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United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



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historic name Yew Dell Farm				
	270.08.7			
other names/site number OL-392; Yew Dell Botanical	Gardens			
2. Location				1
street & number 5800 North Camden Lane			NA	not for publication
city or town Crestwood			X	vicinity
state Kentucky code KY county C	Oldham	code 185	zip coo	
3. State/Federal Agency Certification				
As the designated authority under the National Historic F	Preservation Act. a	s amended.		
I hereby certify that this _X_ nomination request for registering properties in the National Register of Hist requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.	or determination of	eligibility me	ets the doo edural and	cumentation standards d professional
In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet be considered significant at the following level(s) of significant at	neet the National F ifficance:	egister Crite	ria. I reco	mmend that this property
nationalstatewidex_local	7/6	/2011		
Kentucky Heritage Council/State Historic Preservat State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	tion Office			
In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National	al Register criteria.			
Signature of commenting official		Date		
Title	tate or Federal agency	bureau or Triba	I Governmen	it
Title S  4. National Park Service Certification	tate or Federal agency	/bureau or Triba	l Governmen	it .
4. National Park Service Certification  I hereby certify that this property is:				
4. National Park Service Certification		bureau or Triba		
4. National Park Service Certification  I hereby certify that this property is:	determin		e National R	
4. National Park Service Certification  I hereby certify that this property is:  vertify that this property is:	determin	ed eligible for th	e National R	

#### Yew Dell

(Expires 5/31/2012)
Oldham County, Kentucky

Name of Property	<del></del> }		County and S	State
5. Classification				
Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply.)	Category of Property (Check only one box.)	Number of Reso	urces within P	roperty es in the count.)
		Contributing	Noncontributi	na
x private	building(s)	5	4	buildings
public - Local	x district	7	.2	sites
public - State	site	3	0	structures
public - Federal	structure			objects
	object	15	6	Total
Name of related multiple pro (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a	operty listing a multiple property listing)	Number of contr listed in the Nati		ces previously
NA			NA	
6. Function or Use				
Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)		Current Function (Enter categories from		
Agriculture- Horticultural Facili	ty	Agriculture - Hort	iculture Facility	
Landscape – Garden		Landscape - Gard	len	
Domestic – Single Dwelling, S	econdary Structure			
	<del></del>			
		÷		
7. Description		22-25/3		
Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions.)		Materials (Enter categories from	instructions.)	
Twentieth Century Revival/Tud	lor	foundation: Stor	ne	
		walls: Stone/woo	od/plaster	
		roof; slate		
		other:		

(Expire	es 5/31/2012)	
Oldham	County,	Kentucky

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County and State

#### Narrative Description

### Summary Paragraph

Yew Dell (OL-392) is located in Oldham County, Kentucky, eight miles south of the county seat, LaGrange. The area proposed for listing is 33 acres, bounded on the west by Old LaGrange Road, on the north by North Camden Lane, and on the south and east by Yew Dell's 1941 property lines. Theodore Klein (1905 – 1998) purchased the property in 1941, when it consisted of open fields, a large white pine, and a few small trees. He developed it into a nursery and landscape business, growing it into the largest nursery in Oldham County during the period of significance. Klein's plantings served the dual purpose of growing plants for sale as well as showcasing how plants could be used in a landscape. The property will be interpreted according to the way Klein revolutionized the landscape industry.

### Character of the Site and Property Acquisition

Yew Dell, as proposed for listing, is comprised of a home site, which includes a house and pool house, a series of small defined gardens, and a large arboretum. The family lived in the house and operated the farm and nursery from this location. The gardens were part of a new selling strategy, which suggested to customers how plants could be used in a yard or landscape. The arboretum allowed Klein to collect and grow a wide variety of trees and ornamentals to sell. The hardscape features on the property, including walls, fences, and decorative features, were made from local resources which served to amplify the beauty of the plant materials included in his designs.

After the purchase of the original 33 acres, twenty deeds are recorded in Oldham County, registering additional land which Klein purchased between 1941 and 1961, bringing his estate to approximately 200 acres. Klein noted some of the major purchases in his autobiography, stating, "As the nursery business began to pay off and we accumulated a little money we decided to invest it in land. After buying the Clint Wright property of 40 acres in 1941, we bought another 40 acres from Dewey Bryant. In 1957 we bought 10 acres from my younger sister. In 1951 we bought 60 acres from Mary Johnston. In 1960 we bought 35 acres from the Decker estate. In 1944 we bought the old Confederate property at Pewee Valley which was 20 acres." The former Clint Wright property is the land on which Klein built his home and Yew Dell Farm.

Yew Dell Farm topography consists of approximately 15 acres of relatively flat land on which the nursery stock grew and buildings were located. The remaining 22 acres of the property slope to the south. Surface water drains from the majority of the property to a series of 3 ponds at the south end of the property. Near the ponds, there are also two springs that Klein tapped to supply water to the residence, nursery and farm prior to availability of municipal water service. The Kleins lived on the property in a Tudor style home built by Theodore Klein between 1947 and 1949. The Klein complex included the rock house, potting shed, greenhouses, pump house and barn, all of which contributed to his nursery business.

Klein took advantage of the topography when determining the placement of buildings. For instance, the Curved Bank barn is built into the hillside, thus permitting the upper and lower levels to be

Oldham County, Kentucky

Name of	Property
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County and State

entered from ground level. The barn is built with its long axis running perpendicular to the hill's crest line. The Rock House uses the same engineering, with ground access from two levels for loading and unloading materials and nursery stock.

#### Operations at Yew Dell: Use of Space and Features

The land is bordered by two roads and the railroad track is adjacent to one of the roads, allowing easy access to both vehicle and railway transportation. The most populated county in the state, Jefferson County, is within an easy drive to the Farm and provided good business opportunities for Klein.

The work of cultivating the land was done by a plow pulled by mules. All other work, including planting, digging, and packing was done by hand. Klein supplemented his nursery operation with livestock. His cattle grazed on various fields on the main property in order to keep the land from becoming overgrown. He also used the manure on the fields for fertilizer. The ponds that now dot the site were created to provide water for the various breeds of cattle that he raised. Since it has not been mowed or grazed for a number of years, this section has grown up into young woodland with a considerable component of invasive exotic species. Klein also raised chickens and hogs at various times during the operation of the farm. The back portion of the rock house was used as a butcher room.

