

PH0507563

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED NOV 18 1977
DATE ENTERED AUG 3 1978

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Helm Place; (Cedar Hall)

AND/OR COMMON
Same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER *SW of Lexington, Ky.*
Bowmans Mill Road
CITY, TOWN Lexington
STATE Kentucky
VICINITY OF
COUNTY Fayette
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 06
CODE 021
CODE 067

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
			<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Mr. and Mrs. Joe H. Murphy, Jr.
STREET & NUMBER
Bowmans Mill Road
CITY, TOWN
Lexington
VICINITY OF
STATE
Kentucky

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Fayette County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER
215 W. Main
CITY, TOWN
Lexington
STATE
Kentucky

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Historic Survey and Plan for Lexington and Fayette Co., Ky.
DATE
1970
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Lexington-Fayette Urban Co. Planning Commission
CITY, TOWN
Lexington
STATE
Kentucky

(continued)

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 _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This great Kentucky Greek Revival house is situated in a commanding position on an eminence above Bowman's Mill Road, Fayette County. As was typical of the Greek style in Central Kentucky, a broad sweep of cleared ground along with the drive directly approached the main facade of the house in the most imposing manner. A screen of trees was apparently originally thrown about the sides and back of the residence; all contributing to the impression of a classical temple on a knoll projecting from a grove.

The order of the house is a simplified and monumental Ionic, the four columns of the colossal portico being brick with plaster (photo 1). The columns are intentionally spaced so as to leave the widest span in the center, and by this means, to stress both the central axis of the facade and to throw notice upon the elaborate frontispiece consisting of Ionic pilasters, entablature, side lights and transom (photo 2). The bases of the great columns are somewhat of a mystery, having no attempt at a correct moulding, but instead having a base of flared plaster or compo-cement. These may have been damaged and plastered over at some time; or possibly the house is a simplified and somewhat archaic early version of Greek Revival residential architecture in Central Kentucky. This explanation seems hardly likely, however, as the pairs of columns dividing the double parlours of the interior have quite correct Ionic bases. In any event, the interior plaster and millwork is quite as elaborate as the exterior ornamentation is reduced and monumental.

Certain of the fine interior details of Helm Place may be compared to another early Fayette County Greek Revival residence: Lemon Hill on the Cleveland Road, built sometime shortly after 1840 (Clay Lancaster, Ante Bellum Houses of the Bluegrass, pp. 104-105.) Like features between the two houses are a number of the built-in cupboards, which with their great cavetto mouldings have a distinctly Egyptian Revival flavor not common to Bluegrass houses (photo 5).

The plaster centerpiece of the main hall at Helm Place (photo 3), also corresponds to the dining room medallion of Lemon Hill, and both are very nearly identical to plate 21, a centerpiece design in The Beauties of Modern Architecture by prominent New York Greek Revivalist, Minard Lafever (first published, New York, 1835, with editions in 1839, 1849, and 1855). Other Lafever type details appear in Helm Place, the screen with Ionic columns and sliding doors separating the double drawing rooms of the house, possibly being adapted from Plate 25 of The Beauties of Modern Architecture. (Clay Lancaster, Ante Bellum Houses of the Bluegrass, p. 84).

(continued)

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Helm Place is an exceptionally interesting house with both architectural and historic significance. It is a particularly important example of the domestic Greek Revival in Central Kentucky; at once illustrating both forms and techniques indigenous to the region in which it was built, and influences from outside sources acting on the region, as exemplified by the Eastern architectural pattern-books, which formed the single most important outside influence upon the Greek Revival style in Central Kentucky. It was built by a member of the distinguished Bowman family, either Col. Abraham, who settled in Fayette County in 1781, or his son, George H., who inherited the estate and sold it in 1872. Later the family of Civil War General Benjamin Hardin Helm, whose widow Emilie was a half-sister of Mary Todd Lincoln, owned the house from 1912-1946.

In 1775 General Levi Todd came to Kentucky from Virginia, and in 1779 erected a fort known as Todds Station on a road between Harrodsburg and Lexington. General Todd, one of the earliest and most prominent settlers in Kentucky, and one of the founders of Lexington, became the clerk of the first court held in the Western County, and was appointed the first Clerk of the Fayette County Court, which office he held until his death in 1814. He served under General George Rogers Clark, and succeeded Daniel Boone as commander of the Kentucky Militia.

When General Todd left Todds Station, the fort passed into the hands of Colonel Abraham Bowman by a military grant.¹ Colonel Bowman also purchased approximately 8,000 additional acres of land in the vicinity of the Station, about five miles southwest of Lexington on South Elkhorn Creek.² The whole farm was known as Cedar Hall, after the Bowman family farm in Virginia. This name remained until 1912, at which time it was renamed Helm Place by the Helm family after their ancestral home near Elizabethtown, Kentucky.

1 Louisville Courier Journal, 25 October, 1953.

2 Lexington Herald-Leader, 14 April, 1957.

(continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See attached Bibliography)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>1, 6</u>	<u>7 1, 1 7, 3, 0</u>	<u>4, 2 0, 8 6, 6, 0</u>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Nominated area includes house site and property immediately surrounding it.

