

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

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

OMB No. 1024-0018

TEN CHIMNEYS

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Ten Chimneys

Other Name/Site Number: Fontanne, Lynn, and Lunt, Alfred, House

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: S42 W31610 Depot Road and W314 S4151 State Highway 83

Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Town of Genesee

Vicinity: N/A

State: Wisconsin

County: Waukesha

Code: 133

Zip Code: 53127

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

9

\_\_\_

4

\_\_\_

13

Noncontributing

0 buildings

\_\_\_ sites

\_\_\_ structures

\_\_\_ objects

0 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 9

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

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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

Sub: Single Dwelling  
Secondary StructureCurrent: Recreation and Culture  
DomesticSub: Museum  
Single Dwelling**7. DESCRIPTION**

Architectural Classification: Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Revivals

## Materials:

Foundation: stone

Walls: weatherboard, log, stucco

Roof: metal

Other: wood, stone

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**Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**

Ten Chimneys is a rural estate located in the Town of Genesee, immediately outside the village of Genesee Depot, a small agricultural service center in the heart of Waukesha County, Wisconsin. The estate encompasses land near the intersection of State Trunk Highway 83 and Depot Road. The property consists of two parcels: the land surrounding the house and outbuildings on the north side of Depot Road, and the pasture and park area across the street. About 2/3 of the acreage is wooded, while another 1/3 is cleared farmland. The land is mostly glacial moraine with a rolling topography.

The residential complex consists of a main house, a cottage, a studio, and a number of ancillary structures. The house is sited in a modest ravine with glacial hills rising to the sides and rear. The cottage is located at the crest of this ravine, behind the main house. The secondary structures are located over the crest of the hill, and with the exception of the cottage and pool bath house, are not visible from the main house.

A caretaker's house constructed in 1947 is a separate address at W314 S4151 State Trunk Highway 83. It is under separate ownership but is included in this nomination.

**MAIN HOUSE**

The house is of wood frame construction on a raised, brick foundation. The house contains three levels of living spaces contained within a rambling L-shaped plan. The room configuration is the result of many expansions and remodelings. The house began as a modest residence in 1914, and achieved its final form in 1947. Most changes took place in the 1930s.

The house is clad with both stucco and board-and-batten siding. The current roofing is a standing seam metal roof. Fenestration consists mainly of pairs of multi-light casements that are formally arranged in symmetrical compositions. Upper story windows mirror the first story windows below. The principal rooms have larger windows with fixed transoms above. Many of the windows are flanked by operable louvered shutters.

**EXTERIOR**

The house has two primary elevations. The south elevation faces the road and was the original front elevation of the house. This south elevation is composed of a projecting gabled pavilion on the east side, attached to a larger and taller side-gabled wing that extends to the west. A one-story gabled wing projects from the north end of the east facade and sits on a raised basement. Another two-story wing projects from the east end of the north facade of the main block, creating a rear wing.

A two story rear wing extends northward from the main block of the house. It features two single garage doors on the first floor with living quarters above. The end bay projects to the west creating an end pavilion. It is similar in design to the main block with fenestration consisting of pairs of six-light and eight-light casements. One bay north of the juncture of the main house the pent roof becomes a sheltered verandah and continues along the north side of the main house. The verandah roof is supported by overscaled wooden posts that are broadly tapered at the top and bottom. A second story balcony sits atop the verandah and features a cross-buck patterned wooden railing.

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When the front door was moved to the north side of the house, an entry courtyard was created in the space defined by the house and garage wing. Completing the enclosure of the courtyard is a tall, mortared fieldstone wall. Entrance to the courtyard is through ornate metal gates with obelisk-like gate posts topped with urns. Charles Dornbusch furnished the design for the gates, which were completed in 1939.<sup>1</sup> Also in 1939, the courtyard and the planting plan for the area were designed by Chicago landscape architects Root and Hollister. At the center of the courtyard is a large oak tree.

**INTERIOR**

The crowning jewel of Ten Chimneys is the finely decorated and furnished interior of the main house. Extensive mural work executed by Claggett Wilson is found throughout the house and gives the house a flavor more akin to the sceneographic painting of stage sets than conventional house decoration of the period.

The original house, built circa 1914, was a two story, wood frame building. It was described as one enormous room with a staircase leading to a gallery that contained the bedrooms. The original house received a minor addition in the 1920s, with major additions in 1934 and 1938. The 1934 addition by Eschweiler and Eschweiler of Milwaukee added the projecting living room wing. In 1938 Charles Dornbusch of Loeb, Schlossman and Demuth of Chicago designed the kitchen and dining room addition. At this time, the remainder of the house received major renovations and remodeling. The resulting house contains approximately 8375 square feet of space, with 35 rooms, plus closets.

The current interior has three levels and the main entry to the house is located off the auto courtyard. The visitor enters into a reception hall. The focal point of the entry is a large porcelain Swedish stove directly opposite the entrance. A sweeping spiral staircase descends from the upper hall into the reception hall just to the left of the entry, creating a dramatic entry point for the Lunts to receive guests. The floor is laid in a diagonal pattern of black and white marble tile. The walls are painted with a series of floor to ceiling murals depicting English gentry with symbols of welcome and hospitality. These include figures holding keys, pineapples, wine, poultry, and desserts. Also opening from the foyer is the coat room. Because of its prominent location, this closet space has a high degree of finish with decorative wallpaper cutouts.

Other than utility work spaces and a caretaker's apartment located in the garage wing, the only other room of note on the first level is the garden room, located at the far right of the entry foyer. The room is relatively austere in comparison to the highly decorated spaces elsewhere in the house. The walls are plaster with a simple cove molding. The floor is red shag carpet; it replaces the patterned carpet seen in historic photographs. The garden room has French doors opening to an exterior courtyard. The room also contains a Swedish corner fireplace constructed of brick.

From the foyer, the visitor ascends the spiral staircase to the second level, the main living floor of the house. The staircase has a serpentine railing and squared, sawn balusters. The walls are adorned with an unusual decorative technique employing cut-out wallpaper creating a series of floral adorned columns. The ceiling medallion pieced together out of the same wall paper surrounds a crystal chandelier. Wrought iron radiator grill work repeats the floral motif of the entry gates. Two entries at the landing lead to the kitchen and the Flirtation Room.

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<sup>1</sup>Letter to Robert Kruger, 6 July 1939, box 7, folder 2, Lunt and Fontanne Papers. "I am enclosing herewith the blueprint of the gateway for the Lunt Residence..."

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The Flirtation Room, as it was called by the Lunts, utilizes the same floral wall paper columns as the staircase, although the background color has been in-painted with a salmon color to match the overall tone of the room. This space functioned as a reception room for visitors. The centerpiece of the room is an elaborate rococo cast iron stove set in a marbled plaster niche. The room exhibits very heavy moldings on the doors, surrounds, and baseboards. The floor is a wide board oak plank that is pegged. The Flirtation Room also functions as a central circulation point for the house with doors leading to all other main areas of the house.

The most dramatic and highly decorated room in the house is the Drawing Room. The room is accessed from the Flirtation Room by descending a short flight of stairs, creating a sense of drama and stagery upon entering the space. The large, broad space is characterized by plaster walls punctuated on the exterior elevation by a series of paired casement windows with transoms and a large fireplace located in the center of the long exterior east wall. The unusual flat board painted ceiling is a Swedish trait. The room has a chair rail at sill level, below which the walls are painted as faux panels. Perhaps the most superb decorative feature of the house is the extensive mural work found in this room. Above the chair rail, the walls are divided into a series of painted panels. These scenes show a Parisian Art Deco influence, as well as Swedish imagery of bellcast towers and other buildings. The panels depict biblical stories such as Moses being found amongst the reeds, David and Goliath, Abraham being asked to slay his son, and the story of the Golden Calf. The room also contains a hand-painted grand piano with an edenic scene painted on the underside of the lid. A second set of stairs ascends from this space to the Library.

The oak paneled library is a sedate and formal room in comparison to the generally flamboyant and unconventional decoration of the remainder of the house. It is lined on all four walls with bookcases. It has a red tile floor and a large fireplace with a wood mantelpiece. Portraits of Lunt and Fontanne hang on the walls. The most unusual feature of this room is a secret passage accessed through one of the paneled doors which leads to a small chamber and a secondary entrance to the building. The library is in the original part of the house.