Beyond the livestock production, Klein maintained extensive apple and pear orchards, grape vines and extensive vegetable gardens, mostly for his family's consumption. The canning cellar in the main house is lined with shelves that were kept full of various canned fruits and vegetables for consumption during the off season. (Cappiello)

Plant production at Yew Dell was a compact and streamlined operation. Most of Klein's plants were propagated from stock plants he had on the grounds. The hollies he produced were propagated from his holly orchard, a collection of several hundred varieties of *llex opaca* (America Holly) that was located on land he purchased in Brownsboro, Kentucky from Mary Johnston. Most of his Taxus (Yew) plants were propagated from stock plants growing in his gardens such as the 100'-long yew hedge that formed the front border of the Serpentine Garden.

Cuttings were rooted in Klein's greenhouses. After rooting was complete, the young potted plants were overwintered in the lathe house, with the pots packed in peat moss. The young plants were planted in the field the following spring or fall. After four years, when the field-grown plants reached salable size, they were dug, root ball wrapped in burlap, and stored in the rock house for pick up. At times the orders were so large, the plants were moved to the barns on Brownsboro farm. The Rock House served as a loading dock, facilitating transfer of the plants to customer trucks.

Klein sold his plants individually—harvested and ready for pick-up by the customer. He also sold plants by what was referred to as row-run. This arrangement allowed customers to pay less for each plant, but they would have to dig the plants themselves. Mike Ray, now owner of Carl Ray Landscape Nursery related that as a teenager, his grandfather dropped him off at Yew Dell to dig yews in Klein's fields. He was left in the field with a canteen of water, a bag of lunch, a roll of burlap and a bag of pinning nails. He would spend the day harvesting yews that his grandfather had purchased.

Oldham County, Kentucky

Name of Property

County and State

All buildings on the property are located within easy walking distance of each other, and all are connected by roads. The buildings used for work - the garage, barn, potting shed, rock house and greenhouse site - are clustered on the northeast part of the property. This arrangement allowed for efficiency in production as well as increasing the aesthetic value of the homestead. The buildings and gardens which the family used for living and enjoyment are also grouped together, thus separating the working part of the farm from the areas used for living and entertaining.

One large pine tree remains on the property, there when Klein purchased the land. The tree is located twenty feet north of the residence. Mill stones that Klein collected are scattered at the base of the tree. Klein also collected small statues which remain on the property, including a sun dial in the Secret Garden.

Klein used locally available and recycled materials for construction of the buildings and fencing. Local stone was used in buildings and hardscape features, fence posts were made from cedar cut on the property or old railroad ties. Materials salvaged from demolished buildings were used in the house and greenhouse heating system. Klein taught himself iron work, wood turning, and stone carving in order to save money on construction of all the buildings and stone walls.

#### Inventory of Individual Features at Yew Dell Farm

### 1. Yew Dell Land Contributing Site (see photo #0021)

Yew Dell Farm's 33 acres are situated one block east of Highway 146 in Crestwood, Kentucky, paralleling the railroad tracks. The main portion of the property, on which the working structures and arboretum sit, is approximately 15 acres of flat land with a gentle slope on the eastern side. The remaining 18 acres slope to the southeast and are comprised of a large meadow, woodlands and a series of ponds.

The main portion of the property includes the former residence, greenhouse site, barns, garages, propagation shed, pool house (known as the castle), and asphalt drives which circle through the property, connecting all buildings and gardens. The landscaped series of gardens in the main portion were used as demonstration plots for customer review of plant features and use. The field on the north end of this part of the property was planted in rows of yews as nursery stock and the arboretum was planted with unusual specimen woody ornamentals which were sold as focal point plants. A fruit and nut orchard was planted on the northeast side of the property.

The lower portion of the property was initially used as grazing land for cattle. The series of 3 ponds supplied water which was pumped to the main portion for irrigation and general water use.

## 2. Tudor-style Main Residence Contributing Building (photo #0001)

The family residence was built between 1947 and 1949, based on a plan purchased by Klein. The 3000-square foot home served as the office for Klein's nursery business and main residence for Theodore Klein, his wife Martha Lee, and their four children, Marian, Jules, Joyce and Karl. The upstairs contains 3 bedrooms, a bath, an attic and a sewing area which overlooks the castle and meadow. The main floor consists of the kitchen, dining room, library, living room, two bedrooms, a bath and an office with an outside entrance where Theodore could meet his field workers. The full basement was used as storage and a room was portioned off for photography and parties. The

(Expires 5/31/2012)
Oldham County, Kentucky

Name of Property

County and State

garage is also part of the basement. The arboretum and all of the gardens are visible from at least one window in the house.

The house is built of creek stone with a slate roof. The joists below the first floor were made from lumber which was salvaged by Klein from the Confederate Soldiers Home when it was demolished in 1944. Klein did most of the work on the interior of the house himself, including turning the banister's balusters from Cherry harvested from the property, and laying the intricately designed wood floors, which have a different pattern in each room.

Local craftsmen were contracted to assist with the house, including stone mason, Oscar Hayes and a roofing company, the Wagner Brothers. The house retains its original design, materials and location, forming a focal point in the landscape framed by large yews and hollies from the property's entrance drive.

#### 3. Arboretum Contributing Site (photo #0020)

The arboretum at Yew Dell covers approximately 5 acres, planted with a wide diversity of trees and shrubs. It is located directly to the west of the Serpentine Garden and was begun around 1960. Klein continued to plant, evaluate and cull from this area until the close of his business in 1975. Klein developed the arboretum as a place to grow and showcase focal point plants when the demand for the traditional plantings of yew and holly as foundation plantings declined.

Plantings in the arboretum were grouped by genus and species and contained many unusual varieties. Klein also planted plants that were particularly well-adapted to the local climate. Collections include Redbud Cercis sp., Dogwood Cornus sp., magnolia Magnolia sp., witch hazel Hamamellis sp., and beech Fagus sp. The arboretum retains the look and feel of the land when Klein was working it.