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

Pat Snadon

ORGANIZATION

University of Kentucky Dept. of Interior Design

DATE

August, 1977

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

258-9000

CITY OR TOWN

Lexington

STATE

Kentucky

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

Cedric W. Keeton

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

11/15/77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

Charles A. Thompson
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

8/3/78

DATE

8/1/78

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky
1971 State
Kentucky Heritage Commission
Frankfort, Kentucky

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Helm Place, unlike the more absolute and puristic examples of American Greek Revival domestic architecture, is not laid out on a "Temple format." Instead of the portico resolving itself out of the gable ending of the short dimension of a rectangular plan, Helm Place's tetrastyle Ionic portico is placed upon the long side of the rectangle (photos 8 and 9). This creates a very strong cross axis, cutting through the short dimension of the plan in the form of a long central hall at the rear of which a square staircase rises around three walls (photo 4). Four chambers: double parlours on one side and a library and what must have originally been the dining room on the other, are disposed symmetrically on either side of the hall. These four chambers, along with a back gallery and a kitchen detached by a covered breezeway, must have comprised the original floorplan of the residence (photo 9).

The plan and front elevation of Helm Place seems to be an adaptation, or interpretation, of a pair of plans and elevations for two "Country Villas" (photo 10), grouped on the same page of The Builder's Guide, or a Practical Treatise on the Several Orders of Grecian and Roman Architecture etc..., by Chester Hills. (First published, Hartford, 1834, with later editions in 1836, 1846, and 1847. See H. R. Hitchcock, American Architectural Books, p. 50).

Helm Place most closely corresponds to the righthand Villa, but takes and simplifies elements from both plans (i.e., the square staircase from one plan, the fireplaces located against the outside walls from the other). The dimensions of Helm Place, its hall being 12'x40' and the chambers just slightly less than 20'x20', are somewhat larger than the Hills Designs.

The plan of Design I of the Hills Guide with its circular staircase contained within the rear of the central hall closely recalls the plan of The Elms, a Greek Revival Villa (now demolished), noted by Clay Lancaster as being a mate to Helm Place (Ante-Bellum Houses of the Bluegrass pp. 100-101; see also Illustration II). The Elms was built for William Leavy previous to 1854 by local builder-architect John McMurtry. It seems a fairly reasonable assumption, then, that these two Fayette County Greek Revival houses, so closely

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corresponding to the twin plans found in the Hills Guide, could have been by the same architect: namely McMurtry, who doubtless possessed the Hills source.

Whereas Helm Place takes many of its design cues from the Eastern Greek Revival style publications, such as the Lafever and Hills sources, the house also displays characteristics much more traditionally associated with Bluegrass architecture. For example, the front facade and side walls are of Flemish bond brickwork, and in the more conservative fashion of Central Kentucky, never appear to have been painted white or monochrome to correspond with the portico, but instead have retained their natural dark reddish-brown hue. This coloration and the surface textural patterning created by the Flemish bond brickwork was more typical of earlier Kentucky Federal architecture than of the Eastern Greek style.

THE DATING OF HELM PLACE:

The fact of Helm Place seeming to take its basic design from the Hills Guide introduces the question of dating. The first edition of the Builder's Guide was published in 1834. In 1836 Colonel Abraham Bowman made a will which bequeathed, among other items, the "mansion" to his son, George H. Bowman. It is tempting to conclude that the "mansion" referred to in 1836 was the present Greek Revival house and that Helm Place was, then, constructed between 1834, the first date the Hills Guide would have been available in Central Kentucky, and 1836, when Col. Bowman's will was made. This, however, is speculation, for the house could have been adapted from the Hills pattern at any date following 1834, and the "mansion house" referred to in Col. Bowman's will could have been an earlier residence built by that gentleman which was later replaced by his son George. If 1834-1836 could be put forward as a possible date for the house, it would make Helm Place a very early example of domestic Greek Revival in Fayette County, the Grecian style supposedly having been first introduced in public architecture by Gideon Shryock in 1830-33 by his design and building of Morrison Hall on the Transylvania University campus in Lexington. The more typical Greek residences in Fayette County date from the 1840's and 1850's.

In 1858, George H. Bowman advertised a house off Harrodsburg Road for sale as being "recently built." (See attached advertisement, The Kentucky Statesman.)

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If this advertisement (December 21 and 24, 1858) refers to Helm Place, the term "recently built" becomes significant. In 1858 what would "recently built" have meant? At sometime within the past two to five years? Or could the term have applied to a house built in 1834-36 in an architectural style which was, in the 1850's, still a highly popular mode of building? Until further evidence arises, the question of the exact dating of Helm Place may remain unanswered.

From: The Kentucky Statesman, December 21, 24, 1858.

"FAYETTE LAND FOR SALE!

On Monday, January 10th, 1859.

County Court Day, at the Court-House door in Lexington, I will, as trustee of GEO. H. BOWMAN, sell the farm on which he resides. The Farm is 6 miles from Lexington, near the Higbee's Mill, on the Harrodsburg Turnpike, and is one of the most desirable Farms in the county. There are

550 A C R E S

Which will be sold together, or divided into three tracts.

The First, including the improvements, contains 350 acres;

On this tract is a

L A R G E B R I C K R E S I D E N C E

Recently built and in good repair; and one of the best country residences in Fayette County; also

BARN, STABLES, NEGRO HOUSES,

and other improvements usually found on such places.

State the place must be sold - "for the debts must be paid".

John B. Payne, Jr.

