

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic LESTER ARMOUR HOUSE

and/or common

2. Location

street & number _____ not for publication

city, town LAKE BLUFF _____ vicinity of

state ILLINOIS code 012 county LAKE code 097

3. Classification

| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use | |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district | <input type="checkbox"/> public | <input type="checkbox"/> occupied | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> museum |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied | <input type="checkbox"/> commercial | <input type="checkbox"/> park |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <input type="checkbox"/> both | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress | <input type="checkbox"/> educational | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment | <input type="checkbox"/> religious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | <input type="checkbox"/> in process | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input type="checkbox"/> other: |

4. Owner of Property

name LA SALLE NATIONAL BANK TRUST NUMBER: 101845

street & number 135 S. LA SALLE STREET

city, town CHICAGO _____ vicinity of state ILL 60603

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. LAKE COUNTY COURTHOUSE

street & number

city, town WAUKEGAN _____ state ILLINOIS

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title NONE has this property been determined eligible? _____ yes no

date _____ federal _____ state _____ county _____ local

depository for survey records

city, town _____ state

7. Description

| | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Condition | | Check one | Check one |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins | <input type="checkbox"/> altered | <input type="checkbox"/> moved date 1931 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed | | |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

SUMMARY PARAGRAPH:

Located on a bluff overlooking Lake Michigan at the North edge of Lake Bluff, Illinois, the Lester Armour House is the focal point of what originally was a 73 acre estate lying between Sheridan Road and Lake Michigan. Although the estate is now subdivided, the former lands of Lester Armour still retain the stands of original forest which has qualified the subdivided properties for listing in the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory. The five acre parcel on which the Armour House is now situated, plus the long drive from Sheridan Road through the heavily wooded parcels, hardly affects the historical impression of the former Armour residence as the center of a great country estate in the Lake Bluff-Lake Forest tradition. The house itself does not seem to have been altered at all, either externally or internally, from what it was when built by Armour in 1931. It still has its forecourt flanked by brick dependencies and iron fence, none of which have been altered. The main house fronting both on the forecourt and on the lake is equally intact on the exterior so that the 18th century revival character given it by architect, David Adler, can still be fully appreciated. Inside all major rooms are intact including the details of surface treatment: paneling, plaster, moldings, floors, wallpapers, etc.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF SITE, HOUSE AND DEPENDENCIES

The Lester Armour House occupies a five acre tract overlooking Lake Michigan from a bluff 73 feet above the lake. The house is set back 150 feet from the face of the bluff (to the East) and 2800 feet (approximately 1/2 mile from Sheridan Road).

The house consists of a square center portion, 58 feet on a side, with wings on the North and South side that together form a rectangular block containing the principal rooms of the house. It is two stories plus attic and basement in height, 58 x 103 feet overall. Connected to this block by curving arcades are two dependencies. The North arcade contains the kitchen, butler's pantry and a curving passageway while that on the South contains only a curving passageway. Each dependency is two stories in height and measures 26 x 50 feet. These with the main rectangular block form a forecourt that is enclosed on the West side by a wall with an iron fence. Within the courtyard is a circular driveway.

The large rectangular center section of 58 x 103 feet contains the principal living rooms on the first floor with sleeping rooms above. Storage and servants rooms are in the attic with space for utilities and storage in the basement. Despite the absolute symmetry of the dependencies, they serve quite different functions. The North dependency contains servant's rooms and ancillary functions: laundry, kitchen, pantry, etc. On the first floor of the South dependency there is a motor room, a school room and a flower room. There are two guest rooms, each with attached bath, on the second floor.

The house, dependencies and connecting passageways are constructed of Chicago common brick originally painted white. The trim is wood with balconies and window guards of wrought iron. The roof is slate.

SEE Continuation Sheet Pages 2 thru 7

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GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF SITE, HOUSE AND DEPENDENCIES (Continued)

The circulation plan of the house is cruciform. From the entrance, one passes through a circular foyer to the stair hall and from there into another hall leading East running at right angles.³ The four primary living rooms, which are on the East side, have views of the lake. From North to South they are the dining room (32' x 21'), the breakfast room (21' x 18'), the library (21' x 21') and the living room (36' x 21'). A living porch (27' x 24') opens off the living room on the South side of the house. On the West side of the main floor of the house, on either side of the foyer, are the men's and women's dressing rooms and toilets. In the center of the house the large stair hall (14' x 53') is oriented North to South and has a grand spiral staircase at its North end.

