Mackall Square
R St. Between 28th and 29th N.W.
Washington, D.C.

HABS No. DC-164

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Washington D.C.

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

Historic American Buildings Survey
Delos H. Smith, District Officer
1707 Eye St. N.W., Washington D.C.

ADDENDUM TO
MACKALL SQUARE
(Mackall House, Old)
1633 Twenty-ninth Street, NW
Georgetown
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-164

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ADDENDUM TO
MACKALL SQUARE
(Mackall House, Old)

HABS NO. DC-164

Location: 1633 Twenty-ninth Street, NW, Washington, D.C.

Present Owner: Deb and Ben Johns

Present Use: private residence

Significance: Mackall Square conveys better than any other property the rural, isolated nature of residences in Georgetown Heights --- the northern portion of Georgetown that was outside the early boundaries of the port of Georgetown --- in the late eighteenth/ early nineteenth century and the subsequent evolution of these properties into urban estates later in the nineteenth century and the evolution of Georgetown's infrastructure. Mackall Square was also associated with prominent Georgetown families and individuals.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date(s) of erection: In the popular press the brick portion of the house has been dated as 1820 or 1830 with the suggestion that the rear, frame portions are earlier, with perhaps some or all of the frame sections being remnants of a eighteenth-century hunting lodge. The classical revival style of the brick portion suggests it could have been erected anytime between approximately 1820 and 1860. It is known that the brick section was there by 1859 because its shows up in a detailed map by Albert Boschke published in 1861, based on a survey conducted between 1856 and 1859.

Benjamin Mackall was 57 years old in 1820 and died two years later (the dates for his wife, Chistriana Beall Mackall are unknown) so it is unlikely that he had the brick portion built in 1820 or that his widow had it built in 1830. It seems more likely that the brick portion was built by their son, Dr. Louis Mackall, sometime after he acquired the property in 1839. Therefore, it is concluded that the classical revival portion was erected between 1839 and 1859, probably closer to 1839.

The assessment records list Mackall Square as improved and valued at $2,000 in 1808. The next year it was described as a frame house. In 1813, it was improved and valued at $4,500, in 1815, improved and valued at $5,000 and three years later it is noted as frame improvement valued at $7,500. Allowing for the vagueness of the records and possible

fluctuations in currency, it seems reasonable to conclude that one or both of the small one story frame structures existed by 1808 and that the large two story frame structure was added by 1818.

In conclusion, a likely scenario based on interpreting assessment deed records, is that Benjamin and Christiana Mackall had the two frame ells and two story frame house in place by 1818 and that within a few years of their son's taking possession of the property (1839), he erected the formal brick house. (See historical context for a slightly different interpretation.)

2. Original and subsequent owners:

1805 Deed O-83 (3 7/8 acres)
Thomas Beall of Geo
To
Christiana Mackall, wife of Benjamin Mackall and daughter of Brooke Beall, dec'd

1839 Deed WB 72-295
Christiana Mackall
To
Louis Mackall (spelt Lewis on Peabody Room chain of title)

1867 Deed ECE 25-185
Louis Mackall, Sr.
To
Louis Mackall, Jr. (apparently Mackall Square partitioned into north and south parcels)

1874 Deed 734-472
Louis Mackall, Sr.
To
Louis Mackall, Jr. (more of square)

1901 Agreement 2547-348
concerning execution of Louis Mackall, Sr.'s will

1909 Deed 3259-476
apparently heirs of Louis Mackall, Jr. sell property
to other relatives

1911 Deed 3465-133
Quentin Mackall, et al
To
Herman Hollerith

1996 Deed (2 acres)
Estate of Hollerith
To
Deb and Ben Johns

(not all deeds listed)

3. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Unknown for earliest phases.

4. Original plans and construction: As stated above, it is assumed that the one story frame sections are the earliest and that the two story frame and brick wings were built later, mid-nineteenth century.

5. Alterations and additions: The house has been extensively altered in the frame addition (kitchen) and the adjacent porch was handsomely renovated into a family room. On the east facade, a second story landing off the stairs appears to be an addition. All first floor rooms seem to have had at least some cosmetic alterations, such as removal of doors, replacement of hardware, or addition of built-in cabinets. As the basement and second floor were not inspected, any alterations there are unknown.