Trustee of Geo. Bowman

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The only structural changes which have taken place were done in 1812-13, when the Helm family purchased the house and property. At that time, the rear gallery was completely enclosed to create: a glassed sun porch, a dining room, a pantry, a downstairs bath, and a small side porch. (See present plan versus restored plan - Illustrations 7 and 8). The only structural deletion which appears to have been effected in this process was one of the square brick piers supporting the rear gallery roof, which was removed to accommodate the dining room extension. The additions were done in frame (photo 7).

Upstairs, the front hall was partitioned off to form a small dressing room or morning room, and the entrance and direction of the stairs leading on to the attic was reversed.

Elaborate crystal chandeliers were added to the front hall and dining room, supposedly from the Mary Todd Lincoln House in Lexington. Shutters from Mrs. Helm's former Louisville home formed the dado in the new dining room.

The additions were simple and sensitively accomplished, and two of the changes, the upstairs dressing room and the downstairs dining room, were embellished with architectural wall murals of pastoral scenes painted by Katherine Helm, who was a Kentucky artist of some note, having been trained at the Art Student's League in New York, with a period of study under William Merrit Chase, an important American painter. Katherine Helm also kept a New York studio for a number of years. An example of her work today hangs in the Lincoln Room of the White House and Helm Place is the repository for many of her paintings, both portraiture and landscape.

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ADDENDUM

Outbuildings:

1. Tenant House, also called Servants' Quarters or "Garden House." located northwest of the house. Very ordinary common bond, bonded every 9th course. It is possibly a converted slave quarters with later modifications and additions. It has a recent frame lean-to room on rear. (Illustration 17)
2. Tobacco Barn, at the rear of the nominated area, behind a pond. It is a typical rectangular frame structure built by the Helm family, probably soon after 1912.
3. Stock Barn, at the rear of the residence on the east, in front of a pond. It is a rather early structure with portions made of slightly hewn or shaped logs on stone foundation. It has a central aisle with loft above and two 1-story shed wings. One of these is old; the other is of concrete block and was added in the 1950's by the Townsends. The structure was used as a dairy barn in the '50s. The earlier portions of the barn probably date from the middle of the 19th century. (Illustrations 18&19)
4. Round stone above-ground cistern, at the apex of the area behind the house (not marked on U.S.G.S. Map), built by Helm family after 1912 from stones supposedly remaining from the foundations of Todd's Station fort which sat originally to the rear of the farm. The cistern trapped water which was used to irrigate the garden down an incline by a gravity flow system of pipes. (Illustration 20)
5. Miscellaneous small buildings immediately behind house (represented by 1 dot on U.S.G.S. Map). These include a Helm family coach house, board and batten, now used as a garage; Delco house, built by Helm family, for electrical generator, post 1912, board and batten; and various small sheds. (Illustration 21)

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From the many accounts given of Colonel Bowman, it is evident that he was a very prominent figure both in Virginia and Kentucky. He commanded the 8th Virginia Infantry during the Revolutionary War and served directly under General the Marquis de Lafayette. Both Colonel Bowman and the Marquis were wounded at the battle of Brandywine Creek, and when Lafayette visited Lexington, the two men rode along together in a carriage during the welcoming ceremonies. On May 15th, 1825, Lafayette was entertained by Bowman at the house of his daughter, Polly Keene. It was at this gathering that Colonel Bowman made a speech in which he noted that Kentucky's Fayette County had been named in Lafayette's honor.³

In 1780, Kentucky County was divided into Jefferson, Fayette and Lincoln Counties, and under a commission by Governor Jefferson, 13 gentlemen were authorized to qualify as justices over this newly divided land. Colonel Bowman was one of the 13 men. In 1781, Colonel Bowman, at the age of 30, took a wife, Sarah, who was the widow of his companion, Colonel David Bryan, who had been killed in battle.⁴ In 1792, Bowman, then a General, was elected one of the representatives and electors of the Senate from Fayette County under the first state constitution.

On Colonel Bowman's land, he erected a small four room cottage in which he and his family lived, presumably until the building of the later residence, the present Greek Revival house. Bowman also built and operated a prosperous grist and saw mill on this land on South Elkhorn Creek, which gave the nearby road its name. The mill is said to have been in operation until the early 1900's.⁵

Although there is no documentation that Colonel Bowman was the builder of the present house, Helm Place, there are some accounts which indicate that he might have been. Colonel Bowman's great-grandson, A. Smith Bowman, is noted to have said: "I have never known a home built by a Bowman either in Virginia, Kentucky or Louisiana which was not of the highest type of architectural design."⁶ The Colonel

3 John W. Wayland, The Bowmans (Staunton: The McClure Company, Inc., 1943), p. 136.

4 Ibid., pp. 105-107.

5 Louisville Courier Journal, 25 October, 1953.

6 Wayland, The Bowmans, pp. 112-113.

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owned over 150 slaves, of which a large percentage were supposedly carpenters, woodcarvers, masons and wheelwrights.⁷ This presupposes that he had at his disposal the manpower and skilled laborers to erect a residence of the size and style of Helm Place. The bricks from the mansion were said to have come from a clay pit which today is a quiet pond down the drive from the house, and a larger pond behind the barn is where the stone for the foundation of the house was supposedly quarried.⁸ It appears more reasonable, however, that Helm Place was built by George H. Bowman, his son, who along with his mother, Sarah, inherited the major portion of Col. Bowman's estate in 1837.⁹ (See complete discussion of its date in Section 7, Architectural Description.) A house was included in their portion, and upon Sarah's death, her interest went to George, but this could have been an earlier residence. In 1859, George sold the estate to A. J. Reed, who in 1872 sold it to Noah H. McClelland.¹⁰ McClelland sold the estate to Jeremiah McMeekin in 1873, who then sold it to H. F. Hillenmeyer in 1895.¹¹ By 1905, the estate had reverted back to the McMeekin family who deeded a portion of it to Estill McMeekin in 1905.¹² Estill McMeekin deeded this same portion to G.M.D. Minor the next month of 1905.¹³ In 1909 a Special Commissioner, J. Corbin, turned the estate over to John McMeekin.¹⁴ In 1912, John McMeekin sold the estate to Emilie, Katherine and Ben Hardin Helm.¹⁵