This staircase leads to a second floor hall of the same size and orientation as the hall on the ground floor. In the Northeast corner of the second floor is a room that was assigned to the governess (20' x 16'). The children's sleeping porch (11' x 21'), a linen room (9' x 17') and a child's bedroom complete the North end of the second floor. The owner's quarters occupy the South side of the building including a sleeping porch (12' x 21'), Mrs. Armour's dressing room and bath (12' x 15'), the master bedroom (16' x 21') and Mr. Armour's dressing room and bath (11' x 14' main area with an additional irregularly shaped space 7' x 10'). Between the owner's quarters on the South and the previously mentioned rooms on the North are two additional children's bedrooms and three baths. There are 12,000 square feet on the two floors of the main part of the house.

LIST OF ROOMS IN ARMOUR HOUSE

Living Spaces

- Living Room
- Living Porch
- Library
- Dining Room
- Dining Porch
- Breakfast Room
- Seven Bedrooms
- Two Sleeping Porches
- Games Room
- School Room

Service, Utility and Storage Spaces

- Boiler Room
- Two Basement Storage Rooms
- Stole Room
- Pressing Room
- Kitchen Stores
- Butler's Pantry
- Butler's Entry
- Silver Vault

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LIST OF ROOMS IN ARMOUR HOUSE (Continued)

Service, Utility and Storage Spaces (Continued)

Kitchen
Linen Room
Refectory
Laundry
Flower Room
Motor Room
Attic Storage Room
Sewing Room
Cedar Room
Trunk Room
14 Bathrooms
8 Toilets

Servant's Rooms

Houseman's Room
8 Maid's Rooms
Service Hall
Service Porch

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE HOUSE

Approaching the house from the court on the West, the visitor enters into a circular vestibule. Its floor is black marble inlaid with a compass design. The walls are decorated with a wainscot, vertical plaster bundles of foliage, and a modillioned cornice.

Pedestal tables flank the entry (a gilt eagle with spread wings forms the pedestal) over which are hung gilt mirrors. The original lantern fixture hangs from the ceiling.

East of the foyer is the gallery or stair hall with a North-South orientation. A spiral staircase is located at the North end of this hall. Flanking the door from the foyer are two built-in cabinets with faux marbre tops. A door just beyond each of the cabinets leads respectively to the women's dressing room and toilet (on the South) and the men's dressing room and toilet (on the North). The doors to the living room at the South end of the gallery are flanked by niches containing unusual faux marbre urns with an entwined snake motif. Still in place is the original wall paper which has a frieze of repeating Indian heads that, according to Pratt was common in the Federal Period.⁴ According to Alexandra Armour, the paper was purposefully put on upside down and then overpainted by Adler.⁵ Other original decorative elements in the gallery are the black and white marble floor and the two chandeliers.

South of the gallery is the living room. Even though the dimensions of this room, 21 x 36 feet, make it exceedingly large by any standards, by paying special attention to its proportions and by breaking up the wall surfaces vertically with openings, false doors, the fireplace and overmantel, and horizontally by the wainscot and cornice Adler managed, as he does elsewhere in the house to provide a comfortable, even intimate scale. These effects combined with laying the parquet floor on a diagonal enabled the architect to achieve a comfortable scale.

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE HOUSE (Continued)

The moldings in this room, despite their obvious classical derivation are quite original and demonstrate that Adler was a creative architect in spite of the apparent derivative character of his artistic vocabulary. A painting in the 18th Century French landscape tradition is framed by the molding of the overmantel. Adler's penchant for achieving absolute symmetry in the Armour House is emphasized by the double doors flanking the fireplace. As was common in the Eighteenth Century, one pair is false: those to the West are doors to the gallery; those to the East do not open. From the living room, a door leads to the living porch on the South side of the house.

On axis with the vestibule and East of the stair hall is a center hall which opens onto the grounds overlooking the lake. The original light fixture and built-in consoles on either side of this hall remain in place.