B. Historical Context:

Sally Somervell Mackall wrote an article on Mackall Square and a book on Georgetown that raise intriguing issues and provide unique insights. She pointed out that Benjamin Mackall and his brother Leonard each married a daughter of Brooke Beall, thereby doubly uniting two powerful, wealthy merchant families. Mackall went on to write that Brooke Beall gave each daughter: "a double square on Georgetown Heights; to Benjamin Mackall's wife, part of the Rock of Dumbarton, known as Mackall Square, where quite a large frame house was built, where the family resided in the winter. One hundred years ago this building was removed to another portion of the Beall estate on Congress Street, where it still stands in better condition than most modern houses. In its place on Mackall Square was built a handsome brick house of Colonial architecture, with large halls, and great square rooms on either side, lighted by four windows, situated on a high eminence overlooking the city of Washington, which spreads like a broad panorama to view." (pages 154 and 159, *Early Days of Georgetown*, copyrighted 1899 by S.S. Mackall, and privately printed). Congress Street became 31st Street and the current Louis Mackall confirmed that the family owned a home at 31st and O Street, although it is not frame. Ms. Mackall was writing sometime before 1899, so she contended that the frame house was removed by the Mackalls 100 years earlier in approximately 1799 and the new brick house was presumably built shortly after the frame house was moved. This makes the brick structure much older than either the assessment records or architecture style would support. Ms. Mackall's scenario also suggests that Benjamin and Christiana Beall Mackall owned and occupied the property six years before the deed was executed. When they married is unknown, but around 1790 seems plausible as their first child was born in ___. It seems unlikely that Ms. Mackall

would err in her own family genealogy, but it is highly possible that she was confused in terms of her family's architectural history. Perhaps in 1799 the Bealls did move the frame structure from Mackall Square to 31st Street and erect a new, larger frame structure in its place, attaching it to the two small frame structures, which had been erected in the early nineteenth century. Ms. Mackall was probably repeating family history and she confused the brick structure, which is obviously early to mid-nineteenth century, with the two story frame structure behind it.

In her article on Mackall Square she wrote: "When the town of Georgetown was laid out, it was decided that no street should extent beyond Back Street (Q Street); this was changed some years later, and my grandfather Mackall gave to the District the street extending entirely around 'Mackall Square'. No sooner was this done than the Government proceeded to ruin his place by making deep cuts on either side, and did not think it worth while to give any compensation." This description explains why Mackall Square sits several feet above 28th and 29th Streets. Alterations to many of the Georgetown streets have placed several of the houses a floor higher to the street than when built, but Mackall Square is the most dramatic example of how street changes (placing sewers, leveling and resurfacing) have drastically altered the relationship of an early nineteenth-century house and its surroundings to the transportation infrastructure.

William Gordon, long-time Georgetown resident and real estate lawyer and historian wrote of Mackall Square and its occupants: "Dr. Mackall, who had graduated in medicine at the University of Maryland in 1824, after practicing for a number of years, retired and devoted himself to literary pursuits. He was a great student and a man of such culture, his published works, especially those upon philosophical and scientific subjects, showing research and ability of a high order. Until within the past few years the property has been the home and in possession of the family. The dwelling house was a large double brick, without architectural beauty, but commodious and well built. With its out-buildings it remains as originally built in the middle of the square." (Records of the Columbia Historical Society, vol. 18, p. 85, date 1914).

As Gordon points out, the Mackall family was not only descended from important eighteenth-century Maryland property owners, merchants, and patriots, but later Mackalls such as Dr. Mackall achieved prominence. And the first non-Mackall to own the property, Herman Hollerith, achieved wealth and importance as the inventor of the punch card system, which was the basis for the International Business Machine company. He built the large Georgian revival house south of Mackall Square and rented out Mackall Square. While Georgetown residences are most often thought of as being owned and occupied by the wealthy, often they were rented out as was Mackall Square. And often the renters are of greater historical importance, as was seen in the Scott-Grant House (HABS No. DC-824), than the property owners.

Authors Mackall and Gordon in their discussions of Mackall Square raise interesting issues about the social history (such as the use of marriage to solidify political and economic power) of Georgetown and about its topographical evolution that go regretfully beyond the scope

of this study of Mackall Square.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: Mackall Square's architectural character is derived from the brick structure at the south end of the building. The apparently older frame sections at the north end have minor details such as early doors which are of some interest, but otherwise the frame ell sections convey no sense of architectural style or period. The brick section, by contrast, suggests a late Federal period /early classical revival massing with distinctive classical revival detailing, most impressive in the front porch with four ionic columns and in the distinctive lintels with canaliculus at the ends and in the middle. The tall, nearly square front parlors clearly label the interior as being classical revival.

2. Condition of the fabric: Good condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Mackall Square is roughly L-shaped with the base three bays wide and one bay deep. Behind the base of the L is another slightly narrower section of wood rather than brick, but both are two stories with gable roofs. Behind this second section are two one story, narrow ells in a row, also with gables. Separate from this section and a few feet north is a quite small brick structure referred to as the privy, however, if it is old enough to have functioned as one is uncertain.

2. Foundations: The foundation is of brick with no demarcation between it and the wall.

3. Walls: The front elevation is laid in Flemish bond, while the side walls are laid in American bond. The other sections of the house are covered by clapboard. Some of the clapboard is of large rough boards, while other boards are much smoother and beaded. The second ell (farther north) has clapboards of varying widths that have settled unevenly, suggesting it is older. It is apparent that a significant amount of the clapboard has been patched or replaced.

