next recorded change to the property occurred in 1936 when a permit was given for the building of a concrete retaining wall along the alley on the West Side of the lot. The cost was \$450 and RK Ferguson, Inc recorded it.⁶³ Not until 1965 is the Sewall-Belmont House – as an architectural entity -- mentioned. At this time, the house was being considered as a possible new dwelling for the vice-president of the United States.⁶⁴

In 1974, the United States Congress authorized federal restoration funds be made available for the Sewall-Belmont House.⁶⁵ The bill authorized the National Park Service to conduct public tours and complete a feasibility study. It was believed restoration would cost \$300,000.⁶⁶ It is uncertain whether repairs of this magnitude were ever made as no records could be found. National Park Service records from the Office of Design Services, July 10, 1979, do show that a new steel retaining wall with a wrought iron fence was added on the south west of the property. Also, repairs of a storm sewer and patio paving were made, as well as the removal of a window in the basement (to create privacy for a ladies restroom).

Sometime during the twentieth century the stable section was attached to the rest of the house. A 1893 map of Washington clearly shows that the stable and house to be separate.⁶⁷ This attachment came in the form of a covered entryway between the old kitchen section and the stable. This change occurred along Second Street, Northeast, on the East Side of the property. Along with the stable connection it is evident that the porch which is located on the West Side of the kitchen section and attached to the main part of the house was also covered. The porch is covered with a fiber glass roof and has glass walls. These last two changes probably occurred since the NWP has owned the property.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION⁶⁸

A. General Statement

1. Architectural Character:

⁶²Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, National Woman's Party papers.

⁶³National Archives, Washington, D.C., Building Permit number 198028, December 8, 1936.

⁶⁴John B. Willmann, "Landmark," Washington Post, August 28, 1965.

⁶⁵Harvey Kabaker, "The Senate Sides With the Gals," Washington Star, June 20, 1974."

⁶⁶Kabaker, op.cit.

⁶⁷Plat Book of Washington, Volume 2, (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Griffith M. Hopkins, 1893).

⁶⁸Please see the HABS drawings and photographs that accompany this report for explanation of the floor plans and description of the facades, etc., in HABS No. DC-821, HABS/HAER Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

The house Robert Sewall left behind in December 1820 was built in the Adam Federal style (1780-1820). Adam style houses are described as follows:

The Adam house is commonly a single box, two or more rooms deep, with door and windows arranged in strict symmetry. Windows with doublehung sashes, multiple panes, usually five-ranked and symmetrically balanced with the center door. Cornice emphasized with tooth-like dentils or other decorative molding. Semicircular or elliptical fanlight over paneled door, typically accompanied by sidelights, elaborated crown and surround, and or extended, as small entry porch.⁶⁹

There are several possible roof types; side-gabled, hipped, or center-gabled. The characteristics of an Adam house are a fair description of the 1820 Sewall house.

As it appears today, the house is approximately 58' wide on its south front facade and 130' deep on the East Side including the kitchen and stable additions.⁷⁰ Architecturally, the house has evolved into a combination of several different styles, most notably with the addition of the half mansard roof. The alterations made over its two hundred year history produced a structure un-identifiable by stylistic label or period.⁷¹ The eclecticism of the architectural features in the Sewall-Belmont House prompted Mr. L. Morris Leisening, F.A.T.H., to comment that the house was an "interesting example of the development of architecture in the District of Columbia ... from the primitive type of colonial farm house through the Georgian, the Early American, the Federal, Classic Revival, Victorian and French Mansard periods."⁷²

2. Description of Exterior: As described by Carol Ann Poh in the nomination to the National Register for Historic Places, the Sewall-Belmont House

is rectangular, two and one half stories high on a raised basement, and is joined at the northeast corner to the kitchen (one and one half stories) and the stable (one story). A twentieth century addition with a terrace projects from the West Side of the kitchen.⁷³

The principal facade, of Flemish bond, is three bays across with a central portal. The front door features both sidelights and a very fine peacock fanlight under a molded arch with keystone. Paired stairs lead up to a central entrance and flank a round-arched doorway, which allows access to the basement.⁷⁴

The brick in this particular house has been measured and varies from 8 1/2 X 2 1/2 inches to 8 X 2 inches in different sections of the building. Also, the pattern of bricklaying ranges from Flemish Bond (main section) and English Bond through American Bond and Modern bricklaying (which has no definite pattern).⁷⁵

⁶⁹Venture For Architects, "Adam 1780-1820."

⁷⁰Suzanne Ganschinietz, National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form, June 16, 1972, p. 2.

⁷¹"The Rambler Writes of the Historic Sewall House," Washington Star, August 12, 1917.

⁷²"The Rambler Writes of the Historic Sewall House," Washington Star, August 12, 1917.

⁷³Carol Ann Poh, National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form, August 23, 1973, p. 2.

⁷⁴Poh, p. 2.

⁷⁵Margaret Cope, *The Alva Belmont House* (1953), p. 1.

Large windows on the first two floors are divided into three panels, each separated by mullions. The windows feature stone lintels with a decorative circle motif at the corners. A mansard roof was added in the late nineteenth century, as were the three wooden dormers with triangular pediments.⁷⁶

Judging from the rear roofline the original roof was probably gabled.⁷⁷

3. Description of Interior: Inside the house, both the first and second floors have a central hall plan with two rooms on either side.⁷⁸ The third floor has been turned into an apartment. Annabel Paxton writing for the Washington Star newspaper described the interior of the Sewall-Belmont House as

contain[ing] numerous fireplaces, with elaborately molded Chippendale mantels, typical of their period. Ceilings are high, many have well-proportioned cornices, the rooms stately and dignified with much furniture of a glorious past in American history. Doors are high, thick and massive, well paneled, hung on silver plated hinges and fitted with silver knobs.⁷⁹

Tradition holds that the doors on the first floor once belonged to Senator Daniel Webster of Massachusetts and were installed in the house when his Washington home was torn down.

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⁷⁶Poh, p. 1.

⁷⁷Ganschinietz, p. 1.

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PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Documentation of the Sewall-Belmont House was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (Habs/Haer) division of the National Park Service (NPS), E. Blaine Cliver, Chief. The project was sponsored by the National Capital Support Office (NCSO), NPS, Joseph Lawler, Superintendent; and by the National Capital Parks-East (NCPE), NPS, Gentry Davis, Superintendent. Representation at the National Woman's Party provided by, Paula Felt, Executive Director. Project planning was coordinated by Paul Dolinsky, Chief, HABS; by HABS Architects Raul Vazquez and Robert Arzola; by Catherine Lavoie, HABS Historian; by Rebecca Stevens, Historical Architect, NCSO, NPS; Frank Faragasso, Historian, NCPE, NPS. The field recording was conducted and the drawings were produced by HABS Architects Raul Vazquez and Virginia Lee; by architecture

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