

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 Lake Mohonk Mountain House Complex

and/or common

2. Location

street & number

not for publication

city, town New Paltz

vicinity of

state New York 12561

code

county Ulster

code

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 type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other Resort Hotel

4. Owner of Property

name Smiley Brothers, Inc.

street & number Mohonk Mountain House

city, town New Paltz

vicinity of

state New York 12561

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Ulster County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Kingston

state New York

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title National Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1973  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records National Park Service 1100 "L" Street NW

city, town Washington

state DC

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## 7. Description

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**Condition**

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

**Check one**

unaltered  
 altered

**Check one**

original site  
 moved      date \_\_\_\_\_

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**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The earliest development of the complex at Lake Mohonk in the Shawangunk Mountains was begun in 1869 by twin brothers, Alfred and Albert Smiley. A Quaker schoolmaster from Providence, Albert Smiley was so enamored of the site, that he bought a small tavern-guest house on the lake and intended to operate a tiny resort for his family and friends. It became so popular that it was enlarged many times over the years.

The hotel and grounds today comprise 7500 acres of gardens, trails, and woodland situated in the Shawangunk mountains southeast of the Catskill Mountains that lie between Port Jervis and Kingston. This large hotel is set on the northwest shore of a glacial lake 2000 feet in length. The oldest extant part of the present structure was completed in 1879. Architects Napoleon Le Brun and James E. Ware both made major additions, the last of which was completed in 1901.

The result is a hodge-podge of roofs, wall surfaces, chimneys, and balconies that produce a picturesque silhouette against the still mountain lake.

The hotel complex is over 770 feet long and the facades range from three to seven stories high following the slope of the rock into which it is built. On the southwest side is the 1879 rock building four stories high. Adjoining it are the seven-story stone building of 1899 and 1902. Next is the 1888 central building of five floors with the projecting four-story parlor wing added in 1899. The Grove buildings of 1893 contained five-story living spaces and the three-story dining room and kitchen.

The building facades are finished in various materials: clapboard, shingles, and rustic masonry.

Roof material can be flat or pitched and covered with clay tiles, opened up with dormer windows. There are 151 fireplaces, 259 balconies, and, in the parlor wing, large, wrap-around verandas dominating the frame chalet-style structure. This parlor wing (1901), designed by James Ware, is cantelivered out over the lake on steel trusses and the large open interior spaces open out on spacious porches. The dining room is also a great interior space in wood with ample windows overlooking the mountains.

The plan is a random path running from one structure to the next allowing for a maximum of breath-taking views and wholesome mountain air. The furniture and detail are not pretentious but depend on ample space for effect.

Also part of this resort complex are swimming and boating facilities, an 18-hole golf course with putting green, and large well-tended gardens. (The top soil was hauled up the mountain.) There are tennis courts, stables, a power plant, employee housing, a picnic lodge, an 84-car garage, and two memorial towers. Over 140 summer cottages, a large lodge, a green house, and council cottage are located on the grounds, as well as numerous gazebos and summer lookouts dotted all around the lake. In recent years a ski-lift has been put in place.

## 8. Significance

Period	National 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1870–1902      **Builder/Architect** James E. Ware; Napoleon LeBrun and Sons

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Established as a healthful retreat, the popularity of Mohonk Mountain House was evident from its establishment as a family retreat for the Smiley family. This hotel also gained a measure of fame as a center for conferences on humanitarian causes such as world peace, education, and Afro-American and American Indian affairs. The Smiley family's Quaker faith stressed abstemiousness and a vigorous outdoor life. They became avid conservationists as the resort grew and flourished, and the natural area around the hotel was treated as an integral part of the attractions of the Mohonk resort from the time of its founding.

Mohonk, now in its 115th year, is a nature preserve as well as a resort and is still run by the Smiley family. Beginning in the 1870's, with a 280-acre parcel, it has been expanded into a 7500-acre preserve. Much of the mountainous area surrounding the hotel was planned as an experiment in conservation of the natural environment, and as an educational tool for the study of botany, geology, and outdoor living. Historically, extensive nature trails and scenic bridal paths have provided Mohonk's guests with opportunities to explore the preserve. The current Mohonk trust, made up of Smiley family members, has provided for the protection of acres of wilderness and, thus, it contributes to the resort's historical atmosphere and to conservation of the natural resources that were so important to the purposes of the resort's founders.