The secondary entry of the library opens into a short hall connecting the Flirtation Room to the Study, also known as the Belasco Room. A small bathroom with faux marble walls is located off this hall. The Belasco Room has plaster walls decorated with an applied Art Deco floral plaster ornament sometimes referred to as a "frozen fountain" motif. The plaster ornament divides the walls into a series of panels and also rings the windows. The focal point of the room is a fireplace with a decorative plaster surround flanked by oval windows. The other windows in the room are paired steel casements. A hand-loomed rug covers the floor.

Traveling down the short hall and crossing through the Flirtation Room one enters the Dining Room. Located at the juncture of the two wings of the house, the room has three exterior walls, resulting in an abundance of light. Like the Drawing Room it is richly decorated with extensive mural work, this time on the plaster tray-type ceiling. The murals feature an extensive garland of vines and other floral motifs. The four corners of the ceiling exhibit fine female portraiture, said to be modeled on the face of Lynn's sister. The room is finely appointed with a crystal chandelier, delft tile fireplace, painted cabinets with fruit-work motifs, and a woven rug that appears to have been designed for the space. Five sets of paired casements light the room. Above the windows are carved wood valances, reinforcing the Scandinavian feel of the room. The floor is the same oak pegged floor as the Flirtation Room.

A second entrance from the Dining Room leads to an expansive kitchen with wooden cabinets, stainless steel countertops, white tile backsplashes, and two double sinks. At the opposite end of the kitchen is a short hall leading to a small servant's suite and a back staircase. While a utilitarian space, the abundance of work space

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and the glass fronted china cabinets in the kitchen display both the Lunts' love of entertaining and Alfred Lunt's passion for cooking.

From the Flirtation Room, another entrance opposite to the spiral staircase opens to another staircase that leads to the upper hall connecting the suite of bedrooms located on the third floor. The plaster walls of the hallway are extensively painted with trompe l'oeil panels creating a wainscot panel base and cornice. The upper panels contain diminutive detailed murals depicting rural farms scenes, featuring peasants occupied with beekeeping, sheep herding, cattle feeding, and grain harvesting. Smaller panels above the doors depict crickets, frogs, butterflies, squirrels, and other wildlife. Regency crystal chandeliers and sconces light the hall.

Lynn's Bedroom is located at the far end of the hall and is the most ornately decorated sleeping chamber. This room has plaster walls with a subtle cream-on-white daisy stencil pattern that has been overlaid with extensive cut-out wallpaper borders creating a series of panels around the room. The floor is covered with a wall-to-wall hand-needlepointed Brussels carpet. A decorative Swedish stove is a focal point of the room. A sewing room with six sets of paired casement windows is located off the south end of the bedroom. Also located off the bedroom are a dressing room and a bathroom. The walls of the dressing room are lined with mirror-fronted closets. Set between the closets, at the window, is Lynn's dressing table. The dressing table lights are framed with blown glass flowers.

The bedroom known as Alfred's Bedroom is smaller and simpler in design with floral wallpaper, a Swedish design corner brick fireplace, and a shared bath with a small guest bedroom. The most notable feature of the guest room is a recessed wall niche at the head of the bed. It contains an arrangement composed of a trompe l'oeil pedestal and urn with a wallpaper floral arrangement comprised of individual flowers and garland cut out of wallpaper pieces pasted up to form a bouquet.

The last major room on the third floor is the Helen Hayes Bedroom. It is decorated in a white-on-white motif with neutral wallpaper, a marbelized fireplace on the interior wall, and Art Deco style metal screens and grille. A watercolor portrait by Claggett Wilson is hung on the wall of this room as well as a number of Leon Bakst costume drawings. A bathroom with floral wallpaper adjoins the room.

A remarkable feature of the house is the intact nature of its furnishings. The house retains rugs, draperies, linens, furniture, glassware, porcelains and artwork from the Lunts' tenure in the house. The list of furnishings is much too extensive to address in this nomination, but adds greatly to the experience of this household. The furnishings are an eclectic, yet sophisticated, intermingling of Queen Anne, Empire, Regency, and Swedish designs.

### **Cottage**

The cottage is a L-plan, frame-construction building with a side-gabled roof and it is sheathed with shiplap siding. The cottage is built into the hillside so that the west portion has a raised basement story, while the east end is at grade. An extensive wooden deck stretches along the south facade and has a cross-buck railing and a lattice skirt underneath. Like the main house, the cottage was constructed in several phases. It began as the estate's original chicken coop. From its initial transfiguration in the 1920s, the cottage has had many residents. First, it was a space for Lynn and Alfred, later it housed Alfred's mother and sisters. After Mrs. Lunt's death in 1955, Karin and George Bugbee, Alfred Lunt's relations, moved into the cottage. George Bugbee lived in the cottage until his own passing in 1991. A large addition at the back of the cottage containing a bedroom, a

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maid's room and bath, and a garage was added in 1966.

The house is composed of a two-story block on the east end connected to successively smaller one-story segments as the building progresses west. Windows are 6/6 double-hung sash and are set in groups of five along the south facade creating a nearly continuous expanse of windows. The east elevation contains secondary entrances, one at grade and the other at the second story accessed by an open staircase. The rear, or north facade of the building, is composed mainly of single sash multi-pane windows. The cottage is connected to the rest of the estate by expansive stone slab steps and paths edged in fieldstone.

A small gabled entry porch is located near the center of the south facade. The porch shelters built-in benches and has a scalloped fascia and a gable field decorated with a painted Swedish folk design. One enters the cottage via a small entrance vestibule. The doors leading to spaces off of the foyer indicate their function via painted motifs. The kitchen is to the right or east. Straight ahead are doors leading to the second story bedroom and to a bathroom tucked under the stairs. A living room is accessed to the left or west and continuing in this direction leads one to a study. The rear wing is accessed off the study via a short hall which leads to the master bedroom. A staircase in this hallway leads downstairs to servants quarters and utilitarian work spaces.

Many features utilized in the design of the cottage are consciously modeled after traditional Swedish vernacular farmhouses. One of the most strikingly Swedish details is the incorporation of two distinctive corner brick fireplaces with characteristic sloping chimney wings. These brick and stuccoed fireplaces feature a squat square mass that place the hearth out in the room. The fireplace opening wraps around the corner of the fireplace mass and double slope chimney wings taper back to the intersection of the ceiling and wall.

The cottage also utilizes Swedish influenced ceiling treatments, including extensive use of painted flat board ceilings. The study and living room incorporate tray style ceilings composed of a flat plane in the central section of the ceiling that intersects with a sloping plane at the edges creating a tray-like effect. The library's ceiling is extensively painted with peasant type folk painting. Other parts of the cottage incorporated Swedish language inscriptions the kitchen being the most notable example.

Peasant motif folk painting is found throughout the cottage with the most extensive and detailed work displayed in the vestibule, kitchen, study, hall, and master bedroom. This extensive floor-to-ceiling mural work was painted by Lunt.<sup>2</sup> The walls of the living room are almost entirely covered with folk painted canvas panels that appear to be Swedish but are of unknown origin. The cottage is primarily furnished with Swedish primitives, and Swedish reproductions, but also includes extensive collections of pewter and religious icons.

In contrast to the predominant decor, the upstairs bedroom is furnished in a stylishly modern, white-on-white fashion, planned by interior designer Syrie Maugham. Of particular note is the room-sized floor rug of stitched sheepskins. Even this room shows some Swedish influence in the motifs used in the artist signed dressing screen, the use of a Scandinavian-influenced cut-out balustrade, and incorporation of a tray ceiling.

### **Pool House**

The pool house, also known as the Mermaid Pavilion, is a small V-plan, one-story building, constructed circa 1935. It has a low-pitched gable roof, board and batten siding, and is lit by paired and tripartite groups of eight-

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<sup>2</sup>"Design for Graceful Living-at home with Lynn Fontanne and Alfred Lunt," *Women's Home Companion*, November 1956, p. 102.



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light casements. At the junction of the two changing room wings is a massive stuccoed tower with porthole windows and a bellcast roof. A shower is located in the tower. Entrances to the changing rooms are in the ends of the building. Random flagstone walks lead from the changing room doors to the pool and wrap around the pool itself.