The Helm family was the second prominent family to reside at Helm Place. While Colonel Abraham Bowman actively participated in the Revolutionary War, General Benjamin Hardin Helm (whose widow and children were the purchasers of the house) fought and died during the Civil War. General Helm was born in 1831 and was the son of Kentucky Governor John L. Helm, one of the most distinguished men in Kentucky. He entered the Kentucky Military Institute at an early age, but soon left to attend West Point Military Academy from which he graduated in 1851. After illness halted his active duty he resigned his commission, and studied law at the University of Louisville and at Cambridge. Over the next few

- 7 Louisville Courier Journal, 25 October, 1953.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Fayette County Will Book N-255.
- 10 Fayette County Deed Books 35-43 and 50-506.
- 11 Fayette County Deed Books 51-568 and 42-598.
- 12 Fayette County Deed Book 138-511.
- 13 Fayette County Deed Book 138-514.
- 14 Fayette County Deed Book 156-352.
- 15 Fayette County Deed Book 168-299.

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years, Helm served as a State Legislator, Commonwealth's Attorney, and Assistant Inspector-General of the State Guard. Around 1860, he visited President Lincoln, and was offered a commission in the Union Army. Circumstances, however, led Helm to offer his services to the Confederacy, and in 1861, he became Colonel of the First Kentucky Cavalry. In 1862, he was promoted to Brigadier-General and served under General Breckinridge, actively engaging in various campaigns. In the Battle of Chickamauga Helm was mortally wounded and died September 20, 1863, leaving behind his wife, Emilie Todd, and their three small children.¹⁶

Emilie Todd Helm was the granddaughter of General Levi Todd, who originally occupied the land to the rear of that on which Helm Place was built by the Bowman family. Widowed and alone with three babies, the oldest only four, she was invited to the White House to live with her half-sister, Mary Todd Lincoln, and her husband, President Abraham Lincoln. As Emilie was a Confederate, she refused to take the oath of allegiance to the Union, and President Lincoln had to issue a special pass for her safe conduct across the Union lines.¹⁷ When criticized for housing a rebel, Lincoln said: "My wife and I are in the habit of choosing our own guests. We do not need from our friends either advice or assistance in the matter. The little 'rebel' came because I ordered her to come."¹⁸ Emilie Helm wrote that her presence in the White House embarrassed "all of us," and, therefore, she soon returned to Kentucky and lived in Lexington for a time. She then moved to Madison, Indiana, thence to her husband's hometown Elizabethtown, Kentucky, thence to Louisville, and finally to Lexington and Helm Place in 1912.¹⁹

Emilie bought the Bowman House and renamed it Helm Place, possibly intending to spend her last years there. Two of her three children were unmarried and lived there with her. Katherine, her daughter became a well-known artist and writer. Her book, The True Story of Mary, Wife of Lincoln, was serialized in McCalls in 1928. Many examples of her paintings are in Helm Place today. (See Section 7, Physical Appearance.)

- 16 J. M. Armstrong, Biographical Encyclopaedia of the Dead and Living Men of the Nineteenth Century (Cincinnati, 1878), p. 438.
17 Louisville Courier Journal, 25 October, 1953.
18 Lexington Herald-Leader, 14 April, 1957.
19 Ibid.

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In 1928, Emilie deeded the estate to her son, Ben Hardin Helm, who passed it on to his sister, Elodie Helm Lewis.²⁰ In 1946, Elodie sold the estate to William H. Townsend, with certain understandings.²¹ The first was that Mr. Townsend would reserve two downstairs rooms for her use as long as she might live, and the second being that he would retain the name Helm Place. Everything Mrs. Lewis had in the house was sold to Mr. Townsend, and still remains in the house. Mr. Townsend, a nationally known author, Lincoln authority and Lexington attorney, first visited Helm Place and Mrs. Emilie Helm in 1920.²² Mr. Townsend, whose picture hangs at the University of Kentucky Alumni House in the Gallery of Distinguished Alumni, was presented with the Most Distinguished Attorney Award, by the Fayette County Bar Association in 1961. It was his great interest in Lincoln which spurred his visits to and his continuing concern for Helm Place. He never actually lived there but had plans for its renovation, and his daughter, Mary Genevieve, moved in and had the house wired for electricity and generally made more livable. The original kitchen behind the house was restored, and the entrance hall, the upstairs hall, the two parlors, and the dining room were redecorated for the first time in 40 years.

