

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

AARON COPLAND HOUSE

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Aaron Copland House

Other Name/Site Number: Rock Hill

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 1538 Washington Street

Not for publication:

City/Town: Cortlandt Manor

Vicinity:

State: New York County: Westchester Code: 119

Zip Code: 10567

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: X

Public-Local: ___

Public-State: ___

Public-Federal: ___

Category of Property

Building(s): X

District: ___

Site: ___

Structure: ___

Object: ___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

2

2

Noncontributing

___ buildings

___ sites

___ structures

___ objects

0 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 2

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

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4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	DOMESTIC RECREATION & CULTURE	Sub:	Single Dwelling Music Facility
Current:	RECREATION & CULTURE	Sub:	Music Facility

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Modern Movement: California Style or Ranch Style

MATERIALS:

- Foundation: stone
- Walls: wood (clapboard)
- Roof: asphalt (built up)
- Other:

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Summary

Aaron Copland, one of the most important and profoundly influential figures in the history of American music, occupied this house from 1960 until his death in 1990. Internationally celebrated as a composer, admired as an inspiring teacher and engaging lecturer, trusted as a colleague, and beloved as an affable, modest gentleman, he came to be widely regarded as the embodiment of American classical music. His compositions brought a distinctly American sound, character, and zest to the European-bred classical music tradition, and he was the prototype of the modern composer in this country. It is still a surprise for many to learn that this private, unassuming musical man of the world—the much-honored composer of such landmark works as *Appalachian Spring*, *Rodeo*, *Billy the Kid* and *Fanfare for the Common Man*—lived in this house in Westchester County for more than half of his adult life.

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Aaron Copland House, now known simply as “Copland House,” was built in the early 1940s and was the longtime home of the legendary American composer Aaron Copland. The house is located at 1538 Washington Street in Cortlandt Manor, Town of Cortlandt, Westchester County, New York. The property is situated on the west side of Washington Street, just north of the southerly access to the Amalfi Drive cul-de-sac, and almost directly opposite Laura Court. It is in a quiet, residential neighborhood of (mostly newer) single-family homes. The closest main roads are Routes 9 and 9A, located within approximately one mile due west, near the Hudson River. Copland House is almost completely intact from the residency of Aaron Copland, which extended from 1960 to his death in 1990.

Set atop a rock ledge promontory, Copland House is surrounded by 2.5 acres of terraced gardens and woodland, the original acreage purchased by Copland in 1960. The property consists of a rectangular, irregularly shaped parcel of land measuring approximately 700 feet long by 220 feet wide. The property contains Copland’s single-family house and a detached 2-car garage to which is attached a small duplex apartment. The house sits roughly in the middle and in the highest point on the land, with the garage situated some 35 feet away from the northeast corner of the house.

COPLAND HOUSE (contributing building)**Exterior**

Copland House, a mid-twentieth century California or ranch style home in a naturalistic setting, is exceptionally consonant with its surrounding external environment. The one-story, L-shaped frame house rests upon a stone-and-mortar foundation, which seems to emanate directly from the underlying rocky ledge. On the east side the basement is fully exposed. Above the stone foundation, the main body of the house’s exterior is wood clapboard (painted the same forest green as in Copland’s lifetime), paralleling the environmental transition from bedrock to woods. A notable feature above eye-level is the house’s many large picture windows, which help to dissolve the boundaries between the house’s interior and surrounding environment. From inside the house, there is an almost palpable connection to the outdoors. Several feet of the southernmost end of the house (containing the glass-walled studio, described below) overhang the stone foundation (which contains, at this spot, a small storage area). The southern half of the house has a vaulted roof rising towards the east; the northeastern portion of the roof vaults in the opposite direction; and there is a small flat roof area at the northwestern corner of the house. Asphalt shingles cover the vaulted roof.

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Like so many of the surrounding properties, the perimeter of the grounds is unfenced allowing for a natural, unobstructed flow of the land between the adjoining parcels. The grounds are terraced on several levels, following the rolling terrain. The property contains a combination of grasses, annual, and perennial plantings, shrubs, and evergreen trees and plants, as well as a number of unusual specimens of trees, and several small rock gardens.

At Washington Street, the unobtrusive entrance to the property--a plain white mailbox, house numbers on a tree, and a low, stone border containing weathered metal letters spelling out "Rock Hill," (as the house has also been known)--hints at the naturalness and unpretentiousness of the house, that reflects Copland's simplicity, quiet dignity, and rugged elegance. A long, narrow, winding, macadam driveway ascends through the woodlands up to a large parking area on the north side of the house. The six-room house seems to emerge out of the rocks and lush forest, overhanging part of the ledge. To reach the main (western) entrance of the house, one proceeds up a slate staircase arriving at a slate terrace that overlooks the gardens and woodlands, and leads up towards the southwest corner of the house and Copland's studio. Another stone staircase leads up from the parking area to an exterior wood staircase that continues up to a secondary entrance located in the kitchen wing on the northeast corner of the house.

