

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received APR 26 1984

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Helfrich, Michael D., House

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 700 Helfrich Lane

N/A not for publication

city, town Evansville

N/A vicinity of

state Indiana

code 018

county Vanderburgh

code 163

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
			<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Dorothy Arendell

street & number 815 N. Boehne Camp Road

city, town Evansville

N/A vicinity of

state Indiana 47712

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Vanderburgh County Recorder's Office

street & number Civic Center Complex

city, town Evansville

state Indiana 47708

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date June, 1981

federal state county local

depository for survey records Department of Natural Resources
Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology

city, town Indianapolis

state Indiana

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date circa 1970
(Barn)

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The former Michael D. Helfrich Estate is situated on a high point of Evansville's west side where it overlooks the city and the Ohio River. The original setting comprised about 20 acres, but post-World War II sale and subsequent residential development of the lower, encircling sloped areas of the property reduced the estate to its present 6.7 acres. The house is located on the northern end of the hill's plateau, facing south and flanked on the west by ancillary structures (a garage and a greenhouse). (Photo #1)

The Helfrich House was erected in 1920 and is a skillful interpretation of Prairie School domestic architecture. Its two-story plan embraces the horizontal emphasis for which the style was most noted. This theme is primarily carried out by an elongated massing oriented in an east-west direction, and extended on the east side of the building by a "living porch" and by the system of flat roofs. Banks of casement windows and banded wall surfaces of contrasting materials (brown brick and white stone) further stress the linear composition. (Photos #2-#5)

The Helfrich design includes a number of other hallmarks of the style, most notably a complex arrangement of interlocking masses, multitude of art glass windows, corner piers, a massive brick chimney (albeit off center), and a stone base course. The porte cochere, often an element of the Prairie idiom, atypically projects out of the front elevation and is off center.

Quality and durable materials went into the construction of the Helfrich House and are factors which probably account for its excellent state of preservation. Dark brown Rugby brick extends three-quarters of the way up the exterior walls to a point just below the second story windows. A continuous limestone belt course forms the sill for the second story ribbon windows. A limestone ashlar veneer covers the second story, providing a light-colored and smooth contrast to the dark, rough brick below. A second limestone belt course forms the lintel for the second story windows, and creates a frieze-like band under the wide eaves. The flat roofs of the porte cochere and east-end "living porch" are supported by sturdy limestone piers. The sheltered portion of the "living porch" extends onto an open terrace on the south. The terrace has a low limestone wall and its concrete floor is overlaid with a geometric pattern of imported tiles.

A distinctive feature of the design of the Helfrich House is the casement windows. Arranged in banks, they provide vertical links to the horizontal lines of the roof and tie the whole composition to the ground. All of the windows are constructed of leaded clear and colored glass in a rectilinear, geometric pattern. (Photo #6) Of particular note is the centrally located bank of long (approximately 8½ feet) and narrow (one and one-half feet) windows of the south facade which contain translucent yellow glass panes. (Photo #7) Separated by wide mullions, these windows feature a "Wisteria" pattern done in various colors of glass along their outside edges. (Photos #8 and #9)

The interior plan further displays the Prairie style and remains unaltered. Upon entering the home through a single-leaf entrance containing a door with a large beveled and etched glass pane, one steps into a large and spacious entry hall and stairway. The principal rooms all flow out of this space. To the right, through an open arch, is a long and wide living room. (Photo #10) Straight ahead is the dining room which is closed off by a set of double doors with multiple beveled and etched glass panes. (Photos #11 and #12) To the left are the den and kitchen areas. All three upstairs rooms open off the second floor of this entryway. The large bank of "Wisteria" windows provides warm, glowing illumination which filters into all these rooms.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1920

Builder/Architect Clifford Shopbell & Co., Architect
Jacob-Bippus and Sons, Builder

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Michael D. Helfrich Estate is significant for a number of reasons. The home is an outstanding example of the Prairie Style of architecture, one of the most deftly rendered examples in the state. In addition, the structure was designed by Clifford Shopbell and Company, a leading architectural firm in Evansville, and was built by the well-established firm of Jacob-Bippus and Sons. The significance of the Helfrich Estate is further enhanced by the original resident of the property, Michael D. Helfrich, an influential businessman in early 20th century Evansville.