After Mrs. Elodie Helm Lewis' death in 1953, Mr. Townsend began plans for the two rooms left vacant. He had great hopes to eventually make these rooms into a repository for his nationally known collection of Lincoln memorabilia-- priceless letters, documents, pictures and fascinating personal articles which belonged to Lincoln and his family - the largest private collection in the world. The front room was to be the Lincoln Library, and the back room, a Lincoln Museum. Cherry trees had been cut on the farm in 1951 and were seasoning for use as paneling in the two rooms. Mr. Townsend's plans were, unfortunately, never completed. There are, however, numerous Lincoln items which still remain in the house.

In 1973, Mr. Townsend's wife, Genevieve, deeded the house to her daughter, Mary Genevieve Murphy.²³ Presently, Mr. and Mrs. Murphy and Mrs. Townsend reside there. Mr. and Mrs. Murphy are continually working on the upkeep of this historic home to keep it in its magnificent state of beauty, much as it must have been a century-and-a-quarter ago.

- 20 Fayette County Deed Book 251-107.
- 21 Fayette County Deed Book 408-49
- 22 Lexington Herald-Leader, 14 April, 1957.
- 23 Fayette County Deed Book 1096-384.

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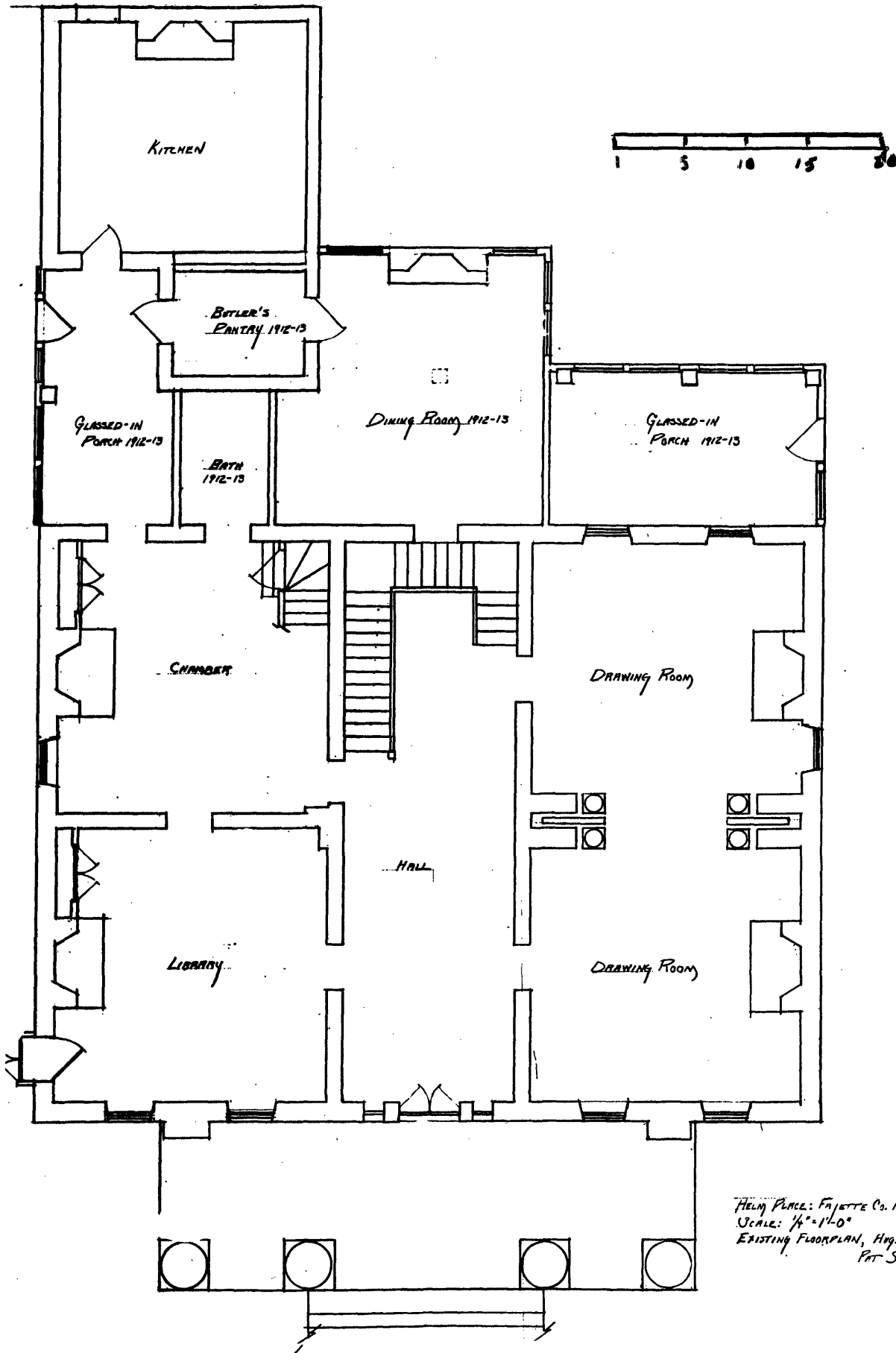
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HELM PLACE, FAJETTE Co. Ky
 SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"
 EXISTING FLOORPLAN, Aug. 1977
 PAT SNODAN

