

Morris-Jumel Mansion

Individual Landmark

65 Jumel Terrace

Designation Date: July 12, 1967



Morris-Jumel Mansion April 1, 1976

Image courtesy of the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission

Of this impressively handsome pre-Revolutionary Georgian Mansion, it can truly be said that George Washington slept there. This historic house, with its columned and pedimented portico, displays a true feeling of grandeur and elegance. Well sited, on sloping landscaped grounds on one of the highest elevations in Manhattan, this two and one-half story spacious country residence, now renovated, restored, and refurbished as a museum, ranks among the most beautiful of our nation's historic shrines.

The architectural massing of this imposing residence is superb. Its formal arrangement of well-proportioned windows is typically Georgian in style. The pedimented portico, with its slender two-story Doric columns, seemingly belongs to the Federal period, however, it is part of the original house. The columns resting on pedestals support a low-pitched pediment with dentils, containing a handsome half-round window, with double keystone blocks. Steps set between the center columns lead to the portico and to a stately front entrance doorway with flanking sidelights, and handsome elliptical fanlight. The sidelights contain delicate tracery filled with tinted glass. Another feature of the front facade is the elegant central Palladian window at the second floor, above the entrance, with an ornamental balcony in front of this window. Built of brick, this house is encased in wood, with wood corner blocks (quoins) imitating stone. The house has a fine dentilled cornice at the roof line, while the captain's walk which crowns the roof consists of an ornate balustrade.

Colonel Roger Harris, a British loyalist sympathizer, built this country house in 1765 when he was a member of the Executive Council of the Province of New York. He had come to America in 1746, a youthful Captain in the British Army. He fought with General Braddock in the French and Indian War and then, as a Major and later as a Colonel, he served with General Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham in Quebec. Colonel Morris and his family lived in the mansion, which they named Mount Morris, until 1775, when he fled to England at the beginning of hostilities. Upon his return to New York in the latter part of 1777, Colonel Morris, at the insistence of the British Government, was given the post of Inspector of the Claims of Refugees, a position he held until 1783, when he and his family returned to England.

After the disastrous Battle of Long Island, General Washington retreated to Harlem Heights and made the Morris home his headquarters. (September 14–October 18, 1776). Upon evacuation by the American forces, the British moved in, and the Morris Mansion housed General Sir Henry Clinton and his officers, and at intervals the Hessians during the seven years the British occupied New York City. When peace was declared, the house and land were confiscated and sold by the Commissioners of Forfeiture.

For 25 years, the mansion changed hands several times, and for a while it even served as a tavern. In 1810, Stephen Jumel, a wealthy French merchant, purchased it. Madame Jumel restored, renovated, and refurbished the neglected mansion, not as it was in the Morris family's day, but in the Napoleonic Empire Style with 19th century Federal Style detail so popular with our new nation. In 1832, a year after the death of Stephen Jumel, Madame Jumel married Aaron Burr, former Vice President of the United States. She lived on in the house until 1865.

In 1903, when the old mansion was put on the market for sale, a group of patriotic women petitioned the city to buy the house and grounds, and preserve it for posterity. The City of New York purchased the property and, by a special act of legislation, custodianship was given to the Washington Headquarters Association, founded by the Daughters of the American Revolution, who restored it as a Museum. The house is owned and maintained by the City of New York under the Department of Parks, and is open to the public.

In 1945, the house was again renovated and refurbished, and the grounds landscaped again. There are many fine architectural features within the interior. A rear wing contains an exceptionally handsome pre-Revolutionary War octagonal drawing room on the first floor. The many rooms contain personal belongings of Roger Morris, President George Washington, and Madame Jumel and Aaron Burr. It is superbly furnished, combining pre-Revolutionary War Georgian pieces with those of the American Federal and French Empire Styles.

[Read the full NYC LPC designation report here.](#)