## 4. Tobacco Barn Non-Contributing Building (photo #0013)

The tobacco barn is located in the southeast corner of the arboretum. The barn was brought to the site in circa 1950 and was used as storage for Klein's tobacco base and equipment. The barn was renovated in 2005, retaining the same footprint as the original barn. Cedar posts support the metal roof of the barn. Vertically aligned cedar boards are nailed on all sides with double doors on both ends of the barn which slide open to allow vehicle access. A glass structure inside the tobacco barn was completed in 2010, housing a Visitor Center and shop for the current owners.

### 5. Castle Contributing Building (photo # 0014)

The castle, constructed in 1956, served as the pool house. The building is 1500 square feet and contains a main room with a rock fireplace, a small bathroom, kitchen and a dressing or storage room. A circular stairway leading to the upper landing and pointed turrets is located in the storage area. The castle is located on the south side of the residence and overlooks the meadow and wooded area of the property. Interesting features of the castle include stone carvings by Klein imbedded in the outer walls, a brick herringbone patterned fireplace liner, slate floor, imbedded millstones and tiles and chandeliers which Klein forged from iron. The leaded glass windows, arched doorway, white plaster walls and dark beams which traverse the ceiling infer a look of old England.

Oldham County, Kentucky

Name of Property	County and State

6. Pump House Contributing Structure (photo #0002)

The pump house which was built at the same time as the residence, is a 12' x 12' river stone structure located fifty feet from the back door of the house. The only door to the pump house is made of wood and faces the interior of the back yard of the house (known as the Walled Garden). The back side of the pump house is connected to the back wall of the garden, making a seamless transition from wall to pump house. The standard gable roof is constructed from asphalt shingles. The architectural style is similar to the residence, castle, rock house and walls of the property. The function of the pump house was to distribute water to the different areas of the property.

7. Gardens 3 Contributing Sites and 2 Non-contributing Sites

Klein established distinctive gardens on the property as a method to market the plants he sold. All plants, whether in an established garden or in a field row were for sale. Showcasing his landscaping talents and bringing the latest trends in garden design to the area were part of his business practices and set him apart from others in the field.

- 7a. The Walled Garden (contributing site photo #0003) was constructed at the same time as the main residence. The 40' x 60' area extends off the eastern end of the house and is enclosed by a rough stone wall of graduated heights. The space has been developed in a symmetrical fashion with an 11' diameter concrete water feature. The garden has a 2' wide stone walkway between the garden beds and the center lawn. The walkway encircles the water feature as well, adding to the formal look of the garden. The garden was entered by gates in the northern and southern walkways as well as from the kitchen door of the house. The southern entrance incorporates a series of stone steps and landings, allowing for a view towards the pool terrace, castle and beyond to the meadow and woodlands. A view of this garden is also afforded from the windows of the main house, notably from the kitchen, master bedroom, 2 upstairs bedrooms and office.
- **7b**. The **Sunken Garden (contributing site photo #0016)** was built circa 1950 to showcase the newest design of rock gardening. The garden is 60' wide and 30' deep and is adjacent to the castle. It overlooks the meadow and woodlands to the south. A short flight of stone steps form the entrance to the garden and a small circular water feature is at the south side of the garden. The water feature is surrounded by field stones and the stones are interplanted with small woody and herbaceous plantings. The space is enclosed with walls of river stone and the base of the garden is peagravel. The garden retains some of its original plantings including yew and Japanese maple.
- 7c. The Secret Garden (contributing site photo #0017) constructed ca. 1960, is located at the eastern side of the Lath House site. The long, narrow garden (100' x 20') has only one entrance, which is located in the center of the Holly Allee, two parallel rows of holly trees separated by a path. The Secret Garden was enclosed by tall shrubs which have since been replaced with smaller shrubs. The garden contains a central sundial and a free-standing ring of holly at the northern end of the brick path. The original holly which grew on the ring had outgrown its bounds and has been replaced by a similar plant. The Secret Garden was a showcase for perennials for Klein's business.
- 7d. The Serpentine Garden (non-contributing site- photo # 0018) was planted between 1970 and 1975. The garden was the culmination of Klein's garden design at Yew Dell. The

(Expires 5/31/2012)
Oldham County, Kentucky

Name of Property

County and State

graceful curving line of yews forms the front boundary for the mixture of coniferous species in the background. Klein included a variety of forms, textures, shapes, colors and heights to obtain the outstanding signature garden which greeted visitors as they drove along the drive to the house. The yews in the Serpentine Garden are in a stage of decline and several of them have been removed. They will be replanted in the same fashion as the original plantings.

7e. The Formal Garden (non-contributing site - photo #0019) was developed during the 1960s and early 1970s. It consisted primarily of tightly clipped yew, boxwood and holly. Formal hedges, topiary and statuary formed an elegant counterpoint to the more open naturalistic Arboretum to the west. The plants in the formal garden grew too large to maintain and were removed in 2010. The plans for the site include retaining some of the formal elements to be represented by topiaries and formal garden bed layout.

8. Corn Crib Contributing Structure (photo # 0008)

The small rectangular one-story concrete block building with gabled roof served as a corn crib during the period of significance. The blocks are laid out in a pattern which includes open spaces to allow airflow through the building. The corn crib is located between the main residence and the barn. The pet cemetery is located on one side of the corn crib, with grave markers for each of the family pets.

9. Curved Bank Barn Contributing Building (photo #0005, #0006)

The main barn on the property, built in 1951, is located on the east side of the main portion of the property, 200 feet east the residence and directly across from the site of the greenhouses and the potting shed. The two levels of the barn are 45' long and 30' wide. The 1350 square feet on each level make this the largest of the outbuildings. The building includes an exposed curved interior rafter system and a tin-covered roof with an Ogee profile. The walls of the lower level of the barn are constructed from cinder blocks. Five wooden doors are located on the lower level, one single door facing the garage, two single doors facing the meadow with a double door between the single doors. The upper level was used for storage of hay and equipment; the lower level housed the livestock. Both upper and lower levels have large paired doors to provide vehicle entrance to the building.

