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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

a. BACKGROUND INFORMATION: Gunston Hall, an architectural gem overlooking the Potomac River 15 miles south of Alexandria, is a fitting monument to George Mason, constitutionalist. Mason (1725-92) is most noted for the various constitutional papers he wrote during the Revolutionary and immediate post-Revolutionary periods, including the "Fairfax Resolves" of 1774, relating to the constitutional position of the colonies and the mother country; the "Virginia Declaration of Rights" in 1776, which furnished at least a part of the inspiration for the Declaration of Independence and the Federal Bill of Rights; and the "Objections to the Proposed Constitution" in 1788, setting forth the basis of his opposition to the adoption of the Federal Constitution. Though Mason's fight against ratification of the Constitution failed in Virginia, most of his objections finally proved valid. Almost as important as his public writings was his influence upon his younger colleagues, many of whom became leaders in Virginia and national politics.

Mason built Gunston Hall during the years 1755-58, employing William Buckland, a skilled craftsman from Oxfordshire, to do the interior wood carving. The house is comparatively small and plain, but with elaborate projecting porches on both the land and river sides. The interior, surprisingly spacious, is notable for the quality of its ornamentation. Outstanding are the Palladian drawing room, with a great variety of intricately carved wood and brocade-covered walls, and the Chinese Chippendale room, almost as elaborately decorated. The grounds are featured by a boxwood allee, 12 feet high and 250 feet long, surrounded by formal gardens, all originally planted by Mason.

b. BOUNDARIES: 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 point of beginning. S

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| PERIOD (Check One or More as | Appropriate) | | |
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| Pre-Columbian) | 🔲 16th Century | 🔀 18th Century | 20th Century |
| 15th Century | 17th Century | [] 19th Century | · • |
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| REAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Ch | eck One or More as Appropris | ate) | |
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This structure, a colonial architectural gem, is a living monument to George Mason, noted for his constitutional papers of basic importance in American history, including the "Virginia Declaration of Rights" of 1776, which was in part an inspiration for the Declaration of Independence and the Federal Bill of Rights. Owned by the Commonwealth of Virginia and administered by the National Society of Colonial Dames of America.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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