

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

PH0699063

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED FEB 5 1979  
MAR 21 1979  
DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

The Rowland J. Darnell House (Nineteenth Century Club)

AND/OR COMMON

Nineteenth Century Club

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

1433 Union Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Memphis

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

Eighth

STATE

Tennessee

CODE

047

COUNTY

Shelby

CODE

157

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

DISTRICT

PUBLIC

X OCCUPIED

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

X BUILDING(S)

X PRIVATE

UNOCCUPIED

COMMERCIAL

PARK

STRUCTURE

BOTH

WORK IN PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

OBJECT

IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

X NO

MILITARY

X OTHER: Social

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Nineteenth Century Club

STREET & NUMBER

1433 Union Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Memphis

VICINITY OF

STATE

Tennessee 38103

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Shelby County Registrar

STREET & NUMBER

Shelby County Courthouse, 160 N. Main

CITY, TOWN

Memphis

STATE

Tennessee

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Memphis Landmarks Commission Survey

DATE

January, 1978

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY X LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Memphis Landmarks Commission

CITY, TOWN

Memphis

STATE

Tennessee

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Bordered by South Watkins Street to the west and a vacant lot to the east, the Nineteenth Century Club is situated atop a terraced lawn on the south side of Union Avenue. Three flights of concrete steps lead to the center of the balustraded terrace that links the sunporch on the east and the porte-cochere on the west to the main section of the house. Once surrounded by large residences, the building now coexists with numerous commercial establishments.

The integration of large proportions, rectangular plan, monumental balconied portico, straight window heads, hipped roof above a classical entablature and strict symmetry on the facade is an expression of the Colonial Revival style. Yet, the arched fenestration found on the first story is derived from the Beaux Arts style popular in Memphis at the turn of the century.

Of brick masonry construction laid in stretcher bond, the two-and-one-half-story main section of the structure is five bays wide. A rear wing of like construction is perpendicular to the west end of the rear elevation. Flanking the principal mass of the building are a brick sunporch on the east side containing French windows and doors and a porte-cochere supported by Tuscan columns on the west side. Both wings, one story in height under low hipped roofs of composition shingles, are recessed behind the wall plane of the facade. Linking the various portions of the building is a concrete water table.

The dominant feature of the facade is the two-story portico. Four fluted Ionic limestone columns support a classical entablature, also of limestone, highlighted by dentils and scroll-like modillions in the cornice. At the rear corners two Ionic pilasters define the entrance bay. The double leaf main door and single-light rectangular transom are framed by a projecting wood frontispiece with engaged columns which support an entablature and segmental pediment. The window on either side of the frontispiece has a flat opening.

In the remaining bays of the facade, first-floor windows are recessed into arched openings faced with limestone and topped by a console keystone. Circular tracery decorates the arched head. Second-story windows are rectangular one-over-one sash with stone surrounds that include bracketed sills.

Aligned symmetrically with the three central bays of the facade are hipped dormers. Dormers are also located on the east and west elevations of the main section and on the rear wing (two on the west side and one on the east rear elevation). Five chimneys capped in concrete on the side elevations and rear wing further accentuate the hipped roof.

Behind the porte-cochere is a two-story bay with a bowed front containing one-over-one sash windows of curved glass. In the center of the rear elevation a curved three-story bay contains five transomed one-over-one sash stained glass windows arranged in a ribbon-like pattern. Stucco covers the wall between the second and third stories. A later one-story addition used for storage has been added to the eastern section of the rear elevation, next to the three-story bay.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES **1907**

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Nineteenth Century Club is one of the show places of Memphis. Built in 1907 by Rowland Jones Darnell, the house has had few major alterations, but has had three significant additions in its seventy-one years of existence. However, the facade remains essentially the same.

In the 1890's, when the supply of eastern and western hardwood was becoming depleted, Memphis attracted attention as a point of access to huge stands of virgin timber in the lower Mississippi Valley. Capital investment in mills increased rapidly. By the turn of the century, lumber was challenging cotton as the city's financial base. Huge quantities of white oak, walnut gum, hickory, ash, cypress, poplar, cottonwood, and yellow pine were exported around the world.

Rowland Darnell was one of the pioneer lumbermen of the North who realized the value of the southern hardwoods. He came to Memphis in 1880 after working with lumber companies in Indianapolis and St. Louis. A year later Darnell formed a partnership with his father, under the firm name of I.M. Darnell & Son. In 1898 the son withdrew from the firm and established his own business at 1089 Florida Avenue. He was the president of Darnell-Love Lumber Company; a member of the National Lumber Exporters' Association; and vice-president of the local Lumberman's Club. Mr. Darnell was not a society or club man, preferring the quiet associations of his home life. He died in June, 1916; but his family remained in the mansion on Union for one more year.

The house was then occupied by A. R. Orgil, the city sales manager of Orgill Brothers Hardware Company. He lived there only one year; the mansion is listed as being vacant in the 1919 city directory. For the next five and a half years the Darnell Mansion was the residence of Leslie Martin Stratton, a hardware dealer, whose business, like Mr. Darnell's was located on Florida Avenue. In 1920 his former business, L.M. Stratton & Company, a wholesale grocery house, was consolidated with the W. C. Early Company and renamed the Early-Stratton Company. Constant expansion of the trade as the result of the most progressive and practical methods made his business one of the largest in its line in the mid-south. Mr. Stratton also served as director of the Union and Planter's Bank and Trust Company, president of the YMCA (for whom the downtown branch is named), and treasurer of the Methodist Hospital. He was a member of the Board of Trustees of the Leath Orphanage, the county election commission, the Board of Advisors for the YWCA, and St. John's Methodist Church, where he was very active.

The Nineteenth Century Club secured the house in 1926 and added a 700-seat auditorium, known as the Taliesyn Ballroom. The club also added a tea room and a swimming pool. The organization, formed in 1890, has served the women of Memphis by promoting the civic, cultural, philanthropic and educational advantages of the Memphis community. Today the house remains in the ownership of the club, although the ballroom has been razed to make

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Allison, Judge John. Notable Men of Tennessee. Atlanta: Southern Historical Assn., 1905.  
 Capers, Gernald M. Jr. The Biography of a River Town-Memphis Its Heroic Age. Gerald M. Capers, Jr., Tulane University, LA, 1966.  
 Hudson Merrill. "Realization of Years of Idealism and Labor," Commercial Appeal, 12/16/28.  
 Memphis City Directories, 1906-1926.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.1

QUADRANGLE NAME Northwest Memphis, Tenn.-Ark.

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 15 772100 3892030

B               

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C               

D               

E               

F               

G               

H               

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property is a quadrilateral lot which measures approximately 165 feet by 300 feet by 160 feet by 30 feet and is bounded as follows: beginning at the southeast corner of the intersection of Union Avenue and South Watkins Street; thence east along the south curb of  
 LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Kay E. Benton, Preservation Planning Intern

ORGANIZATION

Memphis Landmarks Commission

DATE

November, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

22 N. Front Street, Suite 901

TELEPHONE

(901) 528-2834

CITY OR TOWN

Memphis

STATE

Tennessee

# 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

Herbert L. Hays 2/1/79

TITLE

Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER  
 ATTEST: [Signature]  
 CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE 3-21-79

DATE 3/21/79