Renovations for adaptive reuse completed in 2006 converted the barn into a facility now used for educational purposes. Due to significant deterioration of the 55 year old barn, many of the materials in the original building were not salvageable. The original rafters and joists were incorporated into the renovated building as well as the original design and footprint.

The barn's important role was in providing storage for farm equipment used in the business.

10. Pavilion Non-contributing Building (photo #0007)

The pavilion is a wooden structure built in 2006 to provide restroom facilities, a caterer's kitchen, and a large deck for gatherings. It is connected to the bank barn by a glass walkway. The 845-square foot deck overlooks the meadow and was designed to blend into the landscape.

11. Garage Contributing Building (photo #0010)

The three bay, concrete block garage was built circa 1960. It is located east of the barn in close proximity to the potting shed and greenhouse site. The building was used for storage of a golf cart

(Expire	es 5/31/2012)	
Oldham	County,	Kentucky

Name of Property

County and State

used by Klein to access the farm, as well as for storage of other farm equipment. The building is structurally sound.

12. Rock House Contributing Structure (photo #0004)

The enclosed loading dock built in 1952 was named the Rock House by Klein. The 800-square foot structure is located west of the greenhouse site. The concrete floor of the building is level with the average truck bed at the back of the building and at ground level in the front of the building, thus allowing for easy loading or unloading from the rear and a walk-in door at the front. The building was the main point of contact for customers of the nursery business. This one story gable-roofed structure has a rock front and side which face the residence and concrete block sides which face the garage and greenhouse areas. The building participates in the ornamental character of the site, with millstones incorporated into walls, leaded glass casement windows, a fish scale pattern slate roof, and irregular rough cut river stone walls. A simpler building would have served the purpose, but it seems to have been important as a marketing tool to showcase landscaping possibilities.

13. Potting Shed and Head House Contributing Building (photo # 0009)

The potting shed and head house (house connected to the greenhouses) were constructed circa 1960s in conjunction with the greenhouses. The building is constructed of concrete blocks and has garage doors in each bay. The building is separated into two areas, one for potting plants and the other for storage and shelter for the large gas, wood and coal heating units used to heat the greenhouses.

14. Greenhouse Site Contributing Site (photo # 0011)

Three linear glass greenhouses constructed around 1960 are no longer in existence. The greenhouses were constructed to reduce energy costs by burying the lower ½ of each greenhouse below ground level. Each greenhouse was approximately 12' wide by 85' long, just enough room for one person to work between two potting benches. The below-ground level construction was concrete block and the roof and above ground sides were composed of glass. The condition of the greenhouses necessitated their demolition in 2004. However, their roof outline is still visible on the concrete side wall of the head house and on the side of the potting shed.

15. Lathe House Site Contributing Site (photo # 0012)

The Lathe House was an area located directly across (west) from the Rock House. The 100' x 45' area was a flat piece of land with a frame built in the 1940s from 2" water pipe which was covered with World War II tin lathe purchased from an army surplus store on Dixie Highway. Six-inch-high concrete borders are on the east and west side of the rectangular area. The lathe house is bounded on the eastern side by the holly allee and provided shade and protection for young plants.

The Lathe House was removed in 2002 due to deterioration. The site retains the flat land which is now planted in grass and is bordered by the original concrete borders which define the area.

16. Log House Non-contributing Building (photo #0015)

In 1971, Klein purchased a log cabin which was built in 1840 and dismantled and rebuilt it on the property as a home for Sanford Lawler, a friend of Klein's, to live in and provide security for Yew Dell. The 500 square foot cabin is constructed from rough hewn square timbers, a front and back door, 4 windows, a fireplace, one main room with a newly added kitchen, and a small bathroom. The cabin is located at the far end of the holly allee from the main house. The cabin was restored in 2004.

United States Department of the Inter	rior
National Park Service / National Reg	ister of Historic Places Registration Form
NPS Form 10-900	OMB No. 1024-0018
Yew Dell	

(Expire	es 5/31/2012)	
Oldham	County,	Kentucky

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County and State

# 17. Smoke House Non-contributing Building (photo #0015)

The small square stone smoke house was moved to the site at the same time as the log cabin. The building has one door and a pyramidal roof. It appears that the building may have been modified from its original configuration when moved to the site. It is located next to the log cabin.

Yew Dell

(Expires 5/31/2012)
Oldham County, Kentucky

County and State
Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)
Agriculture
Period of Significance
1941-1961
Significant Dates
1941
22/32/05/2004
Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)
NA
Cultural Affiliation
NA
TV.
Architect/Builder
Klein, Theodore Roosevelt, designer and builder
Hays, Oscar (brick mason)
Wagner Brothers, roofing contractor

#### Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance begins in 1941, the year Klein purchase the property for Yew Dell Farm and ends in 1961 when Klein, began to focus more on traveling and less on his nursery business as described in his autobiography.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary) NA

United States Department of the Interior	
National Park Service / National Register	r of Historic Places Registration Form
NPS Form 10-900	OMB No. 1024-0018
Yew Dell	

(Expires 5/31/2012) Oldham County,	Kentucky
County and State	_

Statement	of Significance	Summary	Paragraph

Yew Dell Farm (OL-392), established in 1941, meets National Register Criterion A and is significant as an important landscape and nursery business serving a multi-county region during the post-war era. Theodore Klein, former owner of Yew Dell Farm, is credited with leading the horticulture field in research, plant development and plant trends, building new alliances between the professions of landscapers and home builders, and developing new models of landscape and nursery business practices including the development of his land in a manner that allowed him to market his materials and talents. Yew Dell has been evaluated within the historic context of "Wholesale Nursery Businesses in Oldham County, Kentucky, 1900-1975". From 1941 – 1975, the Klein family developed, owned and operated their nursery and landscape business from the property. After closing the business in 1975, the family continued to live on and maintain the property, until Klein's death in 1998.

#### Narrative Statement of Significance

#### Research Methodology

Name of Property

Research on this project consisted of review of statistics from government sources, Klein's autobiography, industry publications and oral interviews.