Adjoining the center hall on the South is a paneled library that Adler purchased from a house in England or France.⁶ The room was designed to fit the paneling. The overmantel of its fireplace is crowned by a broken pediment with scrolls. Niches flank it. A built-in radio and record player are concealed by paneling under these niches.

A breakfast room opens into the center hall on its North side. The white and cream color scheme of painted wood trim and wainscot, and the fireplace of simple design supporting a rectangular overmantel flanked by two plain pilasters serves as a backdrop for the scenic wallpaper said to be from a house in England,⁷ which is the focal point of the decorative scheme.

Further North is the dining room with its finely detailed paneled wainscot, modillioned cornice, elegant doorway and window surrounds and decorative chimney breast with a broken pediment filled with a carved eagle with spread wings. The original crystal chandelier still hangs in the room. Further to the North, opening off the dining room is a dining porch, exposed to the open air except for screen panels.⁸

The butler's pantry that adjoins the dining room on the West forms a stark contrast to the period designs of the main living spaces just described because of its veneered cabinets and walls carried out in a moderne style of the early 1930's. In a corner of the butler's pantry is a safe for silver service storage.

A spiral staircase illuminated by an overhead skylight leads from the North end of the gallery to the second floor. There is another skylight at the South end of the second floor hall.

Opening off the center hall on the second floor are the principal bedrooms, sleeping porches, and bathrooms of the house. On the West side of the hall is the governess' room and a child's room separated by a bathroom. To the South of the child's room is the owner's sleeping porch. A children's sleeping porch is located North of the governess' room.

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE HOUSE (Continued)

East of the owner's sleeping porch is Mrs. Armour's dressing room and bath which adjoins the master bedroom. This bathroom is the most dramatic room of the second story. Its surfaces are almost totally covered by mirrors. The ceiling is surfaced with a silver foil. Its floor is black marble with a silver colored inlay in place of grout with a decorative steel leaf also inlaid. The bath tub enclosure and sink are made of beige veined marble. Like the butler's pantry, it was cast in a contemporaneous style when built. It is an Art Deco room with characteristic vertical clusters of reeding framing the door openings and a tiered chandelier also typical of the period.

East of Mrs. Armour's dressing room and bath is the master bedroom and North of the bedroom is Mr. Armour's dressing room and bath. Also on the East side of the house and North of the master bedroom suite are two children's rooms separated by a bath. On the West, a linen room adjoins the Northernmost child's room.

The third (attic) floor of the main section of the house contains two servants bedrooms, a bath, a cedar lined storage room, a trunk storage room, a sewing room and other store rooms.

In the full basement, there is a large recreation/theatre room, wine cellar, and various service and store rooms.

The two dependencies balance each other on opposite sides of the courtyard. Each functions quite differently from the other, a fact apparent not only in their plans but also in the use of a false front door at the center of the North dependency. The North dependency is primarily a service wing containing a service porch, servants' hall, toilet, houseman's room and a laundry. Six servants' rooms and two baths are on the second floor. The South dependency has on the first floor a flower cutting room, a school room, a toilet and a one car garage (motor room on the plans). The two guest bedrooms, each with bath are on the second floor of the South dependency.

STYLE

Stylistically the Armour House is an eclectic mixture of various Eighteenth Century American styles. Its architect, David Adler, normally designed in this eclectic manner though the sources selected for emulation varied from time to time during his career. The plan of the house with its dependencies connected by curving wings is derived from southern plantation architecture of the 18th Century such as Mt. Airy, near Warsaw, Virginia 1758-1762.⁹ And like Mr. Airy, the plan can be traced back through designs of the same type in James Gibbs, A Book of Architecture,¹⁰ published in 1728 and from this to English Palladian architecture and ultimately to the architecture of Andrea Palladio's 16th Century villas in Italy. The axial character of the plan comes from the same sources.

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STYLE (Continued)

The general exterior character of the main block of the house derives from the Hammond-Harwood House at Annapolis, Maryland built in 1773-1774 by the woodcarver-architect, William Buckland.¹¹ Such features of the Armour House as the projecting central pavilion, the details of the entrance, the decoration of the central second story window and the bulls-eye window in the gable, which itself is treated as a classic pediment, the fenestration, the string course between first and second stories, and the two end chimneys are much like the same features of the Hammond-Harwood House.

