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# 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 Thomas Nast Home, Villa Fontana

AND/OR COMMON

Thomas Nast Home, Villa Fontana

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER McCulloch Avenue and Miller Road

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Morristown

— VICINITY OF

5

STATE

New Jersey

CODE  
34

COUNTY  
Morris

CODE  
27

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

### CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

### OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

### STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

### PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER:

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Mr. and Mrs. Vincent J. Infinito

STREET & NUMBER 50 MacCulloch Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Morristown

— VICINITY OF

STATE

New Jersey

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Morris County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Morristown

STATE

New Jersey

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE  
NONE

DATE

— FEDERAL — STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

## CHECK ONE

## CHECK ONE

EXCELLENT

DETERIORATED

UNALTERED

ORIGINAL SITE

GOOD

RUINS

ALTERED

MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

FAIR

UNEXPOSED

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Thomas Nast Home, "Villa Fontana," is a two-and-a-half story, white, clapboarded frame house with a mansard roof. It was built in 1860-61, was inhabited by Nast from 1873 to 1902, and is currently a private residence. The main body of the house, which fronts on MacCulloch Avenue, is five bays in front(south), by three bays on a side. The center bay in front is composed of a glassed-enclosed vestibule, and above, a small Palladian window, which is post-historic. The porch which stretched across the front of the house at ground level in Nast's occupancy, has been removed. The front roof is pierced by three dormers, and the sides, by two dormers. On the southeast corner of the house there is a glass-enclosed porch, with floorlength windows in a Palladian motif. There is a one-and-a-half story service wing attached to the rear wall at the northwest corner. It too has a mansard roof, and is pierced by a double and a single dormer on the west side. Running from west to east, behind the house is a driveway, marked by two brick columns, to a small white frame garage on the northeast corner of the property. The house sits on a corner lot, with MacCulloch Avenue on its south and Miller Road on its west. There are private houses to the east and north. The land surrounding the house is kept as lawn, with various trees and shrubs. There is a lead fountain as well, which also dates from Nast's occupancy.

The interior of the house has been well-preserved in its historic appearance. The floor of Nast's bedroom has recently been restored to its original condition, and his study, where he did most of his drawing appears much the same. The interior is characterised by its excellent woodwork, which has since been painted, and by its interesting fireplaces.

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

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SPECIFIC DATES      1873-1902                                  BUILDER/ARCHITECT      Thomas Nast Home

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Thomas Nast, the pre-eminent political and reform cartoonist in American politics, made Villa Fontana, in Morristown, New Jersey, his home from 1873 to 1902. Within this period, Nast, through his cartoons in Harper's Weekly, contributed immensely to the breakup of the Boss Tweed-Tammany Hall Ring which was plundering New York City at the time.

Villa Fontana, a handsome three-story, clapboard structure with a mansard roof, is currently privately owned, but continues to be relatively unchanged in appearance from Nast's day.

## BIOGRAPHY

Somewhere in the United States there are probably a few people who are not familiar with three of our most popular political symbols, the Republican "elephant," the Democratic "donkey," and the Tammany "tiger." But how many of us have realized that those striking symbols came from one fertile, artful mind? Thomas Nast, one of America's greatest cartoonists, created them. Nast's political cartoons spoke boldly and decisively, leaving no doubt in the viewer's mind just what their point was. "Boss" William March Tweed's cry of anguish as Nast exposed his dishonesty is eloquent testimony to the effectiveness of the cartoonist's drawings:

Let's stop them d--d pictures. I don't care so much what the write about me--my constituents can't read, but d--nit, they can see pictures!

Nast's artistic talent early determined the course of his life. Born in Landau, Germany, on September 27, 1840, the young boy emigrated to America in 1846 with his mother; his father joined them in 1850. Both parents deprecated their son's ability to draw. They desired him to adopt a trade, but despite their objections, he took drawing lessons and at fifteen was employed by a leading magazine of the time, Leslie's Weekly. First hired at \$4.00 a week, Nast threw himself into his work, learning much as he drew for the magazine. In 1860 he sailed to Europe, drawing wherever he went. Still of great interest are his sketches done while he marched with Garibaldi, whom he greatly admired. Nast returned in early 1861, and in September of the same year he married.

The great turning point in Nast's career came in the summer of 1862. At that time he joined Harper's Weekly, the Country's most popular picture

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- S. S. Bradford, "Thomas Nast Home," National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings form 10-317, August 19, 1963.  
 Albert B. Paine, Thomas Nast; His Period and His Pictures (New York, 1904).  
 Dennis T. Lynch, The Wild Seventies (New York, 1941).