The complex of buildings evolved as demand increased and important architects were consulted. This evolution is discussed by Larry Burgess:

The growing list of guests who patronized Mohonk year after year, who "talked it up" among their friends, as well as the demands of the Indian Conferences, necessitated expansion and improvement of the Mountain House. In 1887–88 the Central Building was constructed with N. LeBrun and Sons in New York City designing the structure. Four years later the Grove Building, the present dining room, and the kitchen building were added with LeBrun and Sons again in charge. Woods employed in the main dining room included yellow pine for the floor and white pine for the walls.

The exquisite Stone Building came to fruition in two sections and after great expense. Designed by James E. Ware, a New York City architect, the first section was completed and used in 1899 and the second in 1902. Some of the steel support work on the latter phase was supplied by James McKinney and Son of Albany. Both LeBrun and Ware came to Mohonk with impressive credentials. LeBrun had designed many well-known churches in New York City and the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company tower which received the medal of honor from the American Institute of Architects. James E. Ware served as architect of the interior of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church and also as creator of Halcyon Hall in Millbrook, New York.

LeBrun and Ware, along with considerable input from Daniel Smiley, fashioned Mohonk Mountain House into a Victorian and Edwardian architectural wonderland that not only thrills both first-time and old-time guests, but also provides ample areas for conversation, strolling, sitting, and even "exploring". Sitting on the west side of the lake, rising seven stories skyward, the Mountain House stretches nearly an eighth of a mile, and is reminiscent of a castle or grand chalet in Europe.<sup>1</sup>

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 7,500 acres

Quadrangle name see continuation sheet

Quadrangle scale \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References

A 

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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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Verbal boundary description and justification

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

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 Carolyn Pitts

organization National Park Service/History Division date July 1985

street & number 1100 "L" Street NW telephone (202) 343-8172

city or town Washington state DC

# 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

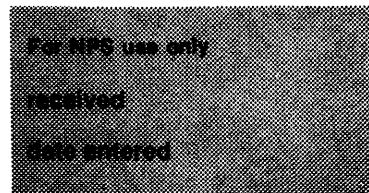
Attest:

date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Item number 8, 9, and 10

Page 2

Mohonk is also famous for the number of humanitarian conferences that have convened here from its earliest days in 1883. Albert Smiley, as a member of the Board of Indian Commissioners held conferences on these Native American affairs at his hotel. In 1895, the first conference on international arbitration was held and both met annually until the beginning of World War I. In June 1890, President Rutherford B. Hayes asked Smiley to hold and preside over another conference on resolving injustice to the Negro. The Y. M. C. A., United Nations, and other organizations have been identified with the hotel over its long history. The desk register includes the names of Andrew Carnegie, John Burroughs, and Presidents Hayes, Theodore Roosevelt, and Chester A. Arthur.

<sup>1</sup> Burgess, Larry E. Mohonk: Its People and Spirit. Privately Printed. Mohonk Mountain House. p. 41, 1980.

9. Bibliography

Burgess, Larry E. Mohonk: Its People and Spirit. Mohonk Mountain House. Privately Printed, 1980.

Egan, James. "Great Homes Away From Home, Mohonk Mountain House." American Home. October, 1971.

Limerick, Jeffrey; Ferguson, Nancy; and Oliver, Richard. America's Grand Resort Hotels. Pantheon Books. New York, 1979

Proceedings of the New York State Historical Association. The Thirty-Sixth Annual Meeting. Lake Mohonk, 1935. New York State Historical Association, 1936, Vol. XXXIV.

Smiley, Albert K., Jr. "A Short Story of the Lake Mohonk Mountain House." (1975).

Smiley, Albert K., Jr. "A Few Winter Scenes at Lake Mohonk." (1897).

Walden and Its Environs. (1914), Vol. II, pp. 49-59.

See continuation sheet page 2 item 8

10. Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

The Mountain House architecture reflects its functions as the center of a resort complex. The complex buildings are thus linked to the surrounding natural areas in a number of ways that serve the resort's purposes as a mountain retreat for the enjoyment of nature. The National Historic Landmark therefore includes some 7500 acres with trails and sport facilities as well as the hotel itself. The boundary is the legal and historic boundary of the Mohonk Mountain House Complex indicated by the red line on copies of the following tax maps of Ulster County, N.Y. in the files of the National Historic Landmarks Program, History Division, National Park Service, Washington, D.C.: Town of Gardiner -- 85.001, 85.002, and 85.003; Town of Rochester -- 77.002, 77.004, 84.000, 85.001, and 85.002; Town of Marbletown -- 70.003, 77.002, 77.004, and 78.001; Town of New Paltz -- 77.004, 78.001, 78.003, 85.002, and 86.001.