On the other hand, the Armour House has brick quoins at its corners which do not occur in the Hammond-Harwood House. These quoins are characteristic of Georgian architecture prior to 1750.¹² The plan of the main block of the Armour House with its contrasting room shapes and circular staircase derives from the American Federal style of architecture of 1790 - 1820 that was based on Adam's work in England. Equally mixed or eclectic is the interior of the house where we find a staircase, balustrade, and foyer in the Federal style and such details as the heavy paneling and scrolled and broken pediments over the doors and on the chimney breasts of the living room and dining room carried out in a more Baroque manner characteristic of colonial architecture derived from plates in Gibbs book of 1728.

MECHANICAL DETAILS

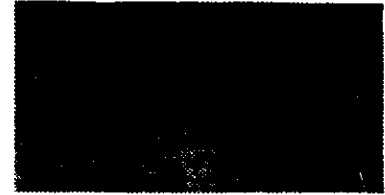
A number of mechanical systems in the house are worth noting as they demonstrate that Adler was concerned not only with aesthetics but with function as well. Several of the closets have light switches in the door frame so that the light goes on automatically when the door to the closet is opened. He concealed the radiators behind the paneled wainscot of major rooms and added metal grills in the window reveals to allow the heat to enter the room. For servicing the radiators the wainscot panels are hinged. In order to illuminate paintings, Adler installed small spot lights concealed in the cornice molding aimed at the paintings. Where these lights occur the cornice molding is hinged to permit ease in changing the bulbs of the spot lights. By raising the large sash window on the North wall of the dining room and South wall of the living room and unlatching a hinged opening in the wainscot, each window can be converted into a door. According to Harry Patterson,¹³ this arrangement was not used in any other Adler house.

FOOTNOTES

1. Plans
2. Alexandra Armour adds that the paint was rubbed to show the pink tone of the brick.
3. The names of rooms in the house are taken from the working drawings of March 2, 1931. Alexandra Armour tells us that the governess' room was actually used as a bedroom for the eldest daughter and that the master bedroom was actually used for a sitting room.
4. Richard Pratt, David Adler: The Architect and His Work, p. 168.

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FOOTNOTES (Continued)

5. Interview with Mrs. Lester Armour (Alexandra), October 25, 1983.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Alexandra Armour remembers that originally the dining room was painted off-white with pale grey trim.
9. Hugh Morrison, Early American Architecture, p. 353-355.
10. Ibid. p. 356.
11. Ibid. p. 397.
12. Ibid. p. 316.
13. Harry Patterson, an architect, currently preparing a book on Adler and his work, October 22, 1983.

8. Significance

| Period | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> religion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> law | <input type="checkbox"/> science |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> economics | <input type="checkbox"/> literature | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> education | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> art | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> music | <input type="checkbox"/> theater |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> communications | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | |

SOCIAL & CULTURAL: THE

Specific dates 1931 **Builder/Architect** DAVID ADLER **COUNTRY ESTATE FOR THE AFFLUENT**

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

SUMMARY PARAGRAPH

Among the works of the noted country house architect, David Adler, the Lester Armour House stands out in a number of ways. According to the testimony of Armour's second wife, Lester Armour did not interfere with the architect when the plans were being drawn and erected the house exactly as specified, thus building one of the purest Adler houses of the architect's career. Stylistically the Lester Armour House is one of two existing residences designed by Adler as an eclectic mixture of 18th Century American sources and thus in terms of its stylistic vocabulary is rare in the architect's oeuvre. The house is also unusual stylistically, for although its exterior and much of its interior are based on the historic styles, a number of interior rooms were very much up to date when the house was built: Mrs. Armour's fantastic mirrored bathroom, the governess' room and the butler's pantry are all cast in Adler's version of the Art Deco. The Lester Armour House is also exceptional among Adler's country houses because it is one of the largest estate houses he ever designed. Adler himself occupies an important place among country house architects in the Midwest in terms of client satisfaction, general esteem in which his residences have always been held by original and subsequent owners, and in the overall aesthetic character of his houses in terms of planning, expression of character and symbolic associations, careful organization of masses, concern for achieving a domestic sense of scale and proportion despite actual size, and attention to detail. In addition, when the Lester Armour House is compared with other estate houses in the Lake Bluff-Lake Forest area where houses of this type are primarily concentrated in the Midwest west of Detroit, it also proves to be of outstanding interest for several reasons. Among similar houses in the area, the Lester Armour House is one of the largest ever built. It is also one of the largest erected in immediate proximity of Lake Michigan, and when an intact estate, it was among the two or three largest that were treated as country estates rather than as model farms actually to border Lake Michigan. Although its property is now subdivided, the ambience of the house at the end of a long drive through heavily wooded terrain with an impressive forecourt and a garden front overlooking Lake Michigan remains: thus its social and cultural significance as the country estate of an affluent third generation member of one of America's great industrial families is fully apparent even to the casual visitor. Finally, the Lester Armour House takes its place aesthetically among those estate houses in the Lake Bluff-Lake Forest region which have already been recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