The design of the pool house is essentially a garden folly that combines the board and batten, casement windowed appearance of traditional Swedish town houses with a tower derived from Swedish castles of the Renaissance period such as the Vasa family castles.<sup>3</sup>

**Swimming Pool and Cabana**

The swimming pool is L-shaped and constructed of poured concrete. A skirt of random flagstone wraps around the pool and is juxtaposed against a nearby circular flagstone patio. The swimming pool dates from the early 1930s.

Associated with the swimming pool is a cabana. The cabana is a square, wood frame shelter, completely open on all four sides; historically, canvas was used to enclose all four sides. The cabana was reportedly used extensively by Lynn Fontanne because of her fear of being freckled by exposure to the sun.

**Studio and Wagon Shed**

The studio and wagon shed are physically attached and are therefore counted as a single building. The studio is a one-and-a-half story, front-gabled, Scandinavian, hewn log building. The building is constructed of horizontal hewn logs fastened together by squared double notched corners. Analysis of the building indicates that the logs were imported and then a building was designed to incorporate them.<sup>4</sup> It has an overhanging second story supported by large wooden scroll brackets. The overhang shelters the entrance. The attic story is clad with vertical boards that are held in place with wooden pegs. The roof is supported by exposed purlins and clad in a red tile characteristic of Scandinavian architecture. The building is lit with small multi-pane windows. A wood post fence landscapes the studio. The interior of the studio is a large open space with a wood-railed, sleeping balcony at one end.

A low one-story wing projects from the right side of the building. The wagon shed wing is also constructed of log but has an asphalt shingle roof and is connected to the studio by a roofed passageway. This passageway was originally open linking the barnyard behind the buildings to the rest of the site. It is now closed off by large doors.

The wagon shed and studio were constructed in 1932. The plans for the buildings are by Eschweiler and Eschweiler.

**Stable and Barn**

The stable and barn are physically attached and are therefore counted as a single building. The stable was one of three buildings that defined the first barnyard at Ten Chimneys. Together with the studio and wagon shed it was

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<sup>3</sup>Thomas Paulsson, *Scandinavian Architecture: Buildings and Society in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden from the Iron Age until Today* (London: Leonard Hill Unlimited, 1958), pp. 112-122.

<sup>4</sup>Architects Four, Inc., *Ten Chimneys, Genesee Depot, Wisconsin: Historic Site Analysis and Preliminary Master Plan* (1997/1998), p. 4-63.

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constructed in 1932 to the design of Eschweiler and Eschweiler. The original portion of the stable is very similar to the studio. It is constructed of heavy hewn logs from Scandinavia fastened with double notched corners and the overhanging upper level is supported by large wooden scroll brackets. The hay loft attic is clad with vertical boards. Attached to the rear is a one-story, wood-frame, square plan barn with a gabled roof. The barn is clad in board and batten siding in a manner sympathetic to the design of the main house. A wood stave silo is attached to the side of the barn. The barn was added in 1942 and was used for farm machinery storage. It also housed several cows and horses.

**Greenhouse/Creamery**

These two buildings are physically attached and are therefore counted as a single building. The creamery is a one-story, stone, side-gabled, rectilinear-plan building. The roofline extends slightly at the entrance to form a sheltered entrance canopy. The stone work is random ashlar with large slabs of edge-bedded stone randomly placed for accent. The building is lit by six-light casements and a large, multi-pane window group. It is topped by a louvered rooftop cupola vent. The greenhouse is a prefabricated, gambrel-shaped, metal frame with glass panels that sits on a low wall of random ashlar stone. A door leads from the greenhouse to what was formerly a cut flower garden edged with fieldstone retaining walls. The building was designed by Chicago architect Charles Dornbusch.

**Garage**

The garage is a large, one-story, rectilinear plan, stone building with a low-pitch, side-gabled roof. A pedestrian entrance is located in the west end of the building, which was used to raise chickens. The north facade is composed of a series of garage bays. The stone construction is similar to the creamery. The building was used primarily for equipment and machinery storage. Charles Dornbusch was the architect of the 1946/1947 building.

**Wine Cellar**

A small wine cellar of random stone construction was built into the ground north of the cottage. Now overgrown, it featured a double entrance door with built-in wood shelves for the storage of wine. The wine cellar dates to 1932 and Eschweiler and Eschweiler are listed as the architects.

**Corn Crib**

Near the barn is a small, slatted, frame corn crib with a gable roof. Its precise date is unknown, but it appears to have been built around the same time as the other buildings.

**Pig Barn**

This building is likewise overgrown. It is a wood-frame, one-story building with a low-pitched, asphalt shingled roof. The exterior is clad in wood board and batten siding. Both the pig barn and the corn crib are thought to have been moved to the site in 1942. However, the two resources are considered contributing because they were part of the working farmstead maintained by the Lunts during the historic period.

**Caretaker's House**

Charles Dornbusch designed this house for the Lunts' longtime caretaker Ben Perkins. The caretaker's house faces south and looks out onto an access road which leads west from STH 83 to the rear of the main grouping of buildings of the Ten Chimneys complex. The building consists of a two-story main section with a one-story wing when viewed from its front façade; this one-story wing then extends across a portion of the back of the two-story main block. The main slope of the end gabled roof extends down to this portion, forming a saltbox-like extension. A large chimney rises at the juncture of the two blocks.

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The house is constructed of stone laid in a random pattern of large and small stones. The gable ends are sheathed in shakes. Despite the heaviness of the materials, the overall design is light and open. Large banks of windows define the wall spaces on the major facades. The exception is the east elevation, which faces the main road and is almost entirely devoid of fenestration.

On the front (south) façade, an integral garage is included in the ground level of the two-story portion at the southeast corner of the house. A door is located at the other end of this wing, and a bank of three six-over-six, double-hung windows fills the space between the door and the garage. All the windows of the house are wood and sit on stone sills. Dornbusch included modern design elements that elevate this building above the level of a vernacular construction. The corners of the second floor elevation are open. At each end, three double-hung, six-over-six windows are on the main façade; the windows then turn the corner with two double-hung windows on the side elevations. Extending over the entire front façade and continuing over the side windows is a very broad overhang. On the south elevation, the one story wing contains at its center a picture window framed by large double-hung windows on either side.

The west elevation is dominated by the projecting one-story ell. Here a shingled gable sits above a wide overhang, which shields the large windows set in the stone walls. At the center of this elevation is a single door. To either side is a large plate glass window framed by a pair of double-hung sashes.

The rear, or north elevation, displays the juncture of the two sections. A single window opening is at the west end, while at the east end of the projecting one-story block is a single door and four windows that wrap around the corner. The two-story portion contains a band of five four-light windows on the second floor, and a pair of four-light windows on the first floor. As noted above, the street or east elevation has few window openings. These are found at the corners as parts of the wrap-around bands from the other elevations.

All the rooms retain their original dimensions and there has been no alteration of the floor plan. The only rooms that have been remodeled by the current owner are the kitchen and the bathroom. The owner removed the linoleum in the kitchen replacing it with tile, put in new cabinets, insulated the garage and added a stone patio.

Also located on the property is a small storage shed of modern construction. It is not included in the count because of its insubstantial size and scale.

**Landscaping**

The grounds are extensively landscaped according to a plan developed by Root and Hollister. The landscaping includes the arrival court discussed above, as well as a series of connecting paths throughout the estate. Flagstone paths and low retaining walls mark circulation patterns and delineate areas of use. Some of the landscaped areas are no longer extant. A flower garden located near the greenhouse was started in 1939. It was located and designed by Root and Hollister. The area is now a lawn, but may be restored. Lynn Fontanne was fond of terraces and one is located at the east side of the house off of the Garden Room of the main house. This area is also overgrown.

**Physical Condition**

The major buildings of the complex are in good and usable condition and retain a high degree of architectural integrity. The main house has received a new roof; other stabilization and repair work remain to be completed.