Initial research focused on obtaining information from government and other sources on the growth of the wholesale nursery business in Oldham County, Kentucky. The Census Bureau, Oldham County Economic Conditions Statistics report, the Green Industry Research group and the Kentucky Department of Agriculture were consulted. This investigation revealed that Kentucky did not license nurseries until 1996 (KRS 249.103), much later than would be useful to identify similar properties to compare with Yew Dell during the Period of Significance.

Further research on the subject was conducted at the Oldham County History Center's archives. The archives contained valuable information in the form of newspaper articles.

Elsewhere, this author searched for written materials authored by Klein, for newspaper articles, and fro industry publications. Material was sought to corroborate claims made by Klein and others about his business. For instance, Klein wrote in his autobiography about the land acquisitions he made as a result of profits from his nursery. The deeds for these purchases were acquired which verified his statements.

Finally, oral interviews were conducted with family members as well as with industry professionals who knew Klein. Their stories corroborated the information previously gathered.

(Expires 5/31/2012)	
Oldham County,	Kentucky

Name of Property					

County and State

### Historic Context: Wholesale Nursery Business in Oldham County, Kentucky 1900 to 1975

The growth, development and decline of the wholesale nursery business in Oldham County, Kentucky, from 1900 to 1975, were a chain of events influenced by numerous factors: population concentrations, housing development, federal loans, highways, plant development and trends, as well as by the individuals owning and operating nursery businesses. Oldham County is located in the Bluegrass Region, adjacent to Jefferson County, the Commonwealth's most populated county.

In the 1930s and 1940s, America was working its way through the Great Depression. During this time, homeowners began to turn from the use of fruit trees to the use of ornamental plants, in landscaping around their homes—a shift away from plantings that provided foodstuffs to plantings that provided beauty. After 1941, greater attention was given to landscaping and beautification. Nurseries started growing new lines of plants as a response to the change in demand (Hillenmeyer).

When World War II began, the nursery industry declined from a shortage of reliable help and a decreased demand for product. Klein, who started his operation on the eve of America's entry into WWII, discontinued his landscape service and concentrated on growing nursery stock, for which there was still a market (The First Sixty-Nine Years). After the war ended in 1945, the demand for housing increased, buoyed by federally backed loans. The government required homes with VA loans to include foundation plantings, to hide the concrete foundations common through the 1960s. Nurseries responded to this requirement by increasing their selection of foundation planting materials.

Initially, builders planted junipers as the stock plant for foundation plantings, but found them unreliable due to insect problems. Yews and hollies became the plants of choice, due to their insect resistance and hardiness for the local area. Klein had built a solid nursery stock of yews and hollies, with over 200 varieties of hollies in 1953 (The Klein Family History), and his business grew as a result. Klein invested his profits in land, increasing his holdings to approximately 200 acres by 1961. Klein ran the largest wholesale nursery in the Louisville area during this period (Lexington Herald Leader, January 1, 1999).

Garden design trends shifted in the early 1950s when the population grew tired of the common foundation plants and builders began seeking unusual plants. Klein recognized this trend and started growing unusual plants which were well-adapted to this climate, thus changing his business from a high volume of low-cost plants to a low volume of unusual specimens, sold at a higher per plant profit. The common purchase by a builder changed from yews and hollies to 10 yews, 5 azaleas, 2 dogwoods, 2 sugar maples and one focal point plant. The focal point plants came from Klein (interview with Lee Squires). Focal point plants were the high-value plants Klein grew during the 1950s and 1960s.

Construction of a major interstate highway (I-71) through Oldham County was completed in 1971, setting in motion a major change in land-use economics. Formerly inexpensive land rapidly increased in value, increasing its development potential. Many farms were subsequently converted to residential subdivisions. During this period, two Oldham County nurseries owned by well-known nurserymen, Rudy Haag and Paul Arterburn, were sold for housing developments. Continued development of the interstate highway system also fostered development of national nurseries rather

(Expires 5/31/2012)
Oldham County, Kentucky

Name of Property

County and State

than local nurseries that had been the norm up to that point. Continuing development pressure and changing economic models has seen a continuation of this land-use shift. An example is the recent (2008) sale of Oldham County Nursery for development. Klein did sell some of his land but deeded much of it to his children; 66 acres to Jules and 75 acres to Karl. Klein closed the wholesale business in 1975.

### General History of Klein's Development of Yew Dell

The Klein family has a long history of working in the nursery industry. Klein's grandparents opened Oldham County's first commercial vineyard and winery in 1886 in Buckner, Kentucky and later added the first nursery and florist businesses in the County. Theodore's father, George Otto Klein, started his own nursery operation after moving out of his parent's home. From the time Theodore was a child, he assisted in the nursery and greenhouse operations of his parents and other relatives. After graduating from high school, he joined his youngest sister in operating a small florist business, growing cut flowers and other plants to sell wholesale locally and to the Louisville trade. The business expanded to include perennials to sell. (The Klein Family History)

Klein married Martha Lee Sageser in 1929. In the 1930s the couple operated a dairy and sold cut flowers and perennials. As business grew, they added landscaping services and began to specialize in growing trees and shrubs. (The First Sixty-Nine Years)

Klein's interest in plant selection began with his holly collection in the 1930s. At that time, the trees were inexpensive because of low demand during the Depression.(First Sixty-Nine Years). In the 1940s he had "visions of selling cut holly at Christmas time" but realized the hollies that were available did not have good foliage (Klein Family History). As a result, he experimented with different varieties to see which would work best in Kentucky's soil and climate. He ordered new varieties as they became available and took plant collecting trips to locate new varieties. In his diary he wrote: "I now have over 40 varieties of the yellow fruited clones. As an experiment I grew almost a thousand seedlings from yellow fruited varieties, but out of the lot only one yellow fruited plant appeared."