Interior

In the interior, the house is essentially a long rectangle. It contains six main rooms, all on one level, and its sprawling, flowing layout imparts a comfortable, open feeling within. The total interior size of the house is approximately 2,300 square feet. Having the living room and kitchen at one end of the house, and the studio at the other, was especially attractive to Copland who so valued privacy while working. On the south end of the building, the 17' x 24' studio has two glass walls offering dramatic views facing west and south, and a slightly vaulted ceiling containing a bank of indirect florescent lights. Bookshelves cover the east wall. The flooring is hardwood covered by carpet and the wall surface is a minutely ridged, wood paneling. The Baldwin Piano Company provided Copland with instruments for 40 years, and generously furnished Copland House with a large grand piano for several years, occupying the very same spot where Copland's own piano stood for decades.¹ In the 1950s a farmer in nearby Ossining built a work desk for Copland out of some large planks of barnwood that sit atop a sawhorse-like base; an excellent illustration of Copland's own practicality, he used it for the rest of his life and still stands in his studio as one of Rock Hill's special mementos. The studio also contains two other items owned by Copland: a wooden chair presented to him by Harvard University, and an upholstered armchair which he was pictured with, in several published photographs. The bookshelves contain music books owned by Copland, as well as an exceptionally comprehensive collection of recorded American music largely donated to Copland House by several prominent U.S. record companies. A second exterior door (facing east) opens onto a wood deck that extends nearly the entire length of the easterly elevation.

The master bedroom adjoins the studio so that the occupant can almost literally fall into the studio after a good sleep or collapse into bed after a long, productive work session. The bedroom, measuring 12' x 16', contains a queen size, mission-style bed bracketed by two matching night tables with table lamps. Low bookshelves built under the windows contain Copland's own collections of important music journals. The wall material is painted plaster. The adjoining library or study, also measuring 12' x 16', contains floor-to-ceiling bookshelves that are large enough to accommodate oversize musical scores, as well as normal-sized books; these contain non-music books, many of which were owned by Copland himself, as well as a nearly-complete collection of Copland's own musical compositions and the music scores of all composers who have won Aaron Copland Award composer residencies. Textured wallpaper dating from Copland's occupancy of the house covers the wall.

¹ Upon Baldwin's demise in 2002, Steinway & Sons provided an exceptional instrument that remains in the studio to this day.

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From the north end of either the master bedroom or the library/study, one enters a railroad-type corridor running north and south that connects the two ends of the house. From this hallway, one may access two full bathrooms (measuring 7' x 9' and 5' x 7') located on the east side and a simple, 11' x 12' guest bedroom containing two single beds and a night table on the west side. At the north end of the corridor is a 19' x 20' rustic living room, whose most notable features are its knotty-pine, vertical, natural wood paneling, and a large picture window facing west towards the surrounding woodlands and the Hudson River. The room contains, among other items, a working fireplace, a built-in pine bookcase, and two armchairs owned by Copland, as well as a dining area. The living room adjoins a 15' x 16' fully-working kitchen containing standard appliances and a small area for eating, with a table seating four. The kitchen wall material is gypsum-board partially covered by a ridged wood paneling, the floor is covered by linoleum.

From the kitchen, one may descend via a fixed staircase to a partially finished basement containing two additional small rooms used by Copland and his assistants for office and archival space. Over this staircase is a pull-down staircase providing access to the attic that covers the northern half of the house. The kitchen has its own exit door on the east side to the rear of the house.²

The house contains mostly double-hung windows, as well as several large picture windows. The studio also has a row of awning windows. Each room contains at least three windows. The entrances to each room have solid-core doors. Bookshelves of all sorts - built-in, free-standing, ceiling-hung - are found throughout the house attesting to Copland's wide-ranging interest in and passion for reading. The house's decor and furnishings are simple and functional, reflecting both the ambiance when Copland lived there and his values. Interior walls and shelves throughout the house display various Copland memorabilia and archival material, including photographs, correspondence, musical and literary manuscripts, honors, and awards conferred upon Copland. All of the artwork on view is from Copland's own private collection and created by established artists who were his friends or colleagues, including Erik Johns, Alvin Ross, Richard Schiff, and Richard Hennessey.