SEE Continuation Sheet Pages 8 thru 13

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Continuation sheet SIGNIFICANCE Item number 8 Page 8

HISTORY

The Lester Armour Estate occupied a rectangular parcel of 73 acres; 888 feet wide and 3,200 feet deep, located between Sheridan Road and Lake Michigan in Lake Bluff, Illinois. Originally heavily wooded, the land remains so today and in consequence has been listed in the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory as one of the last surviving stands of primeval lakefront forest.

Prior to building the house in Lake Bluff in 1931, the Armours lived in Chicago on Wellington Avenue. Leola Stanton Armour, a close friend of architect, David Adler presumably prevailed upon her husband, Lester, to retain Adler in 1931 to design a new house for them near Lake Forest and Lake Bluff. Armour accepted Adler's plans with no changes or reservations whatsoever and consequently the house for Lester Armour probably represents the purest form of Adler house ever built.¹¹

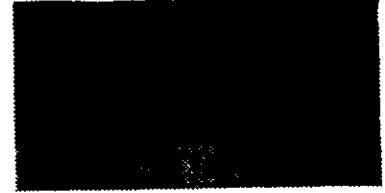
In the autumn of 1930, Adler accompanied Mrs. Evelyn Marshall Field, for whom he was designing a house in Syosett, Long Island, on a trip from Charlottesville, Virginia down the James River and up the Potomac to visit notable colonial and federal buildings in the area.¹² Thus the stylistic vocabulary of 18th Century southern residential architecture was fresh in Adler's mind when in 1931 Armour asked him for plans. Taking his Virginia impressions as a starting point, Adler produced an elegant, eclectic combination of colonial and federal architecture. In fact the Virginia trip resulted in a new phase of historical reference in Adler's architecture: from the fall of 1930 until the end of his major productive career in 1934, Adler designed six large houses all of which were affected in their design and style by this trip.

Because Adler moved in the same social circles as his clients, he understood their life styles very well--how they lived, how they used their houses and what they desired in terms of facilities, style and symbolism.¹³ Adler thus was very well qualified to satisfy the needs of wealthy and socially prominent clients and, in addition, Adler had a gift for producing appealing dwellings that went far beyond mere material satisfaction. Even today Adler houses are treasured by their owners (primarily in Lake Forest and Lake Bluff) and are still described by those who now live in them as well as by those who formerly lived in them as "very livable houses."¹⁴

In addition to designing the house, Adler and his sister, Frances Elkins, an interior designer, nearly always gave close attention to the interiors, and their furnishings. What they did for the Lester Armours in terms of interior design had so suited Mrs. Armour that when she and her husband divorced, she took some of the furniture with her.¹⁵ After the divorce, Lester Armour continued living in the house until 1949 when he and his second wife, Princess Alexandra Galitzine Romanoff established a household there. Lester Armour died in 1970.¹⁶

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HISTORY (Continued)

In 1977 Alexandra Armour, who continued to live in the house, leased the estate to a film company for making the Robert Altman movie "A Wedding" which starred Desi Arnaz Jr., Carol Burnett, Geraldine Chaplin, Pam Dawber, Howard Duff, Mia Farrow, Lauren Hutton, Peggy Ann Garner, Vittorio Gassman, Lillian Gish, Dina Merrill, Susan Newman and Nina van Pallandt.¹⁷

Mrs. Armour subsequently sold the estate which was then subdivided into 15 parcels of approximately 5 acres each. New residences have been constructed on some of the parcels.