Keys to Klein's financial success in the nursery and landscape business were his business strategies. One strategy was to operate a working farm on the land in addition to the nursery, allowing for income during the nursery off season. The typical business model for nurseries in the 1940s included hiring temporary laborers for the growing season and laying them off during the winter months. Klein's model employed workers year round. During the twenty year period of significance, ten to twelve workers remained employed year round. In addition to wages, Klein provided housing for the workers in one of the ten tenant houses located at Yew Dell Farm or on properties purchased in 1941 from Bryant and 1944 from Johnston. If worker housing were not available, Klein paid his workers' housing costs off-site. The workers helped build structures on site and helped with farm work. In the spring, Klein started the growing year with experienced laborers, which put him ahead of other nurseries who had to spend time hiring and training laborers. (Jules Klein)

Another business strategy introduced to the area by Klein was the use of his gardens as demonstration plots. Prior to Klein's influence, the home on the site of a nursery was often positioned by the main road with nursery rows in the fields behind the home. At Yew Dell, Klein

(Expires 5/31/2012)
Oldham County, Kentucky

Name of Property

County and State

located the house in the center of the land and all of the gardens were built as extensions of the house. Customers had to drive by several of the gardens to reach the house, which also served as the nursery's office. This strategy allowed Klein to showcase his plant materials to the customer. His gardens illustrated to his customers many imaginative ways to grow and design with the plants he selected, grew and sold. Through this method, customers could recreate a garden they had seen with plants readily available for sale by Klein.

Nurseries began using demonstration plots, a strategy that continues to this day as evidenced by local nurseries Boone Gardiner Garden Center and the Plant Kingdom.

Klein died in 1998 at the age of 93. The thirty-three acres that formed the core of Yew Dell were purchased from the Klein family in 2001 by the Friends of Yew Dell that became Yew Dell, Inc., a non-profit organization that manages the property as Yew Dell Botanical Gardens. Working with the Garden Conservancy, an organization whose mission is to preserve outstanding private gardens, Yew Dell has established itself as a thriving botanical garden. Yew Dell's mission is to continue the horticultural legacy of Theodore Klein; to encourage exploration of the arboretum, gardens and extraordinary architectural setting; and to provide opportunities for education, enrichment and enjoyment. The buildings have been preserved with some adaptive reuse renovations completed as noted in the Description section.

#### Yew Dell Operations

Klein sold his plants individually, harvested and ready for pick-up by the customer. He also sold plants by what was referred to as row-run. This arrangement allowed customers to pay less for each plant by purchasing the entire row instead of selecting individual plants. At times customers would have to dig the plants themselves. Mike Ray, now owner of Carl Ray Landscape Nursery, related that as a teenager, his grandfather dropped him off at Yew Dell to dig yews in Klein's fields. He was left in the field with a canteen of water, a bag of lunch, a roll of burlap and a bag of pinning nails. He would spend the day harvesting yews that his grandfather had purchased.

From 1945 to 1960, the twelve workers harvested 500 -600 plants per day from March through November, unless it was raining. Each month approximately 12,000 plants were hand dug, wrapped in burlap, transferred to a holding area and hand packed into trucks for transport. The fields were replanted with rooted cuttings. Plants sold for \$1.50 wholesale. From late November through February the workers moved into the greenhouses to work with the cuttings. Their workweek consisted of 9 hours per day during the week and 5 hours on Saturday. Workers were allowed 1 paid sick day per month and 2 weeks of paid vacation per year (Jules Klein).

The noon lunch hour was always honored at the nursery. If a customer arrived at lunchtime to pick up their order, they were invited to join the family and workers for a meal. After the meal was finished, Klein would allow his workers to load the order. As one can imagine, it became popular to arrive to pick up plants just before noon (Jules Klein).

(Expire	es 5/31/2012)	
Oldham	County,	Kentucky

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### Evaluation of Significance of Yew Dell Farms within its Historic Context

Yew Dell Farms is recognized by the Cultural Landscape Foundation as a significant influence on the nursery and landscape industry today. Klein is listed as a Pioneer in the industry by the Foundation as "one who was a visionary who had significant impact on the designed American landscape." Klein is significant for "building a legacy as a leader of the regional nursery industry and as an educator" (http://tclf.org/pioneer/theodore-klein).

Some of Klein's legacies are in plant development, his recognition of trends, and his willingness to share that knowledge and the plants he selected and developed. His generosity gave many nurserymen their start in the business and helped establish Oldham County as a leader in the number of nurseries in the Commonwealth. Klein's talent in plant selection made an impact on the industry by providing an increased selection of materials suited for the local environment for the nurseries to sell. His sons, Jules and Karl, remember their father helping local nursery owners start their businesses. Some of those were Frank and Clarence Otte, Jim and Bill Merchant of Many Oaks Nursery, Doug Waering, Paul Arterburn Nursery, Dick Ammon, Jack Bootes of Maxi Lane Garden Arts, Ward Hallenberg, Earl Humphries and Chris Summers. Mark Paul, owner of The Gardener's Art in Fort Thomas, KY, stated that he was in the nursery business as a result of Klein's influence. "He had a passion for plants, always looking for the next best plant. He also was known for sharing tips and techniques with anyone who would listen" (Mark Paul). That spirit of sharing continues as a business practice in many nurseries today.

Klein is listed in the book *Hollies, the Genus Ilex* as a holly breeder and introducer. He was awarded the William K. Kosar Award in 1988 from the Holly Society and the Joseph C. McDaniel Award in 1989 from the society's Green Rivers chapter in Evansville, Indiana. The Klein Compact and Klein No.1 varieties bear his name and Yew Dell continues to grow "an irreplaceable inventory of genetic stock" that he developed (Courier-Journal, Oct 22, 1998). According to Clarence "Buddy" Hubbuch, late retired chief horticulturalist for Bernheim Arboretum and Research Forest, "Klein's generosity with plant materials and knowledge were legendary." Hubbuch said that more than half – about 300 – of the plants in the world famous holly collection at Bernheim came from Klein. Hollies are now in the top 10 of shrubs grown commercially in the eastern United States.

Klein is credited with introducing approximately 60 new plant varieties to the industry. The Silver Cloud redbud tree was the first variegated redbud on the market and is now one of the most important parents in new hybrid forms being developed for market. Many of Klein's introductions are still growing at Yew Dell.

Bob Hill, of Hidden Hill Nursery, joked that "if God wanted to plant a tree, he'd call Theodore first and ask for directions. He was such an amazing presence" (Bob Hill). Joseph Hillenmeyer, of Hillenmeyer Nursery said that Klein was "one of the greatest plantsman our state had ever known" (Hillenmeyer.com).