8. Helm Place, floorplan as house exists presently (1977)

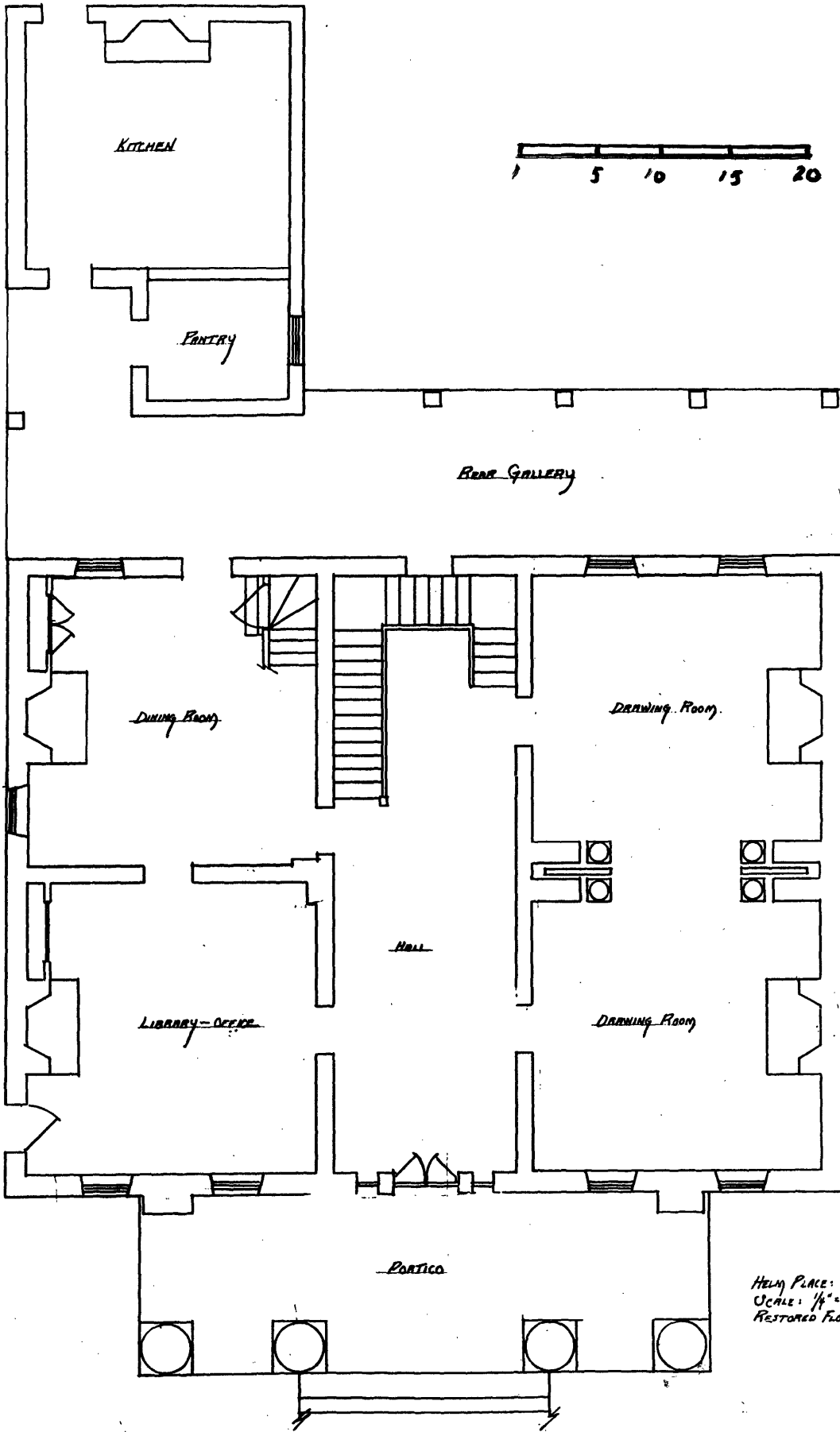
Helm Place; Cedar Hall
Lexington
Fayette County
Kentucky

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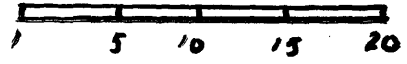
Pat Snadon
420 W. Second
Lexington, Kentucky
August 1977

Photo 8. Floorplan as house
exists presently (1977).

NOV 18 1977



KITCHEN



PANTRY

REAR GALLERY

DINING ROOM

DRAWING ROOM

HALL

LIBRARY-OFFICE

DRAWING ROOM

PORTICO

HELM PLACE, FAYETTE CO. KY.
 SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"
 RESTORED FLOORPLAN / PL. August '11
 PAT SWADON