4. Structural system, framing: It is assumed that the front section is load-bearing masonry construction, with heavy timber framing and that the rear sections are timber framing.

5. Porches, stoops: Across the center bay of the front elevation, four fluted ionic columns support an entablature and balustrade in front of the second story center window bay. Pilasters corresponding to the outside columns of the porch flank the front door. The pilasters also echo the pedestals between the balusters. These pedestals align with the columns below. Each pedestal is flanked by an engaged half baluster. On the ground level of the porch, wrought iron railing of late nineteenth century appearance is placed between the pilasters and outside

fluted columns. In keeping with the fully detailed columns and capitals, the porch ceiling has a crown molding and incised panel treatment. Wooden steps lead up to the porch, which has a wooden floor. This floor is supported by brick side walls that by pattern, size, and color of brick and thickness of the mortar joints are not consistent (i.e., are later) with the other brick facades.

6. Chimneys: The end walls of the brick section (west and east) each contain a chimney and a third chimney is in the two story frame section, mid-point along the ridge.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance is on the south facade of the brick section and is a Federal-style doorway with fanlight above and sidelights (three lights above a panel). The fanlight archivolt is unsupported, lacking either impost or pilaster. The door is six-paneled, with four tall vertical panels separated by a tall lock rail, and two horizontal panels at the top.

Several secondary doorways exist including three in the ell, one on the east facade leading to a small storage space, and four French doors on the recently enclosed porch, now family room. The doors in the last section of the ell consist of vertical boards, with the simplest door surrounds, suggesting very early door and doorways or very inexpensive replacement door. The door and door surround in the south ell is a six-paneled door, again with a simple surround. On the west facade of the two story frame section, closest to the brick section, a door has been cut down to a window, with a double paneled section below the window sill.

b. Windows: On the front elevation of the brick section, there are eight windows of six over six sash, with stone sills and lintels. The lintels have canaliculus detailing at the center and ends. The second story center window is the most elaborate, with six over six sash window flanked by four sidelights, with wooden panels below all the windows, and lintel decorated with canaliculus. This design clearly echoes the entrance below. At the basement, there are four french windows of four lights, with wooden sills. At least some of these windows had metal bars, square in section, and some are still in place. The first and second story windows of the south facade have shutters, while those on the east and west facades have been removed from the six over six windows. On the north facade of the brick section a second story window has a metal in-fill panel, apparently replacing the bottom sash of what was a three sash window of six lights each sash.

The windows in the ell are of several sizes and lack shutters. In the two story frame section most windows are six over six with some of them being nine over six and the window below the gable being four over four sash. The one story ells have four over four windows.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The brick section has a gable roof running east to west and covered with slate, as are the other roofs. The adjacent two story frame section has a gable roof running

north to south, as do the two ells. A flat roof covers the family room.

b. Cornice, eaves: A two course brick cornice exists on the south facade of the brick section.

c. Dormers: One shed roof dormer, lacking in architectural treatment, is on the west facade of the two story frame section. The dormer abuts the brick section.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: The brick section has one room to either side of the center hall. Behind these three rooms is a narrow cross corridor for stairs. In the adjacent frame section is the kitchen and it flows into the family room which is directly east of the kitchen. A door at the north end of the kitchen opens into the first ell. That ell is separated from the rear ell by a fireplace wall. Each ell is essentially one room with small partitioned space for bathrooms in the north ell and laundry in the south ell.

Neither the basement nor the second floors was inspected.

2. Stairway: The two stairs are located in the narrow brick appendage at the north of the brick section. A narrow closed-well stairs up to the second floor runs along the west side of the appendage. Along the east side, a stairs with baluster and newel runs up to a landing at the second floor. Below this run is a stairs to the basement. Neither stairway seems adequate for a house of such well designed classical revival style and both stairs appear to have been built as service stairs.

3. Flooring: Random width wooden flooring in the center hall, flanking rooms, and stair hall. In the family room and kitchen are recent wooden floors. The first ell has a wooden floor. The second ell, which is a locked storage room, has a floor of unknown material.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls and ceilings in the brick portion are of plaster and lack crown molding, although there are plain baseboards.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways, doors and windows: The rooms to either side of the center hall have the same window and door surrounds, consisting of fluted piers, on plinths, supporting a simple entablature that projects out over the piers. The reveals are paneled. Only in the center hall do the surrounds become more elaborate by the addition of bull's-eye corners and fluted entablature. The window surrounds on the south wall of both rooms are slightly taller than the window surrounds on the east and west walls. Also the door and cabinet surrounds in the north wall of the west room are taller than door and window surrounds on the east and west walls. In the west room, french panels have been installed at the top of the door surround leading to

kitchen.