The Michael D. Helfrich House is the best example of Prairie Style architecture in Evansville. When the house was constructed in 1920-21, the Evansville newspapers stated that it was "one of the most beautiful homes in the city," and a "fine addition to the city's handsome residences." The history of Clifford Shopbell and Company began in 1897 when Clifford Shopbell formed a partnership with W. J. Harris, which continued until Harris died in 1910. During those 13 years, the practice established a regional reputation for excellence, engaging in all types of designs both public and private. After Harris' death, Shopbell formed a successor firm of Clifford Shopbell and Company. By the 1920's, the firm had grown to be the largest in Evansville. They designed the first Prairie Style House in Evansville for the city's mayor, Benjamin Bosse, in 1917. Also included in Shopbell's works are the YMCA building, built in 1913, and the Coliseum, built in 1916 (National Register, 1979). The Sunday Journal, in 1923, stated, "The position of Clifford Shopbell and Company has been achieved through constant devotion to the best ideals of the architectural professions." Jacob-Bippus and Sons, contractors, were well-respected for over 70 years of quality construction by 1920. Bippus had teamed with Shopbell and Company on many other projects, including the Bosse home, and this combination of Shopbell and Bippus was regarded as one of the best available.

The association of the house with Michael D. Helfrich is of equal importance. Michael was born in 1866 into one of the leading families of Evansville, who had emigrated to the United States in 1837 from Germany. Michael's father, Adam, founded a saw and lumber mill in Independence (now the West Side of Evansville), accruing a small fortune. Michael became the head of the Helfrich businesses when his father died. At that time, the Helfrich businesses included the Evansville Pressed Brick Company and the Helfrich Lumber and Manufacturing Company.

Michael Helfrich attended Jasper Business College, and worked as a cashier and bookkeeper at the family businesses to learn from the bottom up. He negotiated major contracts with companies such as the Pullman Car Company, Wells-Fargo, and the Chicago-St. Paul and Milwaukee Railroads. Michael's friends included senators and governors, and he entertained friends at his home or at his "river camp" across from Evansville in Kentucky. Michael had no children so he often treated his relatives with social gatherings at his estate, and weekend cruises up the Ohio River to the lumber camps on the Green River.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 6.67

Quadrangle name Evansville South Indiana-Kentucky

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	6	4	4	6	7	5	0	4	2	0	4	0	8	0
Zone	Easting			Northing										

B

Zone	Easting			Northing										

C

Zone	Easting			Northing										

D

Zone	Easting			Northing										

E

Zone	Easting			Northing										

F

Zone	Easting			Northing										

G

Zone	Easting			Northing										

H

Zone	Easting			Northing										

Verbal boundary description and justification

Please see continuation sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Bruce Casteel, Historic Preservation Intern

organization Department of Metropolitan Development date 12-9-83

street & number 216 Washington Avenue telephone 812/426-5487

city or town Evansville state Indiana

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 J. M. Redeman

title Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer date 4-19-84

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the National Register date 5/24/84

for Melissa Byers
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration _____

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Interior details also add to the Prairie School theme. The main stairs are wide and open with a Chippendale railing constructed of detailed cherry wood. (Photos #13, #14, #15) The master bedroom contains an original wooden mantel over the fireplace. (Photo #16) A long, low window seat is present in the den. (Photo #17)

Another mark of the Prairie School style in the Helfrich House was the inclusion of many contemporary and modern conveniences. Large built-in storage areas are present throughout the house. A walk-through closet featuring built-in wardrobes and drawers opens off the master bedroom. (Photo #18) The butler's pantry has a wall of built-in cabinets and drawers. (Photos #19 and #20) A large, walk-in closet opens off the second floor landing with built-in linen closets in the hallway. The basement is full-sized, providing seven rooms of livable space, one of which Michael D. Helfrich used as a pool room. (Photo #21) A servant's stairs leads from the basement to the second floor.

While the house is the most outstanding structure on the estate, a garage (Photo #22) and a greenhouse (Photo #23) are also present. Both are designed sympathetically with the house, having many of the same basic elements—flat roofs, corner piers, deep eaves, limestone coping, and Rugby brick construction. The garage has been remodeled on the interior but still retains a significant portion of the original art metal ceiling. The exterior has changed little. The greenhouse structure has not been remodeled and retains its architectural integrity, both inside and outside, although all the glazing is missing from the metal frame portion of the greenhouse.

The rest of the grounds include contemporary additions such as a swimming pool, barbecue pit, shuffleboard area, and a large, old barn (transplanted circa 1970 from Illinois). An old rock garden remains but is overgrown and deteriorating. A grape arbor between the house and garage is still used, under which a hand-operated water pump remains.

While the estate is now only 6.7 acres, the home and its supporting structures remain in relatively original condition and are the best embodiments of Prairie School architecture in Evansville.

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Michael was active in improving the Independence area, being instrumental in establishing a horse-car line to Main Street and, in 1893, helping to establish the Independence Electric Line. Michael was a strong supporter of St. Boniface Catholic Church, a member of the Men's Society, and a director of the National City Bank. He was known for widespread philanthropy which resulted in a park named for him on the city's west side. He ran a Sterns-Knight car dealership for a short period, but after selling cars to family members and close friends, he went out of business. Michael never drove a car himself, always having a chauffeur or family member drive for him. He drank only goats' milk and kept a herd of goats on his property.