GARAGE (contributing building)

The property also contains a detached, two-car garage, behind which Copland added a two-story, one-bedroom apartment soon after occupying the house in 1960. The exterior matches the house in both materials and finishing, with a stone foundation, green-painted wood clapboard walls, and a vaulted, asphalt-shingled roof. The apartment, which is accessed by separate entrances at the side and rear of the garage, consists of an upper floor containing a 14' x 21' living room space and a kitchenette, and a lower floor containing a 13' x 14' bedroom and a full bathroom. Carpets cover wood flooring in the interior of the two main rooms, with linoleum tile on the kitchen floor; the walls are covered with gypsum board that is painted white.

INTEGRITY AND LATER HISTORY OF THE PROPERTY

The integrity of the exterior and interior of the house, garage and duplex apartment, and grounds has been scrupulously maintained. The house and property remain unchanged since being developed and built in the mid-1940s; the garage apartment added by Copland in 1962 has likewise not been altered since its initial construction. No alterations, additions, or demolitions have been made to the original design. Routine repairs and maintenance have always been undertaken in a manner that respected all existing conditions.

Since 1998, Copland House has been a unique composer's retreat and creative center for American music. As perhaps the only composer's home in the United States devoted to nurturing America's musical heritage

² Copland once said that he never really found his way around a kitchen and usually had a housekeeper on hand to help with cooking, shopping, and other routine chores.

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through a broad range of musical, educational, public, informational, and electronic-media activities, it is a true national asset. When word began to spread a few years after Copland's death in 1990 that Rock Hill was to be sold, a genuine grassroots movement of local townspeople, civic-minded individuals, municipal leaders, and history enthusiasts emerged to preserve his longtime home. An initially small group of neighbors, spearheaded by well-known Peekskill, New York, businessman and local impresario Edward Mashberg, formed the Copland Heritage Association which was incorporated in 1995 as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization (now called Copland House, Inc.) for the explicit purpose of making Copland's home "a living, enduring cultural resource for our country." Their goal was to make Rock Hill a focal point for the continuation and enhancement of Copland's life-long commitment to American music and his fellow composers. This citizens' coalition encouraged the town of Cortlandt to attempt to acquire Copland's home through a long-term, one-dollar-a-year lease from its owner, a completely separate trust called The Aaron Copland Fund for Music (Copland's estate). When the Fund generously agreed, the house and property came under the care of this organization of townspeople.

Through the leadership of Copland House, Inc., Rock Hill's interior was meticulously restored respecting the style and spirit of the house and its era. Its historical integrity is completely intact. The house—a fine example of mid-twentieth-century domestic architecture showing the influence of contemporary design trends—remains as it was during Copland's time there, and retains its ambience and character, as well as many of his own furnishings. All additional necessary interior furnishings, which were acquired through donation after Copland's death, were carefully selected for their consistency of style and spirit with the home and its celebrated occupant. All repairs, upgrading, and renovations have been undertaken with care, sensitivity, and respect for the style and spirit of Copland's era and how he lived, and no major alterations of any kind have been made to the building and property. The house became operational in 1998 with the implementation of its initial programs. In 1999, the house was completely repainted the same forest green Copland chose during most of his time there. The grounds were extensively restored under the expert guidance of the Master Gardeners of Cornell University's Cooperative Extension. In 2002, the Copland Fund, as deed holder, was so enthused by the high quality and effectiveness of the local stewardship of the house and grounds that it transferred ownership directly to Copland House, Inc. Supporters of the home and its activities, called Friends of Copland House, have grown into a vigorous, broad-based, nationwide constituency numbering in the hundreds of individuals, institutions, corporations, foundations, and governmental entities. Copland House depends on their annual contributions that underwrite all of its programs and operations. A modest and growing endowment helps to ensure Copland House's future.

Copland House's current use is completely consistent with Copland's life and work there; as a unique creative center for American music, it is dedicated to continuing and enhancing Copland's lifelong, unsurpassed advocacy of the vibrant musical legacy of the United States. In fall 2000, it was designated an Official Project of the *Save America's Treasures* program (a joint initiative of the National Park Service and the White House Millennium Council), and is the only composer's home in the nation so recognized. It was subsequently listed in the National Register of Historic Places at a national level of significance.

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State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The Aaron Copland House in the town of Cortlandt, Westchester County, New York, is exceptionally significant as the longtime home of Aaron Copland (1900-1990), one of the most renowned and highly influential figures in American musical history. Copland bought the secluded 1940s house known as “Rock Hill” in 1960 and it was his home, studio, and base of operations for the next 30 years.