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Resource Inventory All resources are contributing

<u>Buildings (9)</u>	<u>Date or circa date</u>
Main House	1914, 1920s, 1934, 1938, 1947
Cottage	1920s, 1931, 1966
Pool House	ca. 1935
Studio	1932
Creamery/Greenhouse	1947/48
Garage	1946/47
Stable/Barn	1932, 1942
Pig Barn (moved to site)	1942
Caretaker's House	1947

<u>Structures (4)</u>	<u>Date of circa date</u>
Cabana	1930s
Swimming Pool	1930s
Wine Cellar	1932
Corn Crib (moved to site)	1942

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**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

Nationally: X Statewide:    Locally:   Applicable National  
Register Criteria:A    B X C X D   Criteria Considerations  
(Exceptions):A    B    C    D    E    F    G   

NHL Criteria:

2

NHL Theme(s):

III. Expressing Cultural Values  
2. visual and performing arts  
5. architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design

Areas of Significance:

Performing Arts, Architecture

Period(s) of Significance:

1922-1948

Significant Dates:

1932, 1934, c.1935, 1938, 1942, 1946

Significant Person(s):

Fontanne, Lynn; Lunt, Alfred

Cultural Affiliation:

Architect/Builder:

Dornbusch, Charles; Eschweiler and Eschweiler; Root and Hollister

Historic Contexts:

XX: Theater  
B. Performance  
C. Directing  
A. Playwriting  
D. Staging

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

Ten Chimneys is nationally significant in the area of performing arts for its association with Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. From 1922 until their deaths in 1977 and 1983, the property was the primary residence for Lunt and Fontanne and a social and cultural center of the American theater. Throughout their careers as the "first family" of the American theater, during which they starred together in 35 Broadway plays, the home served as a creative hearth and quiet refuge for themselves and a long list of theater friends, including Noel Coward, Helen Hayes, Laurence Olivier, and Vivien Leigh. Plays were written, reworked, and honed on the estate during the summer months, before the couple returned to Broadway for the theater season. It is especially unique and rare because of the well-preserved and intact condition of both the estate and its furnishings.

The property is of architectural interest as an assemblage of Period Revival historic buildings and as an example of an American country house estate. The main house was designed by Alfred Lunt about 1914 and modeled after chalets he had seen in Scandinavia. The house was extensively remodeled in the 1930s, adding spaces and features of architectural distinction. The house is particularly noteworthy for the excellence of its interior design. In the late 1930s the principal rooms were decorated with lavish wallpaper and mural work executed by set designer Claggett Wilson. These wall and ceiling murals are painted in a sophisticated French Art Deco fashion with motifs based on classical, Rococo and Swedish folk models. The scale and the broad, sweeping lines of the mural work are intentionally reflective of stage set design of the period.

The grounds contain a complex of other buildings erected during Lunt and Fontanne's tenure, including a 1920s cottage remodeled to house Lunt's widowed mother and other family members, a greenhouse reflecting Lunt's passionate interest in vegetable gardening, a swimming pool, a caretaker's house, and a finely crafted log studio that also served as off-season rehearsal space. A number of agricultural buildings complete the complex. The logs for the studio and the stable were shipped from Sweden, reflecting Lunt's Swedish roots, an interest that is evident throughout the estate. Fences, walls, and flagstone walkways complete the naturalistic landscaped estate.

The period of national significance is 1922-1948 and begins with the marriage of Lunt and Fontanne and the resulting initial remodeling of the existing buildings on the property. The period extends to 1948 when the complex reached its current state of development. In 1949 the couple moved from a rented New York apartment into a permanent New York residence. Although Ten Chimneys remained their "true" home, the New York residence marked a transition point in the development of the estate and, therefore, has been used to delineate the end date of the period of significance.<sup>5</sup> The townhouse and most of its furnishings were sold at an auction in 1972 and the Lunts returned to full-time residence at Ten Chimneys until their deaths.

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<sup>5</sup>Jared Brown, *The Fabulous Lunts* (New York: Atheneum, 1986), p. 365.

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**HISTORIC BACKGROUND**

Ten Chimneys is located in the Town of Genesee, a rural agricultural settlement in central Waukesha County, Wisconsin. Stillman Smith is said to have been the first Euro-American to lay a claim in the present Town of Genesee in the spring of 1837. The following summer, he and his brother Horace became the first Euro-American settlers in the town when they built a house in Section 32.<sup>6</sup>

By an act of the Territorial Legislature approved on March 8, 1839, the Town of Genesee was created and comprised the present towns of Genesee, Eagle and Ottawa. The present town boundaries were established on March 21, 1843. In 1851 the town was surveyed into school districts by E. Manning.<sup>7</sup> The township continued to be primarily used for dairy agriculture until the 1960s when the suburban development of the Milwaukee urban region began to spread westward. That trend has recently accelerated, making this one of the most rapidly developing areas in the region.

**PERFORMING ARTS SIGNIFICANCE<sup>8</sup>**

Lunt and Fontanne exerted a profound influence on twentieth century American theater. As America's most famous theatrical couple, they garnered an international reputation for their versatile and accomplished work in Broadway productions, one sound film (*The Guardsman*, 1931) and several television productions. With a dedication to theatrical perfection that verged on fanaticism, they appeared as a team in numerous plays, three films and four television programs. Their work was critically acclaimed. The duo received Tonys for their stage presentations, Emmys for their television performances and Oscar nominations for their sound film appearance. Lunt was considered by many to be one of the best directors in America.

During their time, no theatrical performers were more influential or respected. As the "first family" of the American Theater, their careers were long-lived and successful. Lunt's acting career spanned fifty-three years; Fontanne's a remarkable sixty-two. Their commitment to extensive theatrical touring of their Broadway productions helped keep theater in America alive at a time when its existence was threatened by the emerging motion picture industry. The success of American professional theater today stems in large measure from the influence and commitment of the Lunts.

The Lunts advanced the art of play writing through their close collaboration with major playwrights of the era, such as their close friend Noel Coward, S.N. Behrman, Booth Tarkington, Robert E. Sherwood, Maxwell Anderson, Howard Lindsay, and Russell Crouse. Hundreds of great actors, including legendary performers Helen Hayes, Carol Channing, Montgomery Clift and Edward G. Robinson, were inspired by the realism of their performance style and were personally devoted to the Lunts.

Alfred David Lunt Jr. was born the son of a wealthy Wisconsin lumberman in Milwaukee on August 12, 1892. His father died in 1894 leaving a considerable fortune. Alfred's mother, Hattie received \$500,000. Alfred inherited \$30,000, the bulk of which was held in trust until he was twenty-one.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>C. W. Butterfield, *History of Waukesha County*, (Chicago: Western Historical Publishing Company, 1880), p. 741.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup>The performing arts context relies heavily on the comprehensive and detailed published biography, *The Fabulous Lunts*, written by Jared Brown.

<sup>9</sup>Brown, *The Fabulous Lunts*, pp. 12-13.

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Alfred's interest in the theater was lifelong, beginning at age three when his mother began taking him to performances. He claimed many of his earliest memories were of the theater. As a boy, he saw a broad spectrum of Milwaukee performances from Shakespearean tragedy at the Davidson Theater to vaudeville at the Alhambra.<sup>10</sup> This early exposure was to have a profound influence on his life.

Alfred's mother married Dr. Carl Sederholm in 1900 when Alfred was 7. His new stepfather shared an interest in the arts as a theatergoer and a skillful piano player. Sederholm encouraged Alfred's theatrical interest by taking the boy to opera performances in Chicago, kindling his lifelong interest in opera. Alfred staged his first play at age 8, and apart from Latin and mathematics, his only grammar school enthusiasm was elocution.<sup>11</sup>

For several summers in a row, Alfred was given extended vacations on his aunt's farm in Neenah, Wisconsin. There he worked the farm and learned to love it. As an adult his estate, Ten Chimneys, would furnish him once again with that same satisfaction.<sup>12</sup>

In the fall of 1906 Alfred started school at the Carroll College Academy in nearby Waukesha. His family moved from Milwaukee to the small village of Genesee Depot, where Dr. Sederholm established his practice. Alfred lived at home and commuted to school by train.