Stephen Burns of Gilbert's Nursery in Chesnee, S.C., recalled Klein as a near-legendary figure, yet one who was amazingly approachable. "Mr. Klein really was the personification of that sharing heart and attitude, whether it was his plants, his time, his expertise" (Courier-Journal, Oct 22, 1998).

(Expires 5/31/2012)
Oldham County, Kentucky

Name of Property

County and State

As recognition of Klein's contribution to the selection of plants which would thrive in the local climate and soils, the Theodore Klein Plant Awards were initiated in 1995 to select and promote outstanding ornamental woody and perennial plants for Kentucky landscapes. The program is sponsored by the University of Kentucky, the Louisville Nursery Association (LNA), Yew Dell Botanical Gardens, the Kentucky Nursery and Landscape Association (KNLA) and the Kentucky Department of Agriculture.

Klein's influence on the nursery profession grew through professional affiliations, including the Louisville Retail Nursery Association. When Klein joined the LRNA (now known as LNA) the group consisted of 8 or 9 members, all of whom were growers. Klein convinced the group to open the membership to landscapers, which helped home builders acquire better plants for housing (Lee Squires). University of Kentucky Horticulture Director of Nursery Crops, Win Dunwell stated that the LRNA, which was formed in 1923, was probably the strongest landscape association in the country due to Klein's leadership. During Klein's involvement with the association, Yew Dell was often the site of the industry meetings. Currently, the LNA has 147 members and the KNLA has 250 members.

## Evaluation of Yew Dell's Integrity

During its prime, Yew Dell Farm comprised approximately 200 non-contiguous acres, the number of individual parcels varying during the property's period of significance. While many of the parcels were sold off by Klein during his lifetime, the original 34-acre property, containing all buildings and gardens constructed by Klein, remain largely intact and retain their original feel. A significant Oldham County wholesale nursery operation will be eligible if it retains integrity of location, setting, design, and feeling.

All buildings and gardens constructed by Klein (with the exception of the greenhouses) remain in their original *locations* on the property. The location of Yew Dell was vital to the operation. The place contained requisite landscape characteristics for a nursery operation, such as sufficient level land and access to water. Klein also picked this location due to its proximity to main roads (KY-22 and KY-146) and the rail line. The rail line remains active as primarily a regional freight line.

The setting of Yew Dell Farm remains primarily intact. The relationships among the former farm and nursery fields, work barns, display gardens and residential portions within the property remain as they were during the property's Period of Significance. Several of the spaces have changed use. The lower (south section) acreage that had been pasture and constructed ponds during Klein's time, have since grown up into young woodland. The lowest and largest of the ponds has been reconstructed following major damage that occurred sometime in the 1970s or 1980s. While the original entrance drive is no longer used for property access (a new parking lot and entrance was constructed on the south portion of the property in 2005 for visitor access), the drive remains but is gated at the road. The in-ground pool that Klein constructed in front of the castle was filled in by Klein after his children grew up and moved away. The space is now turf. While some of the surrounding land has been developed in recent years, the primary view sheds retain their agronomic feel that was present during the property's period of significance. The primary change in view is the neighboring warehouses (erected in the 1990s) and the more wooded condition of neighboring lands compared to what would have been mostly pasture during Klein's time.

(Expires 5/31/2012)
Oldham County, Kentucky

Name of Property

County and State

Throughout the property, the buildings, walls and other hardscape retain their integrity of *design*, *workmanship*, *and materials*. One failing mortared stone wall (below the Rock House) was reconstructed (2004) using the original stones. Many of the buildings, walls, stone paths and pools have received minor to moderate repair without change to their appearance.

The house has received updates in kitchen appliances and cabinets, minor cosmetic updates (paint and floor refinishing) and electrical. Otherwise, the house, now used as offices for Yew Dell Botanical Gardens, is as it was constructed by Klein. The bank barn has been adapted for use as an education space with added insulation, electric and general refurbishment. Its exterior appearance is as it was during Klein's time, while the interior of the space has been upgraded to a climate-controlled event space. The tobacco barn has been largely reconstructed because it was in danger of collapse in 2005. Its appearance is as it was originally constructed by Klein in the 1940s. In 2010, a physically-separate glass building was erected inside the tobacco barn to serve as a visitor center and gift shop for Yew Dell Botanical Gardens. The greenhouses have been removed because they were in an advanced state of disrepair. A temporary greenhouse has been erected in the same spot. The lathe house has been removed because of its poor condition. The space has remained as open lawn.

The **feeling** of the historic nursery operation continues for us to experience, and the integrity of **association** of the property with an important nursery business remains, largely as a result of the integrity of location, design, materials and workmanship throughout the property. Despite the use changes in parts of the property, it presents an unmistakable feel of a mixed use residential farm property.

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Oldham County, Kentucky

Name of Property

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Yew Dell

(Expires 5/31/2012)
Oldham County, Kentucky

Name of P	roperty					County and State
Previous o	documentation or	n file (NPS):		Prim	ary location of ad	ditional data:
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reque	ously listed in the N	National Register		-	Other State agency Federal agency	У
		ligible by the National Register			Local government	
	nated a National H ded by Historic Am	nerican Buildings Survey #			University Other	
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Historic I	Resources Sur	vey Number (if assigned);oL-	392			
10. Geo	graphical Data	a				
Acreage	of Property	33.699 acres				
JTM Re	ferences					
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Coordin	ate values exp	pressed according to NAD 27				
		culated by GIS (KY GEONET)				
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The box	undary enco	mpasses a 33 acre parcel t	that r	nakes i	in the histori	c core of a 200 acre nursery

The boundary encompasses a 33 acre parcel that makes up the historic core of a 200 acre nursery operation at Yew Dell Farm. The acreage includes the residences, greenhouses, outbuildings, gardens, former nursery fields and arboretum.