Copland’s importance to American cultural history is both enormous and unquestioned, and as such he is nationally significant under Criterion 1 for music. Cultural critic David Denby wrote in 1999:

Because of Copland “we now have a [musical] tradition, and he, more than anyone else, created it. No American composer can launch a career without hearing Copland’s music in his head and drawing on it as a resource.”³

Widely regarded as the “Dean of American Composers” and the “George Washington of American Music,” Copland envisioned and created a distinctively American musical idiom in concert, ballet, film, and opera for the first time in our history; beginning in the mid-1920s, he defined its sound and character; he directly or indirectly influenced virtually every American composer who followed him; and he served as a role model of the modern American composer. Copland was also a highly accomplished conductor, pianist, author, lecturer, and mentor, and a familiar and revered figure at musical and cultural venues throughout America and the world. In an Official Citation (November 2000), then Governor Pataki of New York hailed Copland’s “remarkable legacy” and noted that “Copland helped American music come of age by defining its sound and spirit.” Copland, declared the great Leonard Bernstein, “is the best we have.”⁴ Because of the exceptional national significance of Aaron Copland in twentieth century American music, this property, as the best extant property associated with him, also meets the National Historic Landmarks Criterion Exception 8 for achieving significance within the last fifty years.

COPLAND’S LIFE

Copland spent his first twenty years in Brooklyn, where he was born in 1900. A first-generation American, he had a traditional, middle-class upbringing living above his family’s department store on Washington Avenue. In 1921, he left for what became a crucial, three-year sojourn in France, during which he began to find his creative voice. Within a few years of returning to New York in 1924, Copland had created several major, pioneering works (*Organ Symphony*, *Music for the Theatre*, *Piano Concerto*) that vividly illustrated his determination to forge an unprecedented, distinctively American musical idiom in the concert hall. By the age of 30, in 1930, he had already advanced to the front rank of young, up-and-coming artists, and had established an active musical presence as composer, concert organizer, lecturer, and an effective, resourceful advocate on the new-music scene. Within the next fifteen years, Copland helped to fashion our national musical identity through such beloved works as *Billy the Kid*, *Rodeo*, *Lincoln Portrait*, *Fanfare for the Common Man*, and his Pulitzer Prize-winning *Appalachian Spring* – a series of compositions on American subjects and lore that has few equals and is unlikely ever to be surpassed in quality and appeal. By age 50, Copland had consolidated his undisputed position as one of the pivotal figures in American musical history.

Although Copland traveled widely in Europe and South America during the 1930s and 1940s, New York City remained his base. He eventually settled into a small apartment in the Empire Hotel on Manhattan’s West Side,

³ David Denby, “The Gift to be Simple,” *The New Yorker*, December 13, 1999, 109.

⁴ Virgil Thomson, *American Music Since 1910* (New York: Holt Reinhart, and Winston, 1970), 58.

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and also rented a nearby loft located just across the street on land now occupied by Lincoln Center, that he used for his work space.

Though Copland grew up in an urban environment he adored country living. Perhaps his love of nature was engendered by his boyhood experience at summer camp in the Pennsylvania Poconos, which he vividly recalled over 60 years later while compiling his autobiography. It was not long before Westchester County and other then-rural environs of New York City exerted their appeal. In the spring of 1929 he spent almost a month in Briarcliff Manor, feverishly working on his *Dance Symphony*, which he submitted to a composers' competition sponsored that year by RCA Victor Records; he was one of four winners. One month grew into six the following year when Copland (and writer Gerard Sykes) rented a small house on Hook Road in Bedford. There, he worked extensively on one of his early masterpieces, the boldly original *Piano Variations*. Subsequent years found him making brief escapes to work in such nearby rustic locales as Bernardsville, New Jersey; Woodstock, New York; and Ridgefield, Connecticut.

By the early 1940s, this frugal man whose rent at the Empire had just topped \$3 a week said he was "beginning to yearn for a place of my own in the country."⁵ After putting it off for a few years, Copland "did a brash thing" in 1947.⁶ Like so many others before him and since, he left New York City and headed to the open spaces in the north. He ventured about 40 miles upriver to Sneden's Landing at Palisades, New York, in Rockland County. He took a three-year rental on a house dating back to pre-Revolutionary days and owned by Mr. Sneden himself, whose boat plied the river between Palisades and Dobbs Ferry. Copland said he was "impressed with the fact that [Sneden's Landing] was close to the city but gave the feeling of being way out in the country."⁷ That sentiment guided Copland's future real estate purchases. After the lease expired, Copland was able to delay making new living arrangements since much of 1951 and 1952 was spent in Massachusetts at Harvard University (as the prestigious Charles Eliot Norton Professor), and at the Tanglewood Music Festival. Finally Copland considered the question, "how does one *ever* decide where to settle *forever*?"⁸ His answer, in 1952, was Westchester. At the age of 52, he bought his first home, Shady Lane Farm in Ossining, which he described as "a remodeled barn...with a nice view of the river."⁹