By 1907 the Sederholm family discovered that their financial situation had taken a turn for the worse, due to the gambling losses and poor investments of his stepfather and to his mother's extravagances. The Sederholms moved the family to Finland to live with Swedish relatives, but Alfred returned in the fall to Wisconsin to continue his schooling at the Academy. He developed a lifelong affinity for Finland and for Swedish culture and returned during the summers for the next several years. His stepfather died in 1909, forcing the family to leave Finland and return to Milwaukee in the summer of 1909.<sup>13</sup>

In 1910 Alfred entered Carroll College in Waukesha. Interestingly he majored in oratory rather than dramatics, although in two years he appeared in twelve college plays. He also designed, built and painted the scenery, an early indication of his later comprehensive scope of involvement. While at Carroll, he developed a program of impersonations and comedy sketches used as intermission pieces for the Carroll Men's Glee Club with which he toured Wisconsin, Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, Arizona, and California.<sup>14</sup>

Lunt transferred in September 1912 to Emerson College in Boston, but quickly realized that his true interest in coming east was to begin his professional theater career. He impulsively entered the Castle Square Theater and was offered a position as a stock player. His first appearance was as a sheriff in *The Aviator* on October 7, 1912. He remained with the company for the next three years.<sup>15</sup> His apprenticeship at Castle Square was typical repertory theater of the period - matinee and evening performances were given six days a week, and rehearsals held every morning for the new show of the following week. A 16-hour day was customary and the regimen was calculated to develop versatility.

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<sup>10</sup>Alfred Lunt, "A Star of Broadway For Third of Century, Dies at 84," *New York Times*, August 4, 1977, p. C16.

<sup>11</sup>Brown, *The Fabulous Lunts*, p. 14; *New York Times*, August 4, 1977, p. C16.

<sup>12</sup>Brown, *The Fabulous Lunts*, p. 15.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>14</sup>Brown, *The Fabulous Lunts*, p. 27-28; *New York Times*, August 4, 1977, p. C16.

<sup>15</sup>Brown, *The Fabulous Lunts*, pp. 32-33, p. 54.



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In 1915-16, he toured the country in a company headed by Margaret Anglin, a romantic actress who also played Greek and Shakespearean roles.<sup>16</sup> There followed some short stints in vaudeville and stock companies before Lunt made his Broadway debut in October 1917 in a minor role as Claude Estabrook in William Hurlbut's *Romance and Arabella*. The engagement brought him to the attention of Alexandra Carlisle, the lead in Booth Tarkington's comedy *The Country Cousin*. Through her, Mr. Lunt was hired for a road tour of the play. Lunt had a major role and played to critical acclaim throughout the country. Tarkington, impressed by the actor's virile looks and his personality, wrote *Clarence* to showcase Lunt's comedic talents.<sup>17</sup> It opened in New York in September 1919, and was an enormous success. It not only lasted 300 performances in New York but was taken on a road tour until the spring of 1921. Lunt's work was so critically and popularly acclaimed that audiences shouted "Lunt, Lunt, Lunt" after the opening performance. The role made him a star and is seen today as one of his greatest works.<sup>18</sup>

Lynn Fontanne was born December 6, 1887 in Essex County, England as "Lillie Louise Fontanne," the youngest of four sisters. Her father owned a printing foundry, which eventually failed, plunging the family into poverty.<sup>19</sup> She showed theatrical aptitude at an early age reciting Shakespeare by age five. By age six or seven she was determined to be an actress.<sup>20</sup> While in her early teens she was introduced to Ellen Terry, a famous British actress. The seasoned star coached Fontanne and arranged for her debut as a chorus girl in *Cinderella* in December 1905. Fontanne was also the understudy to the Fairy Queen, and in a Cinderella-like turn of events, took the stage when the actress playing the part could not perform.<sup>21</sup>

Fontanne's career continued for six years with a series of small parts; her meager income forced her to work as an artist's model to supplement her income.<sup>22</sup> Her first lead role came in the 1914 touring production of *Milestones*.<sup>23</sup> American actress Laurette Taylor had seen Fontanne's performance in *Milestones* and brought her to the United States, where she debuted in March 1916 in *The Wooing of Eve*.<sup>24</sup> Fontanne achieved prominence in American theater through her role in the 1921 production *Dulcy*.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the critical success of both Lunt and Fontanne, the couple were viewed at the time as odd eccentrics who would have limited range and would never reach the top of their profession. In 1920 playwright Robert E. Sherwood called them "gifted grotesques...sure to shine in the sideshow but doomed never to achieve prominence in the Main Tent."<sup>26</sup>

It was love at first sight for Alfred Lunt, as he literally and figuratively fell for Lynn Fontanne, the first time they met. The place was backstage at the New Amsterdam Theater during rehearsals for *Made of Money*. Lunt was standing on an iron staircase and, as he bowed deeply and reached forward to take her hand, he stumbled and fell backward down the stairs.<sup>27</sup> Lunt later said "I was so exhilarated and happy...as though I had been

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<sup>16</sup>Brown, *The Fabulous Lunts*, p. 68.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 77-78.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 87-89.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 3-4.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 36-37.

<sup>23</sup>"Lynn Fontanne is Dead at 95," *New York Times* obituary July 31, 1983 as printed in *The New York Times Biographical Service* Vol. 14 (New York: Arno Press, 1983), pp. 791-793.

<sup>24</sup>Brown, *The Fabulous Lunts*, pp. 40-43.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 95-100.

<sup>26</sup>Quoted in Brown, *The Fabulous Lunts*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>27</sup>Brown, *The Fabulous Lunts* p. 80.

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drinking champagne."<sup>28</sup>

Lunt's courtship of Fontanne had its share of uncertain moments, largely the result of Lunt's close ties with his mother. Despite Hattie's cold opinion of Fontanne, the couple were married on May 26, 1922. Hattie regarded Lunt as the head of her family and was resentful of Fontanne, giving her a cold reception. The couple traveled to Genesee Depot for the summer and quickly set about remodeling the chicken coop as a "cottage," the main house being too small for the Lunts, Hattie and their extended family.<sup>29</sup>

A year later, Lunt and Fontanne appeared together for the first time on Broadway in a revival of *Sweet Nell of Old Drury*. Lunt was Charles II and his wife played Lady Castlemain. As their individual careers blossomed and they received critical acclaim, they had not yet become "The Lunts" and dismissed their dream of always appearing together as unrealistic.<sup>30</sup> In 1924, they made their first appearance under the auspices of the Theater Guild in the play *The Guardsman* and their joint career took off.<sup>31</sup>

Produced essentially as a benefit for the financially precarious Theater Guild, Lunt and Fontanne accepted about one-third of their customary fee and purchased their own costumes. During rehearsals for *The Guardsman* the Lunts began to experiment with a technique of overlapping dialogue for which they became famous. Lunt explained the technique as follows:

We would speak to each other as people do in real life. I would, for instance, start a speech, and in the middle, on our own cue, which we would agree to in advance, Lynn would cut in and start talking. I would continue on a bit...I must lower my voice so that she is still heard.<sup>32</sup>

Critics were skeptical that the technique could be successful, but the play opened to rave reviews and overlapping dialogue became an accepted part of mainstream drama. *The Guardian* ran for 248 performances and the Lunts became famous. Critic Alexander Woollcott stated: "(T)hose who saw them last night bowing hand in hand, for the first time, may well have been witnessing a moment in theatrical history."<sup>33</sup>

The Lunts strove to make every performance seem natural and realistic at a time when theater was largely melodramatic and stylized. Alfred originated a technique at Carroll College of speaking with his back to the audience when addressing an actor upstage that was considered scandalous. The Lunts strove to get inside the characters and understand their psyches in a manner similar to the method actors of today. Lunt explained his approach as follows:

You have only to overdo the catering to a notion of what the public wants to discover that what the public emphatically doesn't want is trite entertainment . . . Nothing is too subtle for a theater audience if it is lifelike. It is the business of the actor to take the actor's truthful conceptions and put them over the footlights, and put them over truthfully, without resort on his part to the 'hokum' of obvious acting tricks.<sup>34</sup>

The Lunts were legendary for their devotion to the minutiae of their performance. They rehearsed incessantly,

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<sup>28</sup>Brown, *The Fabulous Lunts* p. 81.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>31</sup>*New York Times*, August 4, 1977, p. C16.

<sup>32</sup>Quoted in Brown, *The Fabulous Lunts*, p. 131-132.

<sup>33</sup>Quoted in Brown, *The Fabulous Lunts*, p. 136.

<sup>34</sup>Alfred Lunt as quoted in *The Fabulous Lunts*, p. 84.

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polishing minor nuances and gestures, the pursuit of perfection in the theater. No effort was too great, no rehearsal too long, no detail too small for them in their unceasing attempts to give the finest possible performance on every occasion, in New York, in London, or on tour. The playwright S.N. Behrman observed that Lunt's performance changed from night to night bringing out different facets of a character. Jared Brown notes: "...it was necessary that they *rediscover* the meaning of every scene, every line of dialogue and every reaction at each performance, so that every moment would be vivid spontaneous, and real."<sup>35</sup> As a result, their performances consistently improved the longer they ran.

Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne showed disdain for the "star machine" and shunned the notion that they were more important to the success of a play than the playwright and supporting cast. They refused star billing and insisted upon taking curtain calls with the entire ensemble going against the prevailing practice. They vigorously supported the Theater Guild and fought valiantly to reestablish repertory as a viable theatrical system in New York despite the financial losses they incurred. Their incessant touring served to maintain interest in the theater from audiences outside New York City. Jared Brown states:

It may reasonably be argued that the decentralization of American theater today, with the establishment of fine professional companies throughout the country (most of which offer plays in repertory and employ actors on a long-term ensemble basis) owes much to the efforts of the Lunts and a handful of other actors who refused to limit their appearances to New York when it would have been far easier (and far more profitable) to do so. If not for the dedication of these actors, interest in the legitimate theater outside New York might have been extinguished forever.<sup>36</sup>

The Lunts' relentless pursuit of perfection led them to take an interest beyond their own performances, assembling cast members, selecting and commissioning plays, and keeping alive the tradition of the actor-manager. Because they had attained such respect and popular acclaim they were able to maintain strong artistic control over their productions, "a tradition that dates back at least to the sixteenth century, when wandering troupes of *commedia dell'arte* performers in Italy were generally headed by the troupes' foremost actors."<sup>37</sup>

The Lunts enjoyed unparalleled success in American Theater for nearly forty years. They had enormous popular appeal and exerted a profound influence on the American Theater. As Jared Brown suggests: "In their time, no performers were more influential or more highly respected. Few theatrical personalities practiced their professions over as long a period. Lunt's career as an actor spanned fifty-two years; Fontanne was active for a remarkable sixty-one...They were regarded as America's greatest acting couple before *The Jazz Singer* became the first talking picture."<sup>38</sup>

Upon Lunt's death on Thursday, August 4, 1977, the marquees of all Broadway theaters went dark for one minute in his memory beginning at 7:55 PM the following Friday.<sup>39</sup> Lynn continued to live at Ten Chimneys until her death on July 30, 1983.<sup>40</sup> While the couple's fame as actors was world-wide, few today recall their acclaim and the profound influence they exerted on the American theater. Jared Brown states: "(I)t is the profoundest irony that these most versatile and accomplished of American actors should have so quickly faded

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<sup>35</sup>*The Fabulous Lunts*, p. 100.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 464.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 463.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 462-3.

<sup>39</sup>"Alfred Lunt, a Star of Broadway For Third of Century, Dies at 84." *New York Times*, August 4, 1977, p. A.

<sup>40</sup>"Lynn Fontanne is Dead at 95," *New York Times Biographical Service*, p. 791.

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into relative obscurity."<sup>41</sup>

The only comparable family of actors of the period were the Barrymores. Siblings Lionel (1878-1954), Ethel (1879-1959) and John (1882-1942) Barrymore all began their acting careers on the stage. Although their careers overlapped, they rarely appeared together. Ethel's career alternated between the theater and movies. Lionel and John made a more complete break with the theater; they both traveled to Hollywood and became sought after leading men in the movies. Before the transition, John had been a highly successful and widely acclaimed dramatic actor. Lionel made the transition to movies early on. He appeared in dozens of very early motion pictures. Both did return to perform on stage but were most widely known as film stars. Unlike the Lunts whose entries in biographical dictionaries are often linked together, the work of the Barrymores was that of three separate talented actors rather than of a team. It is the Lunts' artistic partnership and longevity that sets them apart from the rest of the theater world.

## ARCHITECTURE

"I'm just a country boy who happens to be an actor. But fashionable parties and clever talk-all that sort of thing-well, y'know, it bores me stiff. I'd rather listen to my chickens clucking any time."<sup>42</sup>

-Alfred Lunt 1956

Indeed, when Lunt retired he was given a tape recorder to record some of his reminiscences. He instead took it into the hen house and recorded chickens clucking,<sup>43</sup> a characteristic response from a man who shunned his celebrity status.

Many of Alfred's childhood memories were tied to Waukesha, Wisconsin and its surrounding countryside. He remembered taking picnics as a child in Genesee Depot, a village seven miles to the east of Waukesha. For a short time he lived there with his family. It was there that he decided to make his own home and as the years passed the Lunts would always regard Ten Chimneys as their true home.

The Ten Chimneys property had a special connection to Lunt and Fontanne. They were intimately devoted to the creation and maintenance of their estate and in countless interviews expressed the notion of Ten Chimneys as a refuge from the tension and strain of their theatrical work.<sup>44</sup> Carol Channing stated "Genesee Depot is to performers what the Vatican is to Catholics."<sup>45</sup>

Lunt purchased the property in 1913 using inheritance money for three acres of land and later erected a two-story wood frame house. The house was described by an early visitor as "one enormous room with staircases leading up to a gallery which had doors leading to bedrooms."<sup>46</sup> Lunt's mother lived in the house year-around, while Lunt returned for the summer months. When Lunt married Fontanne, the couple converted a chicken coop into a "cottage."

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<sup>41</sup>Brown, *The Fabulous Lunts*, pp. 462.

<sup>42</sup>"Design for Graceful Living-at Home with Lynn Fontanne and Alfred Lunt," *Women's Home Companion*, November 1956, p. 51.

<sup>43</sup>Brown, *The Fabulous Lunts*, p. 368.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 366.

<sup>45</sup>Quoted by Libby Nolan in "Lunt-Fontanne: Magic names in American Theatre," *Landmark*, Waukesha County Historical Society, Vol. 24, No. 3, Autumn 1981, p. 29.

<sup>46</sup>Brown, *The Fabulous Lunts*, p. 366.

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In the 1920s they further remodeled the two-bedroom cottage on the proceeds of their first big duet success in *The Guardsman*.<sup>47</sup> The cottage became the residence for Alfred's mother, Hattie. The design was by Charles Dornbusch of Loeb, Schlossman and Demuth of Chicago.<sup>48</sup>

Lunt and Fontanne continued to build and rebuild various elements of the estate. They lived frugally, saving their money for work on Ten Chimneys. In the 1930s they began major renovations to the main house, remodeling much of the house and adding a rear wing and other rooms to create servants quarters for the cook and housekeeper, and additional living spaces for themselves and their guests. An extensive three-page handwritten list of changes to be made to the renovation plans gives an indication of the large scale of work that was to be done. It also demonstrates the extent to which Lunt was involved in the details of Ten Chimneys' design.<sup>49</sup> Another indication of the scale of work on the main house may be seen in the tax valuation of the property which rose from \$3000 in improvements in 1930 to \$26,000 in 1940.<sup>50</sup> The architect for this phase was also Charles Dornbusch.<sup>51</sup>

In the early 1940s Lunt and Fontanne began to add farm animals and expand the scale of their agricultural operations, much to the surprise of their farm manager Ben Perkins who stated: "When I first received your letter about the cow I didn't think you were very serious about it. I thought it was a hangover from your visit to the circus. Now I believe you are serious." The letter goes on to discuss additional stone wall construction and other farm business. The correspondence clearly indicates Lunt's involvement in the most minor details of farm operations from the purchase of cows to what kind of strawberries to plant and when to plant them.<sup>52</sup> Perkins sent snapshots of work to Lunt when he was away so that Lunt could keep abreast of work at Ten Chimneys. They talked frequently by telephone, and letters indicate a flurry of activities every April readying the estate for Lunt and Fontanne's return.

By 1942 the farm had acquired four cows, several pigs, and as many as 200 chickens. The operations included six acres of corn, seven acres of oats, four acres of alfalfa, one acre of clover, and 3/4 acre of wheat. The farm also included orchards and extensive vegetable and cut flower gardens. Ben Perkins routinely sent butter, meat and other farm produce to Lunt and Fontanne in New York and elsewhere.<sup>53</sup> These more intensive operations required construction of a barn in 1942.<sup>54</sup>

Lunt's strong interest in the design of the estate is evidenced in a November 9, 1945 letter to Chicago architect Charles Dornbusch in which he said, "There were many things I wanted to discuss with you on Sunday but I could not think through that headache...I am now rampant with building ideas which I hope will interest you." These ideas included a new "model hen house + a pretty one at that" as well as a house for hired hand Ben Perkins (Gatehouse) and a machinery building (Garage).<sup>55</sup> Correspondence indicates lengthy collaboration

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<sup>47</sup>"Design for Graceful Living-at Home with Lynn Fontanne and Alfred Lunt," *Women's Home Companion*, November 1956, p. 51.