The most elaborate door surround is that of the main door, which is more fully developed than the exterior treatment. Unlike the exterior, the entablature of the fanlight is supported, on the interior, by fluted pilasters.

All interior doors in the three rooms of the brick section have been removed.

6. Decorative features and trim: The front parlors have matching marble fireplace mantels in off-white marble. Capped by a plain mantel shelf, the mantel has beaded edges and archivolt, with a centered half-round crocket or corbel of flower buds and leaves, with the spandrels incised with the same naturalistic decoration.

At the north end of the center hall, an arch demarcates the front of this main block of the house from the stair appendage. The arch, which has paneled reveals, is supported by fluted pilasters and is capped with a keystone. On the south front of the keystone, a metal hook remains, suggesting that at some time an object, such as a lamp, was hung from the keystone.

7. Hardware: The front door retains a door pull and lock box that appear original. Part of the door pull on the interior also is still extant. A door pull remains on the west facade of the two story frame section, next to the door that was cut down to a window.

8. Mechanical systems: The house is heated by hot water radiators. Moreover, beneath the windows in the front parlors and in alcoves in center hall, what appear to be flat, electric heating panels have been added.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Mackall Square originally included the entire block bounded by 28th, 29th, R, and Q Streets. In the mid-nineteenth century, the southern parcel was sold off and much later, the northern edge facing R Street was sold off and developed as row houses. At present, Mackall Square has still generous acreage for Georgetown of 2 acres, but the southern and northern boundaries have changed dramatically by the addition of houses and their rear, and in some cases, side yards. But the immediate surroundings of the house remain open with trees, plantings, and grass. Young trees have recently been added to provide a buffer between this house and the others on the block. Older, larger trees also provide a buffer, especially along the east edge of the property.

A driveway from 29th Street approaches the house from the north or back of the property. The landscaping and surroundings are largely naturalistic, but formal or planned elements exist in front of the house with a curved walkway linking the circular end of driveway to the front porch and to a sitting area east of the house. A meandering footpath runs along the east, south and part of the west perimeters of the property.

The family room has a stone terrace on its east and a stone path on its north which leads to the rectangular pool and pool house beyond. West of the pool is a garage and drive, concealed by trees.

2. Historic landscape design: Unknown.

3. Outbuildings: The pool and pool house are very recent additions that could be considered as outbuildings. The only other outbuildings are the garage (early twentieth century), and the privy, close to but not attached to the ell.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The vast majority of archival information was from the Peabody Room of the Georgetown Branch of the D.C. Public Library. This material included realtor sale brochures, recent Georgetown newspaper articles, genealogical material most likely from the Daughters of the American Revolution Library, and deed and assessment records from the National Archives. In all likelihood this material was compiled by the late Robert W. Lyle, archivist at the Peabody Room, who in 1963 prepared an index to Mackall's history of Georgetown (cited below).

The Historical Society of Washington's library was the source of the William Gordon and Sally Mackall articles (volume 18, 1914) and Mackall's book , *Early Days of Washington*, which her family donated to the library.

Louis Mackall was helpful with details of the family genealogy and concerning the Mackall house on 31st Street. Also, he suggested that his ancestor, Dr. Louis Mackall built the classical revival brick section. (Note: The family pronounces the name MAY kall).

Reps, John W. *Washington on View: The Nation's Capital Since 1790.* Chapel Hill. University of North Carolina. 1991.

Prepared by : Bill Lebovich, architectural historian, September 1999.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Georgetown Documentation Project was sponsored by the Commission of Fine Arts and undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) of the National Park Service. Principals involved were Charles H. Atherton, Secretary, U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, and E. Blaine Cliver, Chief, HABS/HAER. The documentation was undertaken in two phases. The summer 1998 team was supervised by John P. White, FAIA, Professor of Architecture, Texas Tech University; and architecture technicians Robert C. Anderson, Boston Architectural Center; Aimee Charboneau, Tulane University; Irwin J. Gueco, The Catholic University of America; and Adam Maksay, United

States/International Council on Monuments and Sites (US/ICOMOS) architect from the Transylvania Trust. Historic research was initiated by Bryan C. Green, historian, Richmond, Virginia, during this summer. The summer 1999 team was supervised by Roger S. Miller, architect, Alexandria, Virginia, and architecture technicians David Benton, The Catholic University of America; Edward Byrdy, The Catholic University of America; Irwin J. Gueco, The Catholic University of America; and Clara Albert, US/ICOMOS architect from the Transylvania Trust. The project historian, and author of the written reports, was William Lebovich, architectural historian, Chevy Chase, Maryland. The photography was undertaken by Jack E. Boucher, HABS staff photographer, and James Rosenthal, photographic assistant.