7. Helm Place, Restored floorplan

Helm Place; Cedar Hall
Lexington
Fayette County
Kentucky

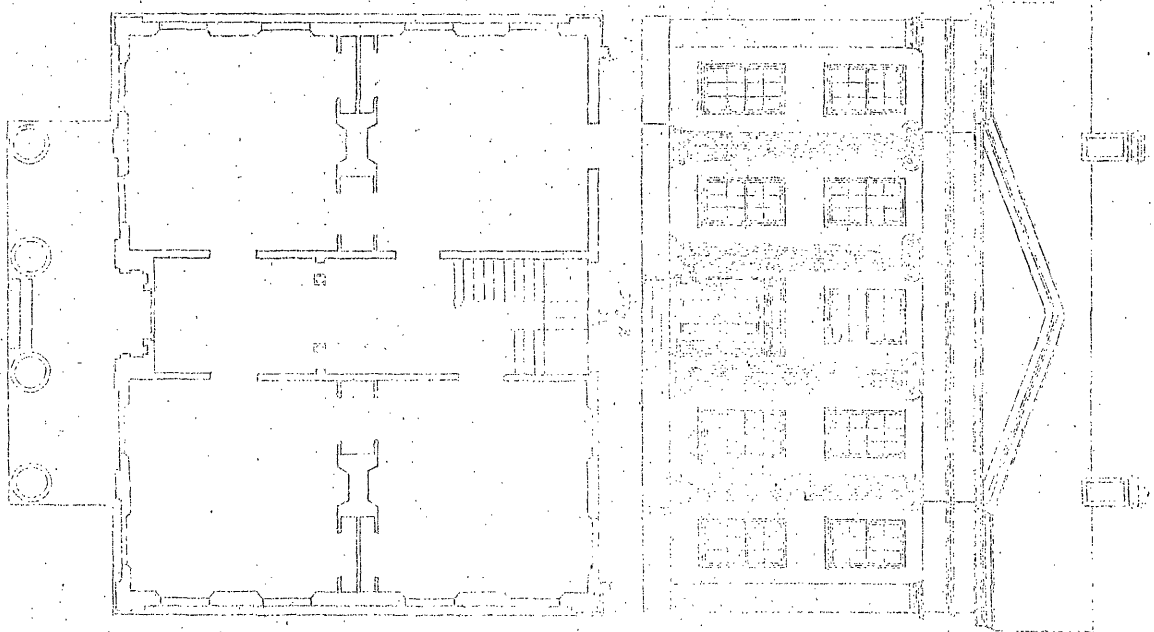
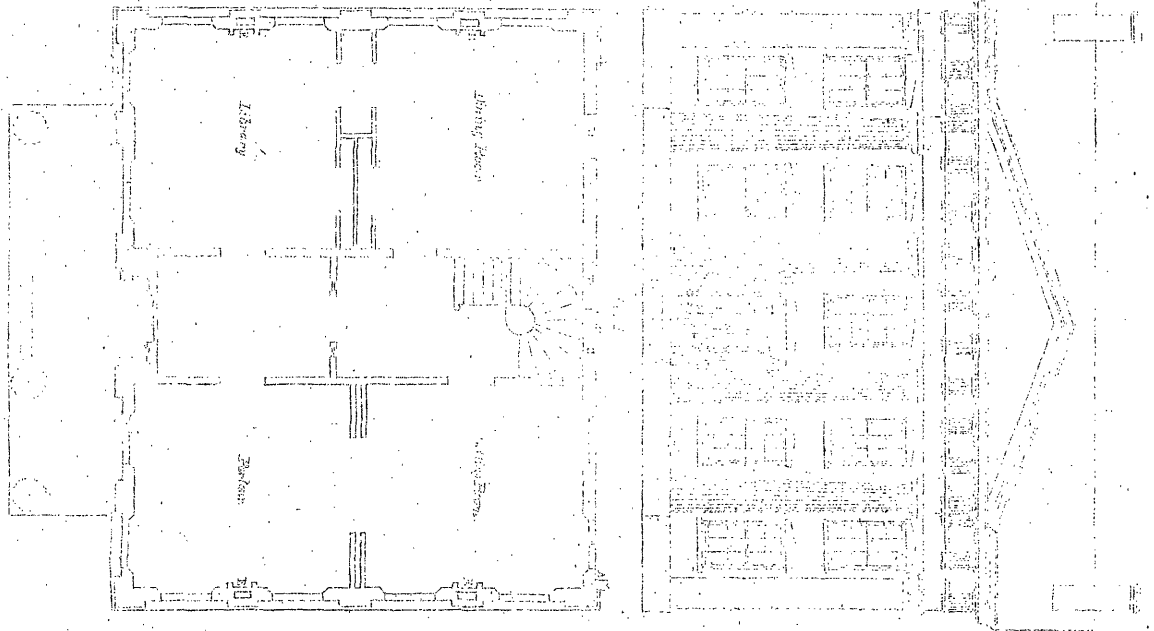
AUG 3 1976

Pat Snadon
420 W. Second
Lexington, Kentucky
August 1977

Photo 9. Helm Place - restored
floorplan.

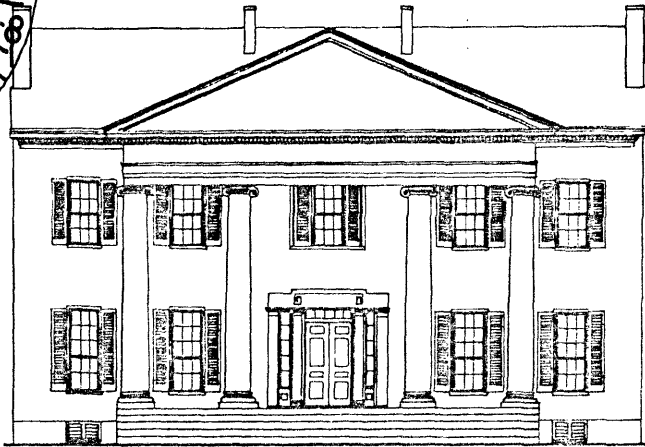
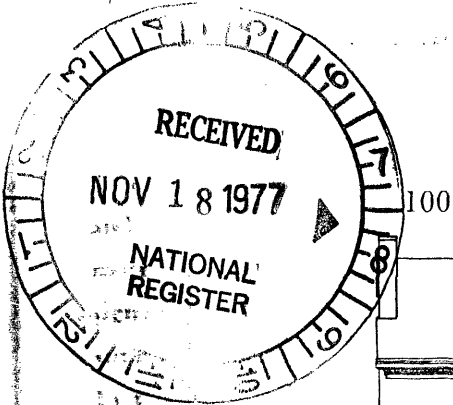
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RE DESIGN & RECONSTRUCTION
 PAGE 144 BY FRANK CHRISTOPHER HILL
 THE BUILDERS' GUIDE... etc.
 1834.

