



City of Manassas, Virginia
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Annaburg Named to National Register of Historic Places

City of Manassas, VA . . . Annaburg has been officially listed in the National Register of Historic Places by The National Park Service. After the 1892 house on Maple Street and surrounding 3.65 acres were acquired by the City in 2019, the grounds opened as a park.

Staff and consultants spent the last year working through the nomination process to recognize the historic importance of the home built as a summer retreat by Prussian-born entrepreneur and Alexandria brewer Robert Portner.

The 35-room Annaburg Manor is believed to be the first home in the country equipped with mechanical air-conditioning. Portner's designs in air-conditioning, artificial cooling and ice making machines would later contribute to the technology used in today's air-conditioning systems.

Designed by Washington, D.C. - based architect Gustav Friebus, the house combined elements of some of Portner's favorite European mansions, and was built using brownstone obtained from Portner's own Manassas quarry. The interior, furnished with Italian marble mantles and statuary from Greece, sustained extensive damage during the many years while the house was unoccupied. At its height, Annaburg encompassed a total of 2,157 acres, stretching from Main Street in Manassas to the shores of Bull Run.

Annaburg has a long history as a recreational destination. Residents and visitors attended the town's Dairy Festival, 4th of July events, and even church baptisms at the estate. After Robert and his wife Anna Portner passed away and the house was no longer occupied, residents recalled the grounds as a place to stroll, take photographs, and skate on the frozen ponds in winter. In the 1960s, two wings of the Manor,

which have since been removed, were constructed and Annaburg became a nursing home and rehabilitation center. The facility was managed by what was then Novant Health UVA Health System.

In the past year restoration efforts focused on stabilizing the structure by replacing the home's original slate roof, metal cornices and wood box gutters, and paint removal that helped fix moisture problems. A recent archaeological excavation uncovered the foundation of Annaburg's stone tower, a major landscape feature that was torn down in the 1980s due to structural integrity. Additional exterior stabilization including paint removal and window replacement, and the addition of park amenities are planned for this year.

A final Master Plan, which will help determine future improvements to the park and the historic house, was developed with extensive community input and adopted by City Council in December 2021.

The Virginia Department of Historic Resources placed Annaburg on the Virginia Landmarks Register in December. It now joins Liberia, the Manassas Industrial School for Colored Youth, Cannon Branch Fort, Mayfield Fort, the Manassas Water Tower, and the downtown national historic district on the National Register of Historic Places.

Visit www.manassasva.gov/annaburg to learn more.



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