At long last he owned a house in a serene, rustic setting, in which he could work to his heart's content without disturbing the neighbors (always a concern to him). In eight busy years in Ossining, he worked on a homespun, coming-of-age opera called *The Tender Land*, the monumental *Piano Fantasy* in memory of the great young American pianist, William Kapell; *Canticle of Freedom* for the opening of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Kresge Auditorium, and the *Orchestral Variations* (based on his landmark *Piano Variations*). Having previously received the 1945 Pulitzer Prize in Music, the 1950 Academy Award for Best Original Film Score (for *The Heiress*), and a raft of other top honors, Copland occupied a commanding position on the international music scene and his professional life was a whirlwind of activity.

When Copland soon outgrew Shady Lane Farm, Victor Kraft, a gifted photographer and longtime friend, found a spacious but modest home perched atop a hill on Washington Street in the Town of Cortlandt, not far from the river. Copland said:

One look at the grounds, with the Hudson in the distance, the gardens and woods, and the house with the separate studio, and I was sold! When I first saw the studio, I said that it looked like a

⁵ Aaron Copland and Vivian Perlis, *Copland Since 1943* (New York: St. Martin's, 1989), 25 (hereafter referred to as Copland/Perlis II).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 180.

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room where a composer could write music. The house, 'Rock Hill,' is not a made-over barn as my previous homes had been.¹⁰

He sold Shady Lane Farm in August 1960, and his datebook for November 1 of that year lists morning appointments at the realtor and bank for the closing, and proudly proclaims "HOUSE BOUGHT!"¹¹ Even before Copland had a chance to settle in, *Time* and *Newsweek* sent reporters to Cortlandt for sixtieth birthday interviews amid unpacked moving boxes. He was to live at Rock Hill for the remaining 30 years of his life, far longer than anywhere else.

"I'm sort of sitting above the woods," Copland once explained. "It's very nice here -- it's quiet and it's near enough to New York so I can swoop down and see what goes on down there."¹² When Rock Hill was built in the 1940s few other homes in the immediate area existed, and even when Copland bought it in 1960, not many souls would have been nearby to disturb this idyllic site. The unobtrusive entrance at the road hints at the naturalness and unpretentiousness of the house and the home reflects Copland's simplicity, quiet dignity, and rugged elegance.

He maintained a regular schedule at Rock Hill. After a light breakfast he would collect his mail and work on his correspondence. During the afternoon he would often have visitors. (Despite his vast international celebrity, he remained exceedingly accessible throughout his life.) He reserved the evenings for composing, and would sometimes work late into the night. As Copland scholar Vivian Perlis explained during a National Public Radio interview that emanated from Copland House, Copland:

was very clear that there was something magical, mystical and romantic about the nighttime hours that the day did not give him in terms of composing. While I don't think there's a specific connection between the music that he composed when he was here and this place, I do believe the quality of the countryside, the beauty of the trees here, the changing of the seasons gave him a feeling that he needed to do his work.¹³

While at Rock Hill Copland composed two large symphonic works (including one for the inauguration of Lincoln Center in 1962), as well as many important ballet, chamber, orchestral, piano, and film scores. Television also beckoned. He wrote and hosted an important series called *Music in the Twenties* for WGBH in Boston, which was broadcast nationally on public television, and composed the signature (or opening) music for each episode of a CBS-TV series called *Television Playhouse*; all this from a man in the autumn of his compositional career.

In fact, his composing *was* subsiding, but other activities loomed larger. The "Dean of American Music" traveled widely, guest conducted symphony orchestras around the world, contributed astute commentary, and was a much sought-after music personality, whose mere presence added luster and authority to any event. He gave generously of his time, continuously demonstrating his exceptional "music citizenship." Rock Hill had become a mecca of music activity, and friends, music colleagues, scholars and journalists, aspiring young composers, and young school children made their way up the path from Washington Street to work with, interview, or visit Copland. During those last thirty years of his life, Copland received two of the highest civilian awards bestowed by the U.S. government -- the Presidential Medal of Freedom (given by President

¹⁰ Copland and Perlis, *Copland Since 1943*, 293-294.

¹¹ Entry, November 1, 1960, Copland's daily journal, Copland Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

¹² Robert Sherman, producer and host, "A Copland Portrait," on *The Listening Room*, WQXR Radio, New York, NY, November 13, 1985.

¹³ Mark Mobberley, producer, "A Copland Birthday Broadcast," on *Performance Today*, NPR, Washington, DC, November 14, 1997.