ILLUSTRATION 19



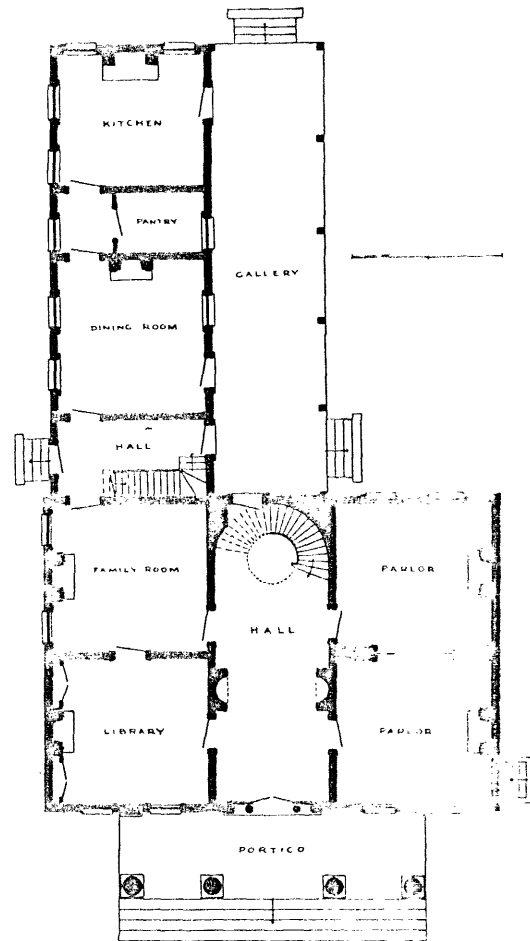
137. *The Elms. Restored.*

top and bottom, somewhat like that at Corinthia. The service ell of the McCauley house is an earlier two-storied dwelling converted to this purpose. The appurtenances once included a stable, smokehouse and a two-storied servants' house.³⁷ The grounds have dwindled to a fraction of their former size, with a church interposed between the house and Maxwell Street. Now reached from Lexington Avenue, the McCauley place has served as an Episcopal seminary, Professor A. I. Totten's School for Boys, a sorority house, and a university residence hall.

THE ELMS A house greater in size than the two houses with Doric porticoes just described was *The Elms*. Another McMurry design, it was built a mile below Lexington on the Harrodsburg Pike for William Leavy, before 1854, during which year the architect became the owner. The conspicuous feature of *The Elms* was its ponderous Ionic portico, with stone steps running the full breadth, as in the *Innes* houses. A full entablature appeared only on the portico, the architrave coming slightly below the lintels of the second-story windows (*Fig. 137*). The front door has been illustrated earlier, as being derived from a plate in *Civil Architecture*, by Edward Shaw (*Figs. 107-108*). The facade of *The Elms* was constructed of Flemish bond brickwork, which Shaw said was "deemed the neatest, and most elegant; but in execution is attended with great inconvenience."³⁸ The window pattern resembles that of the *McCauley* house,

ANTE BELLUM HOUSES

minus the attic openings. Pilasters were limited to the ends of the portico. The centermost bay of the house is about twice that of the other intercolumniations, which permits a very wide central hall, fifteen by forty feet, with an open newel staircase at the back curving around a six foot circular well to the third floor (*Fig. 138*). Niches for life-size pieces of statuary protrude midway in the hall, with pairs of rooms opening to either side, and a 62-foot gallery on axis at the back. The gallery is alongside the rear wing containing dining room, secondary stairhall, kitchen, and other service rooms, over which was a full second story containing a similar arrangement of chambers. On the McMurry estate of about 250 acres were brick servants' quarters, a large carriagehouse, stables, barn, and a grist mill, according to the specifications billed in the



138. *Main Floor Plan of The Elms. Restored.*

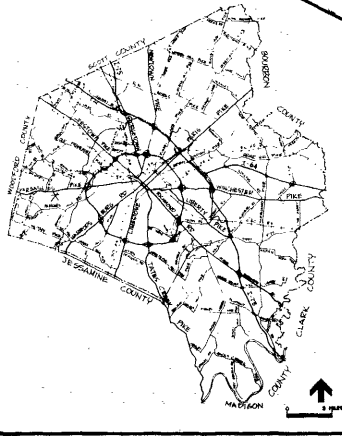
Helm Place; Cedar Hall
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Fayette County
Kentucky

From Clay Lancaster,
Ante Bellum Houses of the
Bluegrass.

AUG 8 1978

Photo 11. Plan and elevation of
"The Elms."

NOV 1 8 1977



SCALE
1" = 2000'
↑

BASE: 200-AR-0172

INFORMATION:

LEXINGTON-FAYETTE CO. PLANNING COMMISSION
221 N. UPPER ST. LEXINGTON, KY.

Helm Place; Cedar Hall
Lexington
Fayette County
Kentucky

ALL 1978

Lexington-Fayette County
Planning Commission

.2" = 2000 feet 1972

Map 2. **NOV 18 1977**