Michael built his home in 1920-21 on one of the best sites available in Evansville—on top of "Westholm Hill" in an area then known as West Heights, now simply the West Side of Evansville. The estate covered approximately 20 acres and, according to his niece, Grace Huggins, the lawn was kept manicured "like a golf course". The estate also had a rose walk, pond, grape arbor, orchard, and an elaborate rock garden consisting of a waterfall, pools filled with goldfish, walks, and a bridge over one large pool.

At the south base of the hill is a large, underground storage room. An arched tunnel leads into a room about 15' x 45' and 15' high. A rear exit, which has been bricked up, may have led up through the hill into the basement of the house; however, this area is no longer a part of the 6.7 acres on which the house sits today.

When Michael died in 1938 at the age of 71, his obituary was front-page news. He was called a "leader in the city business life" and "one of Evansville's most successful and widely known businessmen." At the time of his death, the family businesses had been expanded to include The National Helfrich Pottery Company, Peerless Tank and Seat Works (makers of the "Silent Knight" water closets and the "Don't Worry" seats) and the Peerless Selling Company, with offices nationwide, including Chicago and San Francisco.

Since Helfrich's death, a number of people have occupied the house, including the president and general manager of the Globe-Bosse-World Furniture Corporation. The present owners, the Arendell family, bought the house in 1966.

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CITY DIRECTORIES AND HISTORIES

Evansville City Directories, 1884+

History of Vanderburgh County, Indiana, Madison, Wisconsin: Brant and Fuller, 1884.

McKinney, Margaret, Founding Families, Indianapolis, Indiana: News and Features Press, 1982.

McCarty, Walter C., ed., Indiana Today, Indianapolis, Indiana: Indiana Editors' Association, 1942.

Reflections Upon a Century of Architecture, Evansville, Indiana, Evansville, Indiana: The Junior League of Evansville, Inc., 1977.

NEWSPAPERS

Evansville Journal:

April 4, 1920, "Helfrich Home to go up on West Heights".

April 18, 1920, "Work Begins on Helfrich Home".

July 18, 1920, "Helfrich Home Ready for Superstructure".

August 1, 1920, "New Helfrich Home".

August 8, 1920, "End of Strike Starts Work on New Homes".

April 22, 1923, Architectural Section, "Clifford Shopbell and Company Gain Wide Reputation for Beauty and Variety of Architectural Work".

Evansville Courier:

October 15, 1922, "Helfrich Building Elaborate Garage".

September 3, 1938, "Helfrich, Leader in City Business Life, Dies at 71", Page 1.

Evansville Press:

September 2, 1938, "M. D. Helfrich Dies; Headed Pottery Firm", Page 1.

PUBLIC RECORDS

Vanderburgh County, Indiana. Grantee/Grantor Deed Indexes.

Vanderburgh County, Indiana. Mortgage Index.

Vanderburgh County, City of Evansville, Indiana. City-County Department of Health Local Certified Record of Death.

Vanderburgh County, Indiana. Perry Township Assessor's Records.

RESOURCE PEOPLE - INTERVIEWS

Helfrich, Jim - Evansville, Indiana -- November, 1983.

Helfrich, Pete - Evansville, Indiana -- November, 1983.

Huggins, Mrs. Grace Eisterhold - Evansville, Indiana -- November 2, 1983.

McKinney, Margaret - Evansville, Indiana -- November, 1983.

MISCELLANEOUS - LOCAL RECORDS

Wesley Architectural Index, Evansville, Indiana, Jack Wesley, ed.