<sup>48</sup>Little is known of architect Charles Dornbusch. No biographical information has been uncovered to date and no other Wisconsin commissions have been identified.

<sup>49</sup>Lunt and Fontanne papers, Box 7, Folder 2, "Final changes and corrections for Lunt House as agreed upon in N.Y. by Alfred Lunt and C.H.D. [Charles Dornbusch]."

<sup>50</sup>Tax Rolls for the Town of Genesee, 1930 and 1940, Milwaukee Area Research Center, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

<sup>51</sup>Lunt and Fontanne papers, Box 7, Folder 2, "Mr. Holtz is framing the roof over the Garage and Loggia and he has rebuilt frames for the Living Room reset." 9/22/1938

<sup>52</sup>Lunt and Fontanne papers, Box 6, Folder 10, letter dated November from Ben Perkins to Lunt.

<sup>53</sup>Lunt and Fontanne papers, Box 6, Folder 10, Letter dated April 1, 1943, Perkins to Lunt.

<sup>54</sup>Lunt and Fontanne papers, Box 6, Folder 10, letter dated September 5, 1942, Perkins to Lunt.

<sup>55</sup>Lunt and Fontanne papers, November 9, 1945 letter from Alfred Lunt, Box 7 Folder two.

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between Dornbusch and Lunt on the design and siting of the buildings. As was typical of Lunt stage work, no detail was too small to be considered. For example, the chicken coop was designed based on advice from Walter Spreiter, a farm building specialist at the University of Wisconsin Agriculture Department, and incorporated the latest theories for chicken farming.<sup>56</sup>

Lunt's desire to get construction underway by the spring of 1946 conflicted with material rationing by the Civilian Production Administration (CPA) which prohibited the construction of these buildings until the termination of the war.<sup>57</sup> Despite the curtailment of residential construction, Lunt and the architects continued to plan for the construction of these buildings, tinkering with details.<sup>58</sup> Construction commenced without a permit from the C.P.A. in June of 1946, but the creamery and greenhouse do not appear to have been completed until 1947-1948.<sup>59</sup> The gatehouse was erected in 1947<sup>60</sup>

Flagstone paths and retaining walls and landscape features unify the site and buildings and were planned by Root and Hollister to connect the buildings with the already extensive landscape of the estate. These included the flagstone around the pool, and paths to the dairy building, chicken coop, and walks around the main house.<sup>61</sup>

The Ten Chimney estate is of architectural interest as a uniquely intact and important example of the country house property type. The country house evolved in the period of 1870 to the late 1920s during which the wealthy elite built sprawling estates in the country. This phenomenon was noted by architectural critic Barr Ferree in 1904 when he described a typical estate as "a sumptuous house built at large expense, often palatial in its dimension, furnished in the richest manner and placed on an estate, perhaps large enough to admit of independent farming operations, and in most cases with a garden which is an integral part of the architectural scheme."<sup>62</sup>

The practice of building country estates was rooted in the traditions of landed gentry in Europe who built lavish summer homes in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and established the "gentile" concept of the "gentleman farmer." In the United States, early country estates were exemplified by Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, which gave the country house a connotation of intellectual enlightenment and sophistication. The notion of the estate as a refuge was likely encouraged by romantic authors of the nineteenth century such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau who equated rural life with spiritual enlightenment. The growth in popularity of country estates after the turn of the century was encouraged by improvements in transportation as passenger trains and automobiles increasingly improved travel and brought the country house within easy reach of urban

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<sup>56</sup>Lunt and Fontanne papers, Box 6, Folder 9. There is extensive written discussion between Lunt and the architect and various contractors. For example in a letter to Lunt, Dornbusch states: "First, as to Ben's house, that was not the working drawing but only a sketch....The machinery building certainly can have three doors for the small wagons....I have finally received information from the U. of W. The things that go on in a chicken coop!....Anyway, the chicken house will be designed according to the latest concepts of chicken raising....As to the milk house, I placed it where it is so that it would compose better with the other buildings....I have been trying to arrange the buildings so as to have as much covered area as possible in going from one building to another and to have some kind of stepping-stone walk connecting the different approaches to the buildings." 5/24/1946.

<sup>57</sup>Lunt and Fontanne papers, Box 6, Folder 9, Letter from Loebel and Schlossman, architects to Lunt dated April 5, 1946.

<sup>58</sup>Lunt and Fontanne papers, Box 6, Folder 9, Dornbusch to Lunt dated June 11, 1946.

<sup>59</sup>Lunt and Fontanne papers, Box 6, Folder 9. Letter from Lord and Burnham Corporation dated September 5, 1947. "We are in receipt of a letter from Mr. Root requesting the placement of an order for a 13-A-7Y ORLYT greenhouse...we know you are eager to begin the erection of the greenhouse."

<sup>60</sup>Lunt and Fontanne papers, Box 6, Folder 10, letter dated May 13, 1947, Perkins to Lunt.

<sup>61</sup>Lunt and Fontanne papers, Box 6, Folder 11, letter dated April 10, 1948, unknown author to Lunt.

<sup>62</sup>Barr Ferree quoted in "The Country Estate in Illinois," *Historic Illinois*, Vol. 10, No. 5, February 1988, p. 1.

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centers.<sup>63</sup>

Typical estates after the turn of the century were built on private sites secluded from the street and neighbors. The house was usually large and two stories in height, not necessarily palatial in design. The grounds often exhibited flower and vegetable gardens and cultivated agricultural acreage. Oftentimes, country estates were centers for scientific agricultural experimentation, such as the Frederich Pabst estate and Gustave Pabst estate, both located in Waukesha County.<sup>64</sup> Site plans typically included clusters of buildings, each serving specific functions such as guest houses, servant houses, gate houses, elaborate agricultural buildings, and recreational buildings, such as bathhouses and greenhouses.

Ten Chimneys is exemplary of the more informal country estate type. The buildings reflect the eclectic and artistically sophisticated taste of Lunt and Fontanne. Although Ten Chimneys was built on land immediately adjacent to Genesee Depot, the house was deliberately sited to maintain a distance from the community. Its buildings were located deep within a wooded grove and placed within the topography, so that hills and woods screened them from public sight. The grounds were landscaped with stone paths and walls, gardens and statuary in a naturalistic manner such that the landscape was an integral part of the design of the complex. The buildings were intentionally set in a tight cluster to allow easy access. As was typical of country estates, much of the site was turned over to Lunt's passion for agriculture; oats, hay and alfalfa were grown, and cows, pigs, and chickens were raised on the grounds. The agricultural component of the complex was an important aspect of the Ten Chimneys identity. Alfred Lunt enjoyed working the land and it provided the bounty for the entertainment and fine cooking for which the Lunts were noted.

The property is of further interest as an example of period revival design. Rather than drawing from English or Spanish precedents, as seen throughout most of the United States, the Scandinavian influenced design of Ten Chimneys recalls Alfred Lunt's youthful recollections of Swedish and Finnish architecture. Not following a specific example, the complex incorporates elements of Scandinavian farm house design in a unique composition. These include the large tapered posts found at the auto court, the board and batten siding, the multi-paned casement windows, and the decorative window hoods, such as those found in the dining room. The painted and decorated wall surfaces of both the cottage and the main house also mimic the Scandinavian interest in surface decoration. While the house and the cottage reflect Scandinavian farmhouse architecture, the studio and the stable come from the vernacular log building tradition found in agricultural buildings and the loft houses of Scandinavia. The pool house also draws on Swedish examples for its design elements. This building, however, is more in the nature of a garden folly. It combines the board and batten, casement windowed appearance of traditional Swedish houses, with a tower derived from Swedish castles and churches.

