

Richard Curtis House
(Dolley Madison House, in recent times,
the (Cosmos Club)
SE Cor. Madison Pl. & H St.
Washington, D. C.

NABS No. DC-58

HABS
DC
WASH
32-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Washington 25, D.C.

ADDITION
FOLLOWS...

Dolley Madison House, in recent times,
the Cosmos Club
SE Cor. Madison Pl. & H St.
Washington, D. C.

HABS No. DC-58

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DC.
WASH.

Present Owner: U. S. Government

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Present Occupant and Use: National Science Foundation

Description

Brick stuccoed with 3½ stories and basement. The Dolley Madison House has undergone so many radical alterations that the building is of sentimental rather than architectural interest. It appears to have been designed as a typical 3-bay brick town house, undoubtedly with entrance on Madison Place. In all likelihood its height was raised when Major Greek Revival details were added - the modillion cornice, narrow windows in frieze formed by applied bead-and-reel moulding underneath. Apparently there was a string course at the first floor level. Incidentally the lowest window heads seem earlier than those above. Present projecting bay window on H Street is Victorian, as are over-all sash treatments. Cast-iron balcony across the front facade must have been a relatively late addition.

Historical Data

Year of erection: 1820

Built for (first owner): Richard Cutts

Architect: Unknown

Builder: Probably Richard Cutts

Notable events and occupants

Social center of Washington where the widowed Dolley Madison spent the last 12 years of her life. This building is reported to have been built by Mrs. Madison's brother-in-law, Richard Cutts who was unable to maintain it. Ownership passed to James Madison a few years after completion in satisfaction of a debt. After Madison's death in 1836, the widow is said to have devoted the proceeds from the sale of his papers to Congress, to modernizing the mansion for her use. From 1837 to her death in 1849 it was a social center of the city. Here on New Year's Day guests came to make a ceremonial call on Mrs. Madison after visiting the White House.

References: W.P.A. Guide, pp. 454-55, 653. HABI form prepared by T. Russell Jones and Worth Bailey, HABS, National Park Service. December, 1958. Harold Donaldson Eberlein and Cortlandt Van Dyke Hubbard, Historic Houses of Georgetown, and Washington City Richmond, 1958. On page 276 appears a reproduction of contemporary drawing showing House in original condition.

Richard Cutts House (Dolley Madison House;
Old Cosmos Club)
1518 H Street, NW
Washington
District of Columbia

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Addendum to

Dolley Madison House, in recent
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SE corner Madison Place and H Street
Washington, D.C.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240