

NATIONAL PARK SEMINARY, COLONIAL HOUSE
(Walter Reed Medical Center Annex, Building No. 110)
2745 Dewitt Circle
Silver Spring
Montgomery County
Maryland

HABS No. MD-1109-L

HABS
MD
16-SILSPR,
2L

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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

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Location: 2745 DeWitt Circle; south of the castle and east of the windmill.

Significance: The Colonial House was the Phi Delta Psi sorority house. Its Classical or Colonial Revival design was popular in the late nineteenth century because of the nationalism stirred up by the Bicentennial celebrations and the World's Columbian Exposition, and because of the xenophobia caused by massive foreign immigration. The architectural style was common component of fashionable Beaux-Art site plans.¹ It was one of three Classical Revival buildings constructed by Cassedy near the end of his building campaign.

History: The Delta sorority house was built in 1904. According to NPS historian Ric Nelson, the Delta sorority house originally was intended to be oriented perpendicular to its presence stance.² It was to be a gatehouse with traffic passing through its central arch. It might have been realigned because it would have blocked the view to campus from the bridge, it interfered with other construction projects to the north of it, or it was too prominently positioned compared to the other sororities.³ The central arch was originally open. It was filled in between 1908 and 1914.

The clubhouse originally had first-floor porticos with balustraded roof decks on the north and south ends. By 1914, a large awning was added to the second floor balcony on the north side.⁴ By 1931, but probably in 1927, the awning at the north end was removed and replaced with a two-story portico with full-height square columns. On the south end, the first-floor porch was enclosed and a second story was added above it. According to a local historian, an arched window was removed from the original southern facade and placed in the new first floor enclosure.⁵

¹ For a more complete description and analysis of the Classical Revival and Beaux-Arts design, see the campus planning section in HABS No. MD-1109.

² Ric Nelson, "A School for Girls," Part 1.

³ Nelson, "A School for Girls," Part 1 and "Tour of Forest Glen," typescript of a tour guide of the site by an unidentified author, ca. 1970s.

⁴ I did not find historic views of the north facade so I don't know if the same changes were made there as well.

⁵ From "Tour of Forest Glen."

Description: The narrow rectangular building is crowded with many architectural elements that are symmetrically arranged on the facades. The flat-roofed building is crowned with a large dentiled cornice and balustrade. It is covered with yellow-painted stucco with white trim. The north facade has a full-height portico with second-story porch. It was originally a one-story porch with roof deck. The columns are square with a shallow recessed design. The first floor has a center door flanked by full-length sidelights that are divided by pilasters. The second floor has a Palledian window surround with a center door flanked by windows. A plain rail on the second-story porch replaced an earlier balustrade.

The east and west sides are divided by five full-height pilasters. The west facade has a large round-arched opening with fanlight at top and four-part door and window grouping below. The second-story windows at either end resemble the first-floor center pattern. They have round-arched openings with curved diamond-pattern lights above and a center sash flanked by narrow casements below. The second-story windows between them are tripartite double-sash windows.

The east facade is similar to the west facade except it has an exposed high basement since the building is banked into the hillside. The ground floor has five enclosed round arches. The first floor has a center oversized semicircular fanlight over four doors with pointed arch traceries. The doors used to open on to a porch, but the porch is now enclosed. Two small round-arched windows flank the entryway. Windows at either end of the second story are similar to those on the west facade. There used to be two small round windows above the door but they were replaced by two-over-two double-sash windows.

At the south end, the first-floor portico is filled in. The first floor porch is enclosed in glass and the second floor is fully enclosed. A small balustraded porch leads up to a first-floor doorway that is flanked by adjoining sidelights. The Chateau causeway enters the south facade at the second story.

ADDENDUM TO:
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PHOTOGRAPHS

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