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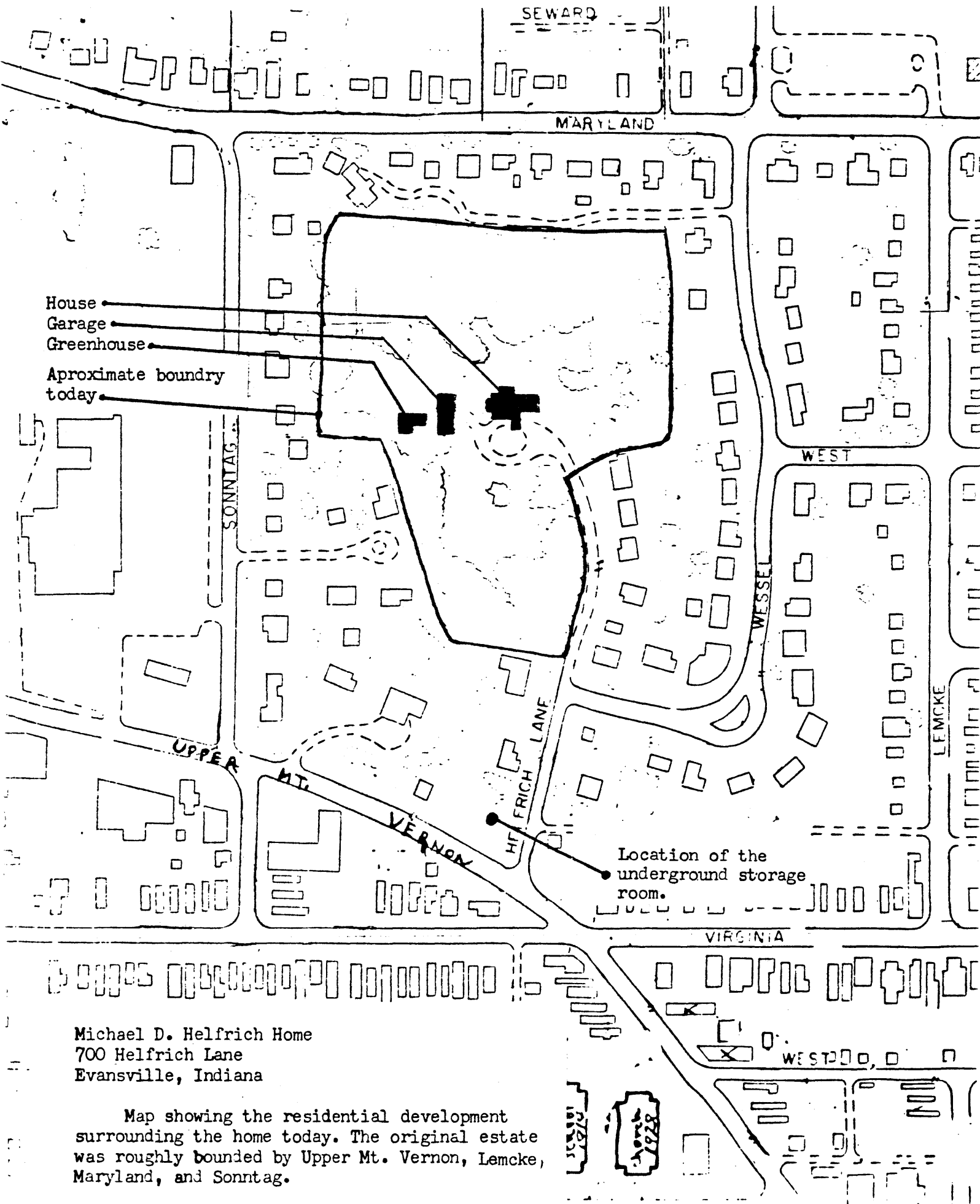
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All that part of the Southeast Quarter of Section 23, Township 6 South, Range 11 West, described and bounded as follows, to-wit:

Commencing at the Northwest corner of said Southeast Quarter; thence East along the north line thereof a distance of 632.26 feet; thence south $2^{\circ}00'$ East a distance of 160 feet to the starting point for the metes and bounds description of subject property; thence North $87^{\circ}17'$ East a distance of 480 feet; thence South $13^{\circ}53'$ East a distance of 388 feet; thence South $82^{\circ}15'$ West a distance of 197.10 feet; thence South $18^{\circ}37'$ East a distance of 76.50 feet to the point of curvature of a $25^{\circ}17'$ curve to the right; thence along the arc of said curve 117.30 feet to the point of tangency of said curve; thence South $11^{\circ}03'$ West a distance of 161 feet; thence North $78^{\circ}57'$ West a distance of 128' to the point of curvature of a $44^{\circ}46'30''$ curve to the right; thence along the arc of said curve 142.90 feet to the point of tangency of said curve; thence North $14^{\circ}45'$ West a distance of 277.50 feet; thence South $88^{\circ}00'$ West a distance of 108 feet; thence North $2^{\circ}00'$ West a distance of 257 feet; thence North $18^{\circ}53'30''$ East a distance of 101 feet to the place of beginning, containing 6.77 acres, more or less.

Exception therefrom a parcel of ground described as follows: A parcel of land adjoining Lot Number 50 in Section B Helfrich Heights in the City of Evansville, Vanderburgh County, Indiana, described as beginning at Northeast corner of said Lot Number 50, running thence in a Northeasterly direction at right angles to the North Line of said Lot Number 50, 35 feet; running thence West to a point where the North line of Lot Number 50 extended Westwardly would intersect with said boundary line; running thence in a Southeasterly direction along the North line of said Lot Number 50 and said North line extended to the place of beginning, being triangular in shape and 35 feet of said triangle facing Helfrich Lane.

Subject to all legal highways and right of ways.



Michael D. Helfrich Home
700 Helfrich Lane
Evansville, Indiana

Map showing the residential development surrounding the home today. The original estate was roughly bounded by Upper Mt. Vernon, Lemcke, Maryland, and Sonntag.