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Johnson in 1964) and the Congressional Gold Medal (1986), in addition to the first Kennedy Center Honors (1978) and the National Medal of Arts (given by President Reagan in 1986). Among the most honored private citizens in American history, Copland had also received the 1945 Pulitzer Prize, an Oscar in 1950, several Grammy Awards and over two dozen honorary degrees, decorations from foreign governments, and honorary academic memberships. Copland spent the last few years of his life in declining health and died on December 2, 1990, at Phelps Memorial Hospital in North Tarrytown, New York, a few weeks after observing his ninetieth birthday. Copland's death robbed the classical music world of a peerless role model for professional generosity, selfless collegiality, and artistic rectitude. Fortunately, the story of this great man in Westchester did not end with his passing; the restoration of Copland House offered a vibrant, enduring tribute to his unsurpassed artistic and personal legacy.

Gifted American composers are selected through the coveted Aaron Copland Awards for all-expenses-paid residencies of three to eight weeks at Copland House where they can focus uninterruptedly on their creative work. A touring resident Music from the Copland House chamber music ensemble, consisting of some of America's leading performers, shares the work and spirit of Copland and his musical ancestors, contemporaries, and heirs through concerts, recordings, and broadcasts that have been internationally-acclaimed. Copland House has collaborated with Carnegie Hall, the Library of Congress, National Public Radio, British Broadcasting Corporation, European Broadcasting Union, and other cultural entities, as well as local schools, libraries, hospitals, and other community organizations. Copland House educational activities have brought the dynamic, many-sided world of American music to thousands of young people. Various educational activities are being explored that can help introduce school children to music via the work of American composers and their richly diverse music vocabulary and aesthetics. Copland House's web site (www.coplandhouse.org) is visited regularly as an informational resource for professional musicians, students, historians, and music-lovers from every corner of the globe.

The rebirth of the Copland House has involved precisely the kind of public-private partnership that political, business, and philanthropic leaders have encouraged arts organizations (and others) to pursue. Local governmental leaders have all been steadfast in their encouragement and support of this historic mission. The cultural, symbolic, and practical importance of having preserved Copland House cannot be overstated. Aaron Copland celebrated the American experience in almost everything he undertook. Copland House has already played an important role in helping to preserve this rich musical legacy while serving as a source for the creation of new American traditions in the future.

AARON COPLAND WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MUSIC

As Tim Page, Senior Music Critic of the *Washington Post* noted in 1998, Aaron Copland is "a virtual personification of American music in all its guises. He is still probably the most influential composer of classical music we have produced."¹⁴ There is indeed general acceptance of Copland's incalculable significance in the growth and evolution of American music, which rests on an unsurpassed, three-cornered foundation:

1) historically, Copland defined the sound and spirit of a recognizable American musical idiom, which had not previously existed. "For many people, Aaron Copland seems to be American music," according to one of America's most distinguished scholars of music in the United States, Professor H. Wiley Hitchcock. "Few alive today can even imagine an American musical culture without Copland at the center of it."¹⁵

¹⁴ Tim Page, "Fanfare for an Uncommon Man," *The Washington Post*, August 2, 1998, p. G1.

¹⁵ Wiley H. Hitchcock, "Aaron Copland and American Music," *Perspectives in New Music* 19 (Fall 1980): 31.

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2) musically, Copland produced a large and outstanding body of prize-winning work, including many compositions that have extended far beyond the popular and have become deeply embedded in America's cultural consciousness. As Katrina Ames wrote in *Time* magazine in a tribute upon his death in 1990, "Copland gave America a sense of its musical worth ... He gave Americans the sound of their music."¹⁶

3) and professionally, Copland helped to create an organizational and professional infrastructure for composers, performers, and listeners that enabled American music to come of age and flourish. "His significance as the Moses of the modern-music movement ... in this country over the last 50 years is unquestionable," wrote Donald Henahan, then-Chief Music Critic of the *New York Times* in 1975. "In a sense, the thousands of young composers at work in America today are his children."¹⁷

Because of America's relative youth, our country's concert music through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries lacked a characteristic national cultural identity with most U.S. composers largely emulating the European masters with whom they studied abroad. Historically, Copland was among the first (in the early 1920s), and remains the most enduring to have convincingly appropriated the sounds and cultural gestures of both our urban and rural landscapes specifically "to make an American-sounding music."¹⁸ Upon hearing Copland's first major orchestral work in 1924, the celebrated composer-critic Virgil Thomson hailed it as "the voice of America in our generation."¹⁹