The Armour House now stands on about 5 acres, giving it sufficient grounds along with its location on axis with the main road into the subdivision and its relationship to Lake Michigan for more than adequate historical interpretation. Outbuildings, located along the northern boundary of the original estate included the garage, a stucco building, a frame building and the greenhouse, portions of which are still visible.

Lester Armour (1895-1970) was the son of Philip Danforth Armour Jr. and May Elizabeth Lester,¹⁸ and the grandson of Philip D. Armour (1832-1901) the famous Chicago meat packer, grain dealer and philanthropist whose fortune is said to have totaled over \$50,000,000.¹⁹

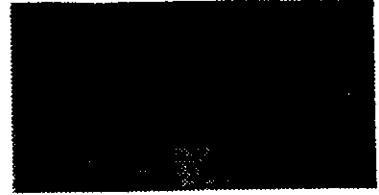
Born in Chicago in 1895, Lester Armour was educated at St. Mark's School, Southboro, Mass. and Yale University. After service in the Navy, he returned to Chicago where he was employed by Armour and Co. until the early 1920's. After that he went into banking and became president of the Chicago National Bank and later Chairman of the Board of the Harris Bank.²⁰ He also served as director of numerous companies and corporations among them: Rathborne, Hair and Ridgeway Co., National City Bank and Trust Co., Allis Chalmers Mfg. Co., Marathon Paper Mills Co., and Aro Equipment Corp.²¹

About 1918 Lester Armour married Leola Stanton. The couple had five children. That marriage ended in divorce and in 1949 Lester was remarried to the daughter of Prince Paul Galitzine of Russia, Alexandra Galitzine Romanoff, who previously was married to the nephew of Czar Nicholas.²²

David Adler (January 3, 1882-September 27, 1949) was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and educated at Lawrenceville School and Princeton University from which he graduated in 1904. After European studies including the Ecole des Beaux Arts from 1906-1911, he settled in Chicago where he was employed by architect Howard van Doren Shaw. Within the year, however, the opportunity arose to establish a partnership with Henry C. Dangler which lasted until the latter's death in 1917. From 1917-1928 Adler associated with Robert Work in the firm of David Adler and Robert Work Inc. a necessary arrangement as Adler lacked an architectural license until 1928. Adler worked alone from 1928 until his death in 1949, however he produced very little after 1935 because of the Depression, and World War II and his own ill health.²³

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COMPARATIVE EVALUATION

In attempting to put the Armour residence and estate in a comparative perspective, we have determined that it has the following special characteristics:

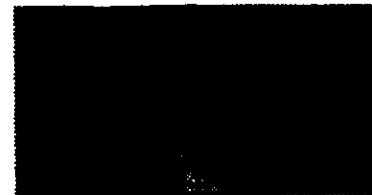
- A. It was situated on a very large estate bordering on Lake Michigan
- B. The house is of the manor or country house type with attached dependencies approached by a formal avenue into a courtyard in front of the building.
- C. The style of architecture is an eclectic combination of elements of 18th Century American architecture of the Colonial and Federal periods.

After identifying its distinguishing characteristics, we made the following comparisons.

- A. Because the house and estate are part of the Lake Forest-Lake Bluff estate section which occurs almost no place else in the Midwest west of Detroit, we compared the size of the Armour Estate property with all other similar properties in the Lake Forest region using maps to a scale of 1" = 100' (The preliminary work in this regard was done by Professor Paul Sprague for the City of Lake Forest for the purpose of developing estate historic districts.)
RESULT: The comparison revealed that there are almost no other pieces of estate property of this size that were not farms. The most comparable pieces of property are found north of Deerpath Road along the west side of Green Bay Road and further west. Two properties that are comparable in size, whose estate houses are extant are J. Ogden Armour's Mellody Farm and the Albert D. Lasker Estate, however, both of these estates functioned primarily as model farms and neither is located on the shores of Lake Michigan. Therefore the Lester Armour Estate was clearly one of the very largest pure country estates in this region and was the only estate of this size whose estate house still stands that borders on Lake Michigan. An equivalent estate would have been the Nettie McCormick Estate which was located along Lake Michigan on the south side of Lake Forest, however, the house has now been demolished, and the estate subdivided. It is possible that some estates in Lake Bluff are of comparable size such as the Philip D. Armour Estate, the Kelley Estate or that of William McCormick Blair. Because of the extremely private situation of these estates, it was not easily possible to study them. But even so, among these estates only the Blair Estate is on the lake and it was used as a farm, not as a country estate. Therefore, as a manor house that overlooks Lake Michigan and which originally controlled a vast country estate, the Lester Armour House appears to be unique.
- B. Next we went over Lake Forest maps at the same scale of 1" = 100' looking for houses of comparable size both with dependencies and without.