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre  
 UTM REFERENCES

A	7,8	51,137,810	156,515,610	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Beginning at the intersection of the northern curb of MacCulloch Avenue and the eastern curb of Miller Road, proceed north along the eastern curb of Miller Street for 157', thence east in a straight line paralleling MacCulloch Avenue for a distance of 174', thence south to the northern curb of MacCulloch Avenue in a straight line paralleling Miller Road, thence west along MacCulloch Avenue to the point of origin.

These boundaries enclose Villa Fontana within the boundaries of the house lot.

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 Richard Greenwood, Historian, Landmark Review Task Force

ORGANIZATION Historic Sites Survey

DATE 8/1/75

STREET & NUMBER 1100 L. Street, NW.

TELEPHONE 202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN Washington

STATE D.C.

## 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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

Landmark Designated: JAN 29 1964

TITLE

Boundary Certified: Aug 2, 1975

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

*Wm. M. ...*

DATE 8/10/75

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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magazine. Nast remained with Harper's for about twenty-five years, showering the Nation from his enviable spot with one telling cartoon after another. His vastly popular and patriotic drawings during the Civil War brought him quick fame, causing Abraham Lincoln to say that Nast had "been our best recruiting sergeant."<sup>2</sup> During reconstruction he vigorously upheld "Radical Reconstruction," violently attacking President Andrew Johnson. A staunch admirer of Ulysses S. Grant, Nast's trenchant cartoons caused the general to say that Nast's pen had helped put him in the White House. Even during Grant's second term, when scandal filled the air like an evil-smelling smog, Nast could bring himself to draw only a single anti-Grant cartoon.

Of all of his work, Nast's devastating and searing cartoons directed against the Tweed Ring in New York City remain his most excellent. "Big Bill" (Tweed), "Brains" (Peter B. Sweeny), "Slippery Dick." (Richard B. Donnolly) and "O.K. Hall" (A. Oakly Hall) had looted the city of millions after the Civil War, while most of the city's press ignored their brazen plundering. Only Harper's Weekly attacked the robbers, with Nast's pen serving as a most effective lance. Nast's first anti-Tweed cartoon appeared on September 11, 1869. By March, 1870, Nast had so angered the plunderers that Tweed sought State legislative action against the artist. Also, some of Tweed's friendly press referred to the cartoonist as the "Nast-y artist of Harper's Hell Weekly."<sup>3</sup>

Becoming more frightened than irked, especially after the New York Times joined Harper's in its crusade, the Ring sought to buy off its attackers. But the two papers only redoubled their efforts, with Nast infuriating Tweed. When a member of the Ring exposed the misdeeds of his cronies, Nast's cartoons hammered even more strongly against Tweed. Shortly after having been threatened by the Ring, as well as having been offered a fat bribe, Nast in November, 1871, published his most famous cartoon. It appeared on a double page, showing a packed Roman amphitheater, with a bloated, bearded Tweed in "Caesar" seat. Dominating the center of the drawing is a furious, snarling tiger, with paws holding down a prostrate figure, the "Republic." Beneath the cartoon was the caption: "The Tammany Tiger Loose--"What are you going to do about it?" Thus did the Tammany tiger make its never to be forgotten initial appearance, and as Nast's biographer says:

In all the cartoons the world has even seen none has been so startling in its conception, so splendidly picturesque, so enduring in its motive of reform . . . "<sup>4</sup>

When Tweed's grasp on the city was finally broken, it was Nast who had done

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more than anyone else in felling him.

Although his pen remained as acute and penetrating as ever, Nast's work was never as effective in later years as it had been against Tweed. For one thing, Nast devoutly believed in Republicanism, so his political bias did not encourage general approval. He continued to draw for Harper's until 1887, but in that year he broke his long association with that publication. Ill-fortune followed, with demand for his work practically disappearing. Financial hardship overtook him, and it was because of that he accepted a consularship in Guayaquil, Ecuador, in March, 1902. Shortly after arriving there, he died on November 30, 1902.

Fortune may be fickle, but the fame of Nast is enduring. The boldness, directness and meaning of his cartoons remain overwhelming. This is all the more apparent when one turns to Harper's and looks at Nast's work, especially the double-page cartoons. It then becomes obvious that his work remains practically unparalleled in the history of American political cartooning.

Nast, who lived and worked in "Villa Fontana" between 1873 and 1902, loved and enjoyed his home immensely. Friend of numerous prominent people, Nast welcomed, among others, Ulysses S. Grant and Mark Twain. Those distinguished guests left indelible impressions upon their host: Grant because of his powerful cigars and Twain because he stopped all the clocks in the house in order to be able to sleep. It was a bitter blow to the artist when adverse financial circumstances forced him to accept a consularship in Ecuador in 1902 and he had to leave his beloved home. He never saw Villa Fontana again, as he died shortly after arriving in South America.

<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Albert B. Paine, Th. Nast, His Period and His Pictures (New York, 1904), 17g.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Paine, Nast, 149.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Paine, Nast, 149.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted in Paine, Nast, 196.