Copland further developed and gave substance to a distinctive American musical idiom in a succession of beloved classics on U.S. themes, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Appalachian Spring* (on Shaker life), *Lincoln Portrait* (using the Gettysburg Address and other Lincoln writings), *Rodeo* (on life in the Wild West), *Billy the Kid* (on the Western folk hero William Bonney), *Fanfare for the Common Man* (supporting the World War II effort), *Old American Songs* (setting hymns and folk tunes), and others. Acclaimed film director Spike Lee's use of Copland's music in 1998 in his inner-city basketball film *He Got Game* demonstrated the wide-ranging appeal of Copland's music. Choosing several Copland works to score his film, Lee said, around the time of the film's release, "When I listen to his music, I hear America."²⁰

Beyond giving voice to America, Copland's commanding position in our musical history rests also in his fundamental role in literally reshaping America's professional musical landscape. As the *New York Times*' then-Music Critic John Rockwell explained in 1975, "from the first, Copland has fought to establish a truly indigenous American music, and it is only natural today that he should be looked on as the father of the whole internal movement of American composers."²¹ Copland helped to establish in the 1920s and 1930s, and strengthen in subsequent decades, a framework within which U.S. composers could pursue and advance their careers. Copland was a founder or pivotal early supporter of many new organizations that became fixtures on the U.S. musical scene, including the American Composers Alliance (copyright protection), League of Composers (contemporary music concert producer and advocate), Cos Cob and Arrow Music Presses (progressive music publishers, now part of larger companies), American Music Center (service organization for composers and performers, and lending library for increased availability of sheet music), Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood (world-class training center for young composers and performers), and the Yaddo and MacDowell Colonies (artist retreats), to name but a few. The concerts he produced and/or performed in throughout the U.S. and abroad across five decades number in the hundreds, and as an author, lecturer, mentor,

¹⁶ Katrine Ames, "Aaron Copland: 1900-1990," *Time*, December 17, 1990, p. 57.

¹⁷ Donald Henahan, "This Aaron is a Musical Moses," *New York Times*, November 9, 1975, Arts page 21.

¹⁸ Aaron Copland and Vivian Perlis, *Copland 1900 Through 1942* (New York: St. Martin's, 1984), 90.

¹⁹ Copland and Perlis, *Copland Since 1943*, 104.

²⁰ Quoted in "Copland 10 x 10: The Influence of Copland," Minnesota Public Radio Internet Music Feature, August 16, 2001.

²¹ John Rockwell, "Copland at 75 is Still Copland the Kid," *The New York Times*, November 12, 1975, p. 48.

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advisor, and indefatigable crusader, Copland had a peerless, lifelong influence on the development of music in America. As composer-critic Virgil Thomson explained:

it was if he could see already coming into existence an organized body of modernistic American composers with himself at the head of it, taking over the art and leading it by easy stages to higher ground...This concentrated professionalism was Copland's first gift to American music; it had not been there before.²²

Amidst the extensive national and global celebrations of the Copland Centennial in 2000, *Chicago Tribune* Chief Music Critic John Von Rhein wrote:

if America cared half as much about its cultural giants as it does about its other heroes, Aaron Copland's distinctive profile...would have been chiseled into Mount Rushmore long ago. Copland...was the greatest composer the American century produced.²³

As University of Houston Professor Howard Pollack summarized in his definitive Copland biography in 1999:

Copland had perhaps the most distinctive and identifiable musical voice produced by this country so far, an individuality ... that helped define for many what American concert music sounds like at its most characteristic and that exerted enormous influence on multitudes of contemporaries and successors.²⁴

The New York Post's much-respected veteran music critic Shirley Fleming described Copland House in 1999 as "a dwelling of particular historical importance."²⁵ No other site or building associated with Copland exists anywhere. As the place where he lived for thirty years, longer by far than anywhere else (from 1960 to 1990), Copland House vividly and tangibly embodies this extraordinary individual's essential role in and incalculable contributions to the development and growth of America's musical history. This comfortable house --ideally suited for creative work-- clearly reflects Copland's lifestyle, values, and personal modesty, dignity, simplicity, and practicality. As the Yale oral historian and Copland scholar Vivian Perlis has written, "the house has a kind of natural, unstudied elegance not unlike Copland himself."²⁶ The 1940s, prairie-style, hilltop home in New York's lower Hudson River Valley served as his full-time residence. Its rugged elegance, architectural simplicity and modernism, and unpretentious dignity, strongly reflect both his professional and personal values and the sense and spirit of his life and work there.