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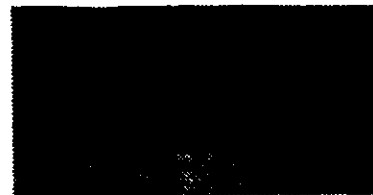
Continuation sheet SIGNIFICANCE Item number 8 Page 11

COMPARATIVE EVALUATION (Continued)

- B. RESULT: The Lester Armour House proved to be a very large house as residences go in Lake Forest (over 5000 square feet in its main block, not including its wings and dependencies) and while a few other estate houses approach it in size, few are as large. Some that are nearly its size in Lake Forest are: The Owen B. Jones house, the Charles H. Schweppe house, the Edward L. Ryerson house and the Mrs. Kersey Coates Reed house, the Lasker house and in Lake Bluff, the J. O. Armour House and the William McCormick Blair House. Thus the Lester Armour House is unusual for its size alone.
- C. Thirdly, we went through the inventory of Lake Forest and Lake Bluff architecture done by the Illinois Historic Structures Survey looking for houses of similar type. We found 23 listed. Of that number 13 had been recommended in a final evaluation of 1975 for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. (The Lester Armour House had not been listed by the Illinois Historic Structures Survey because it was then outside the municipal boundaries of Lake Bluff and the survey was restricted to incorporated municipalities above 500 in population. Had the Illinois Historic Structures Survey investigated unincorporated areas, the surveyor would obviously have recorded the house and the survey would have listed it (according to Jon Pohl, who surveyed Lake Bluff for the IHSS).
- D. Then we went through the final evaluation of the Illinois Historic Structures Survey, prepared in 1974-75, which classified all structures photographed by the survey by style and date, compared them to all others in each category, and recommended on the basis of these comparisons those properties that ought to be nominated to the National Register. In studying these recommendations, we found that approximately 25 residences of the manor house type that employed Colonial-Federal architectural details had been recommended for nomination. Of those, the only one that is really similar to the Lester Armour House is the Robert McGann house at 965 E. Deerpath in Lake Forest, designed by Delano and Aldrich. That house, however, is not located on Lake Michigan nor did its estate even begin to approach in size that of Lester Armour.
- E. Finally we compared the Armour House with other houses by its architect, David Adler, using as our guide the book David Adler: The Architect and His Works by Richard Pratt. There we discovered that the Armour House is apparently one of two in this 18th Century Southern American style ever designed by Adler and built in Illinois. The other, the Mrs. Kersey Coates Reed House at 1300 N. Lake in Lake Forest, was also constructed in 1931 and shares many exterior and interior similarities with the Armour House. While both houses exhibit a common Colonial-Federal vocabulary on their exteriors, the Armour House uses brick, characteristic of Virginia and the southern colonies while the Reed House employs dark grey mica stone from Pennsylvania. They share similar plans, striking stair halls with circular staircases of similar design, and mirrored powder rooms. While the Reed House was also located on the lake shore it did not have nearly as much property as the Armour estate. In its final evaluation, the Illinois Historic Structures Survey recommended nominating the Kersey Coates Reed house to the National Register, and on that basis alone, it is obvious that if the Reed House qualifies, so does its near twin, The Lester Armour House.