The use of Scandinavian architecture as a period revival style, as seen at Ten Chimneys, is also unique. Despite the large number of Scandinavian immigrants and their influence on the culture of the Midwest, examples of Scandinavian revival styles are rare. Wisconsin contains several examples of reconstructions of Scandinavian buildings, as well as buildings constructed by early settlers in the style of their homeland. However, these buildings are not examples of the twentieth century period revival phase, which is characterized by the adoption of an architectural vocabulary as a stylistic interpretation of a given period or setting. For a number of practitioners of the period revival, architecture was a link to the historic past and defined the region's identity. For Alfred Lunt, the use of Scandinavian design elements reflected his own past.

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<sup>63</sup>Ferree, "The Country Estate in Illinois," p. 11.

<sup>64</sup>Carol Cartwright, National Register of Historic Places nomination form for the Gustave Pabst Estate, Town of Summit, Waukesha County, Wisconsin, July 11, 1988.

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**Claggett Wilson**

The property gains further interest for the interior design work of Claggett Wilson. Wilson was born in Washington, D.C. in 1888 and had a lengthy career as a noted painter and set designer. Wilson studied art at the Art Students League of New York and at the Julian Academy, as well as in Paris. He taught art at Columbia University in the early teens until the outbreak of WWI. He enlisted in the Marines and was gassed and wounded receiving the Croix de Guerre, the Navy Cross and nine citations. His wartime experiences served as the basis for a series of paintings depicting WWI battle scenes exhibited in New York in 1920. They were considered "America's most ambitious contribution in art to the memory of the Great War."<sup>65</sup>

Wilson was exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and elsewhere. He spent much time painting in the Basque region of Spain. Wilson went on to make a name for himself as a stage set designer. He became associated with Lunt and Fontanne and was a set designer for many of their plays.<sup>66</sup>

**Summary of Significance**

Ten Chimneys embodies the important legacy of Lunt and Fontanne to the history of the theater and represents the international acclaim that the couple achieved in their 38 years of duet performance on the stage. The property reflects the sophistication, refinement and exuberance that the couple brought to their performances.

From 1922 when Lunt and Fontanne were married until Lunt's death in 1977 and Fontanne's in 1983, Ten Chimneys was their primary residence and was a social and cultural center of the American theater. Plays were written, reworked, and honed on the estate during the summer months before the couple returned to Broadway for the theater season. Throughout their careers as the "first family" of the American theater the home served as a creative hearth and quiet refuge for themselves and a long list of performing arts and film legends - Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh, Clifton Webb, Kitty Carlisle, Uta Hagen, Sydney Greenstreet, Helen Hayes and Carol Channing; and prominent Wisconsinites Edna Ferber, Thornton Wilder and Robert LaFollette.

Ten Chimneys is the property that most accurately depicts the various facets of the Lunts's lives. The created living spaces are both highly theatrical and highly personal in their arrangement and execution. During the period of significance the estate was a place of retreat and renewal for the Lunts and for their friends from the theater world. At Ten Chimneys the Lunts also provided their fans and the public with a view of their personal lives away from Broadway. The numerous photos generated at Ten Chimneys, while staged, reflect the two sides of the Lunts. While some photos show them in evening dress many show them in casual attire on their bicycles, engaged in household tasks, or around their property. The survival of the property, intact with its furnishings and interior decoration, contributes to our understanding and provides a glimpse into the personalities and interests of this nationally significant couple.

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<sup>65</sup>"War Paintings," *Survey Graphic*, Vol. 24, No. 3., March 1935, p. 104; "Claggett Wilson Dies, American Mural Painter," *New York Herald Tribune*, May 21, 1952, p. 20.

<sup>66</sup>*New York Times*, obit.



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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.

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): Ten Chimneys, Genesee Depot, Wisconsin.

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**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Acreage of Property: 102 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	16	387560	4758200
B	16	387840	4758200
C	16	387940	4758160
D	16	387930	4757370
E	16	387845	4757090
F	16	387400	4757190
G	16	387420	4757800

**Verbal Boundary Description:**

Ten Chimneys is comprised of the following acreage as indicated on the attached USGS maps:

**Parcel on north side of Depot Rd.:**

Part of the NW 1/4 and NE 1/4, Section 21, Town 6N, Range 18E, described as "COM CTR OF SEC NN 45'E 311.20 FT THE BGN NO 45'E 373.52 FT S89 28'E 66.52 FT NO 45'E 99.21 FT S89 28'E 89.83 FT NO 45'E 37.52 FT S 89 23'E 169.34 FT N1 52'E 248.85 FT NO 30'W 247.08 FT S89 41'W."

**Parcel on south side of Depot Rd.:**

Part of the NE 1/4 SW 1/4, Section 21, Town 6N, Range 18E, described as "COM 77.05 FT W OF CTR OF SECT W 1301.44 FT S00 29'W 1314.44 FT 52'E 1352.96 FT N1 36'E 1134.80 FT W 77.05 FT N1." Also part of SW 1/4 SE 1/4 Section 21, Town 6N, Range 18E lying west of the railroad tracks.

**Parcel for caretaker's house:****Parcel 1**

All that part of the southwest 1/4 of the northeast 1/4 of section 21, Town 6 north, range 18 east, Town of Genesee, County of Waukesha, State of Wisconsin, bounded and described as follows:

Commencing at the center of said section 21, thence north 0 degrees 45' 24" east along the north 1/4 line 969.191 feet to the place of beginning of the lands hereinafter described; thence continuing north 0 degrees 45' 24" east along the north 1/4 line 146.812 feet; thence north 89 degrees 41' 01" east 296.472 feet to the west right-of-way line of State Trunk Highway "83", thence south 0 degrees 30' 31" east along said west right-of-way line 50.3 feet to an angle point; thence south 1 degree 52' 29" west along said west right-of-way line 96.558 feet; thence south 89 degrees 41' 01" west 295.699 feet to the place of beginning.

**Parcel 2**

Non-exclusive easement for the benefit of Parcel 1 created by an instrument dated July 22, 1993 and recorded July 29, 1993, on reel 1753, image 449 as document # 1866173, for ingress and egress as provided for therein.

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**Boundary Justification:**

The boundary encompasses the entire parcel currently owned by the Ten Chimneys Foundation that was historically associated with the property. Due to the intimate connection between Lunt and Fontanne and the land which they gardened, landscaped and farmed, the nomination includes all the intact acreage associated with the couple and their life at Ten Chimneys. The nominated parcel also includes the property associated with the former caretaker's house, which is today held under separate ownership, but was historically associated with the Lunt and Fontanne property holdings.

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**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

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DESIGNATED A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK  
July 31, 2003

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**Photographs**

(The following information is the same for the submitted photographs numbers 1-13.)

Ten Chimneys  
Town of Genesee, Waukesha County, Wisconsin  
Photographed by Jim Draeger  
November 1999

Photo 1/14  
Name tile on facade of Studio

Photo 2/14  
Main house, showing main block and garage/service wing, looking southeast

Photo 3/14  
Main house, side elevation, looking east

Photo 4/14  
Main house, detail of south facade, looking north

Photo 5/14  
Main house, side elevation, looking west

Photo 6/14  
Main house, projecting wing containing garden room and dining room, looking northwest

Photo 7/14  
Main house, interior, drawing room

Photo 8/14  
Main house, interior, dining room

Photo 9/14  
View from entry court to grounds, cottage in the distance, looking north

Photo 10/14  
Cottage, front facade, looking north

Photo 11/14  
Swimming pool with pool house, visible in the distance are the stone construction garage and greenhouse/creamery, looking southeast

Photo 12/14  
Greenhouse/Creamery, looking northwest

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Photo 13/14  
Stable/Barn, looking northeast

Photo 14/14  
Caretaker's House, looking north  
Photograph by Traci Schnell  
March 2002

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**Slides**

1. Name plate found by entrance to studio.
2. Main house, looking north.
3. Main house, looking northwest.
4. Main house, auto court with garage wing.
5. Main house, interior, Flirtation Room.
6. Main house, interior, Drawing Room.
7. Main house, interior, Dining Room.
8. Cottage, looking north.
9. Cottage, interior, painted panel on door to living room.
10. Pool House (Mermaid Pavilion), looking east.
11. Swimming Pool with Pool House to right, other outbuildings in the background. Looking east.
12. Studio (left) and Wagon Shed (right), looking east.
13. Stable/Barn, looking northeast.
14. Stable/Barn, detail of construction.
15. Greenhouse/Creamery, looking north.
16. Pig Barn, with Corn Crib visible to the right, looking northwest.