EVENTS AND WORK ASSOCIATED WITH THE HOUSE

Copland's entire post-1960 career was very closely associated with Rock Hill. He produced much highly significant and enduring work in this house, including two compositions commissioned by the New York Philharmonic: *Connotations*, for the Opening Concert at Lincoln Center in 1962, and *Inscape*, for the orchestra's 125th anniversary. He also wrote *Emblems* for wind ensemble and the now-classic *Duo* for flute and piano, completed the *Nonet* for strings, revised his recent *Dance Panels* (a ballet score for Jerome Robbins and the New York City Ballet), and orchestrated many of the exquisite Emily Dickinson songs of 1950. In addition, he composed several television scores and wrote what would be his last motion picture score (for a dark, moody

²² Virgil Thomson, *American Music Since 1910* (New York: Holt Reinhart, and Winston), 1970.

²³ John Von Rhein, "Fanfare for an Uncommon Man," *Chicago Tribune*, July 30, 2000.

²⁴ Howard Pollack, *Aaron Copland: The Life and Work of an Uncommon Man* (New York: Henry Holt, 1999), 555.

²⁵ Shirley Fleming, "Concert Marks Copland's 100th Birthday," *The New York Post*, September 28, 1999.

²⁶ Copland and Perlis, *Copland Since 1943*, 399.

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feature film in 1961 called *Something Wild*), which he reworked into a major composition for the London Symphony entitled *Music for a Great City*. His lovely little piano piece called *Down a Country Lane* was commissioned by no less than *Life* magazine and appeared in the centerfold of its June 29, 1962, issue. He authored several books at Rock Hill, including his two-volume memoirs, which were immediately hailed as a landmark chronicle of his life and work and of the development of twentieth century American music. He also wrote several influential collections of essays, and dozens of newspaper, magazine, and scholarly journal articles.

Copland's home was a base for his wide-ranging activities as guest conductor of major orchestras around the world, recording artist, lecturer, and internationally renowned elder statesman of American music. He served as musical and institutional advisor (for such major entities as the new Lincoln Center, the MacDowell Colony, Naumburg Foundation, and others). Rock Hill was a much-traveled destination for artists of all kinds, broadcasters, journalists, scholars, school groups, and many others. Because of Copland's longtime residence at this house, Peekskill has acquired the same powerful resonance in the music world as Hyde Park, New York, has in American history and politics and Concord, Massachusetts, in the literary community.

CONCLUSION

Copland's music has become "a sound signature of American culture,"²⁷ according to the respected historian Carol Oja, and his life and work have significance for all Americans. "Copland himself has become a cultural icon," Oja wrote. His music is now so thoroughly ingrained within the public consciousness that people may not even be aware that when they hear music evoking an American image, sound, or character -- whether rural or urban -- they are hearing something Copland wrote himself or inspired. His most famous work, the stirring, World War II-era tribute to U.S. soldiers called *Fanfare for the Common Man*, has become almost a kind of alternative national anthem, and has soared out from television commercials for our Armed Forces, awakened the space-shuttle astronauts, opened the Atlanta Olympics and several Presidential inaugurations, and honored the dead at World Trade Center memorial ceremonies. Other treasured Copland works have been used extensively in major corporate advertising campaigns (the American Cattleman's Association, Oldsmobile, and Trans World Airlines). Still other iconic Copland compositions are emblematic of the American experience and widely recognizable to the American public, including *Appalachian Spring*, *Billy the Kid*, *Rodeo*, *Lincoln Portrait*, *Old American Songs*, and *Poems of Emily Dickinson*.

What we think of today as "the American sound" is largely of Copland's making. As the highly-respected scholar, conductor, and Bard College President Leon Botstein wrote in 2005:

he assumed a role in life he has not lost in history, as the undisputed central figure of American 20th century classical music...One reason Copland was a central figure in his lifetime and posthumously was that his craft as a composer has been universally admired. But far more significant is the widespread notion that he wrote music that has come to exemplify the modern American spirit and landscape. Copland helped define, if not create, the resounding cliches of America with which, in turn, he is credited. Copland's achievement is understood, therefore, not only in musical terms but as a prominent feature of American culture.²⁸

²⁷ Carol J. Oja, *Copland 2000* (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1999), 1.

²⁸ Carol J. Oja and Judith Tick, eds., *Aaron Copland and His World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 439 and 441.

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

Previously Listed in the National Register. NR # 03000245, 09/19/2003

Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.

Designated a National Historic Landmark.

Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #

Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State Agency

Federal Agency

Local Government

University

Other (Specify Repository): Copland House

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 2.5 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	18	591930	4565800

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundaries of the Copland House are shown by a heavy line on the attached site map.

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Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes the land that is historically associated with the Copland House during the period of significance and which maintains integrity.

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DESIGNATED A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK
October 6, 2008