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FOOTNOTES

11. Interview with Mrs. Lester Armour (Alexandra)
12. Pratt, David Adler: The Architect and His Work, p. 25.
Alexandra Armour tells us that the house was begun in 1929, in which case, when designing the Lester Armour House, Adler could not have profited by his Virginia trip in the autumn of 1930. We believe, however, that Adler did incorporate into the Lester Armour House certain elements derived from that Virginia excursion. First of all, there is the visual evidence that relates parts of the house to Virginia houses (see description) and secondly, we note that the plans are dated March 2, 1931. Thus, even if Adler had been making sketches for Armour as early as 1929, there was plenty of time between the Virginia trip in 1930 and the preparation of working drawings in 1931, for Adler to have produced an exterior design that reflected his new interest in 18th Century Virginia houses.
13. Paul McCurry, architect, retired, Lake Forest resident interview, October 22, 1983.
14. Ibid.
15. Mrs. Armour (Alexandra)
16. Ibid.
17. Chicago Tribune, June 14, 1977
18. Ibid. January 28, 1900.
19. Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. 1, (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons), 1928, p. 347-349 and The Handbook of Chicago Biography, (Chicago: The Standard Guide Company), 1893, pp. 34-35.
20. Mrs. Armour (Alexandra)
21. Who's Who in Chicago and Vicinity, 1941, p. 39; also 1931, p. 40.
22. Mrs. Armour (Alexandra)
23. Pratt, David Adler

BOOKS

- John J. Flinn, Ed. The Handbook of Chicago Biography. Chicago: The Standard Guide Co. 1893.
- Allen Johnson, Ed. Dictionary of American Biography: Abbe-Barrymore. Vol. 1. New York: Charles Scribners Sons. 1928.

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BOOKS (Continued)

Hugh Morrison. Early American Architecture. New York: Oxford University Press. 1952.

Richard Pratt. David Adler: The Architect and His Work. New York: M. Evans and Co. Inc. 1970

Who's Who in Chicago and Vicinity: The Book of Chicagoans. Chicago: The A.N. Marquis Co. 1931 and 1941.

PERIODICALS

"David Adler Obituary". Bulletin of the Chicago Chapter, AIA. November, 1949. p. 7.

"David Adler Obituary". Illinois Society of Architects Monthly Bulletin. Vols. 33-34. Jan-Oct, 1949. p. 8.

NEWSPAPERS

"Armour's Death a Blow". Chicago Tribune. Jan. 28, 1900. p. 8.

"David Adler Architect, Dies in Sleep at 66". Chicago Tribune. Sept. 28, 1949. p. 6.

"Where Queen Anne Met Louis XVI". Chicago Tribune. Nov. 28, 1971. pp. 69-70.

"Waukegan Caters Whale of 'A Wedding'". Chicago Tribune. June 14, 1977.

MANUSCRIPT

Stephen M. Salny. "David Adler: The Epitome of an Era". Class paper. Lake Forest College. Spring, 1977.

INTERVIEWS

Alexandra Armour (Mrs. Lester Armour). Interview. October 25, 1983.

Ted Bennett, architect. Past president of Lake Forest Foundation for Historic Preservation. Interview. October 22, 1983.

Paul McCurry. Architect, retired. Lake Forest resident. Interview. October 22, 1983.

Harry Patterson. Architect. Currently preparing a book on Adler and his work. Interview. October 22, 1983.

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE Continuation Sheet Page 12

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 5

Quadrangle name WAUKEGAN QUAD

Quadrangle scale 7.5 MINUTES

UTM References

A
 Zone Easting Northing

B
 Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET PAGE 14

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| | | | |
| state | code | county | code |

11. Form Prepared By

name/title SUSAN KARR AND ASSISTED BY PAUL SPRAGUE

organization

date JANUARY 12, 1984

street & number 37835 ATKINS KNOLL ROAD

telephone 567-3699

city or town OCONOMOWOC

state WISCONSIN 53066

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title _____ date _____

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date _____

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date _____

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
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For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet GEOGRAPHICAL DATA Item number 10 Page 14

Legal Description (plat map attached)

Lot 10 in Lakewood Estates being a subdivision of Lot 3 and parts of Lot 4 and Lot 11 in School Trustees' Subdivision in Section 16, Township 44 North, Range 12 East of the Third Principal Meridian according to the Plat of said Lakewood Estates recorded July 27, 1978 as Document #1934452 in Book 66 of Plats, page 34, in Lake County, Illinois. All located in the Village of Lake Bluff, Lake County, Illinois.