11. Form Prepared By		
name/title Karla Drover		
organization Yew Dell, Inc	date 1/20/2011	4
street & number 6220 Old LaGrange Road	telephone 502.	241.4788
city or town Crestwood	state KY	zip code 40014
e-mail karlad@yewdellgardens.org		

Name of Property

(Expires 5/31/2012)
Oldham County, Kentucky

County and State

#### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Maps: A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- Continuation Sheets
- · Additional items: (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

#### Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

#### Yew Dell Farm

National Register Nomination - Photo Log Page

Name of Property:

Yew Dell Farm

City or Vicinity:

Crestwood Oldham

County: State:

KY

Name of Photographer

Paul Cappiello

Date of Photographs

March 15, 2011

Location of Original Digital Files:

6220 Old LaGrange Road, Crestwood, KY 40014

Photo#1 (KY\_Oldham County\_Yew Dell Farm\_0001

West elevation, camera facing east

Photo #2 (KY\_Oldham County\_Yew Dell Farm\_0002)

North elevation, camera facing south

Photo #3 (KY\_Oldham County\_Yew Dell Farm\_0003)

Camera facing east

Photo #4 (KY\_Oldham County\_Yew Dell Farm\_0004)

West elevation, camera facing northeast

Photo #5 (KY\_Oldham County\_Yew Dell Farm\_0005)

North elevation, camera facing south

Photo #6 (KY\_Oldham County\_Yew Dell Farm\_0006)

South elevation, camera facing south

Photo #7 (KY\_Oldham County\_Yew Dell Farm\_0007)

North elevation, camera facing south

Photo #8 (KY\_Oldham County\_Yew Dell Farm\_0008)

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Name of Property	

North elevation, camera facing south

Photo #9 (KY\_Oldham County\_Yew Dell Farm\_0009) South elevation, camera facing north

Photo #10 (KY\_Oldham County\_Yew Dell Farm\_0010) South elevation, camera facing north

Photo #11 (KY\_Oldham County\_Yew Dell Farm\_0011)
West elevation, camera facing east

Photo #12 (KY\_Oldham County\_Yew Dell Farm\_0012)
Camera facing south

Photo #13 (KY\_Oldham County\_Yew Dell Farm\_0013) North elevation, camera facing south

Photo #14 (KY\_Oldham County\_Yew Dell Farm\_0014) North elevation (right), camera facing southwest

Photo #15 (KY\_Oldham County\_Yew Dell Farm\_0015) West elevation, camera facing northeast

Photo #16 (KY\_Oldham County\_Yew Dell Farm\_0016)
Camera facing southeast

Photo #17 (KY\_Oldham County\_Yew Dell Farm\_0017) Camera facing north

Photo #18 (KY\_Oldham County\_Yew Dell Farm\_0018) Camera facing northeast

Photo #19 (KY\_Oldham County\_Yew Dell Farm\_0019)
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Photo #20 (KY\_Oldham County\_Yew Dell Farm\_0020)
Camera facing south

Photo #21 (KY\_Oldham County\_Yew Dell Farm\_0021) Camera facing northeast

Photo #22 (KY\_Oldham County\_Yew Dell Farm\_0022) Camera facing southeast

Photo #23 (KY\_Oldham County\_Yew Dell Farm\_0023) Camera facing east

## Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Yew Dell, Inc.

street & number 6220 Old LaGrange Road

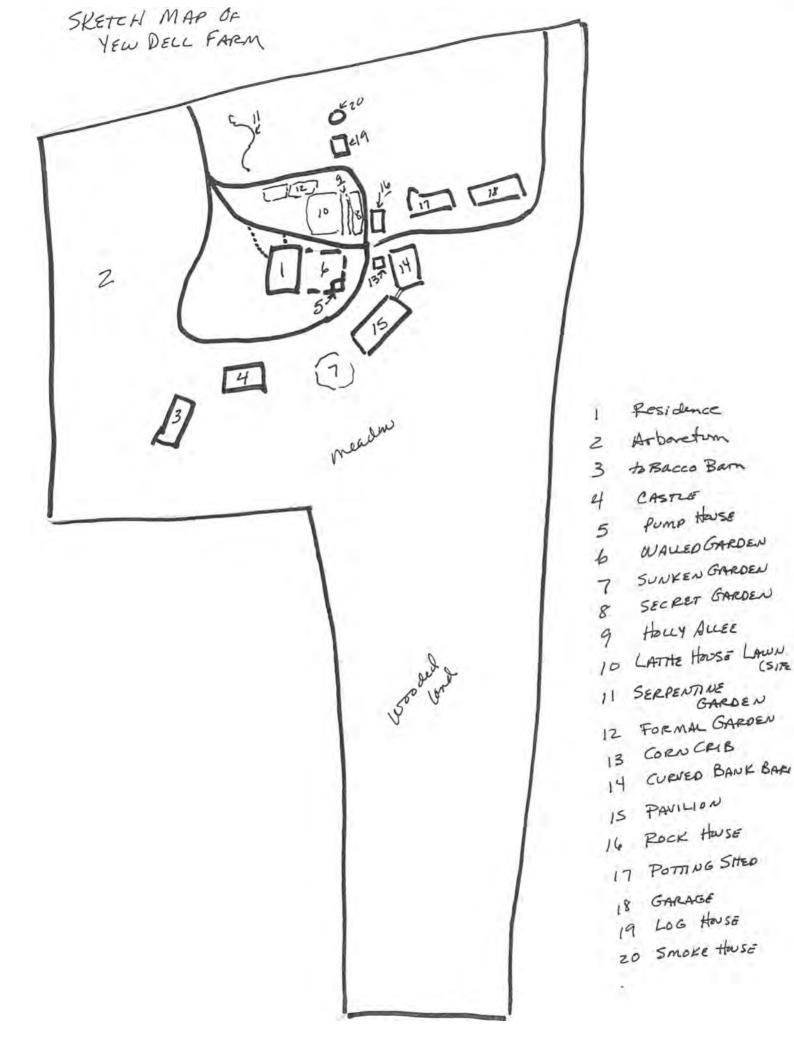
telephone

city or town Crestwood

state KY

zip code

40014





# YEW DELL GARDENS

Visitor Parking Meadow Red Mixed Border Tobacco Stone Barn Sunken 10022 Castle Peyton Samuel Head Trust Redbud 0016 Pavilion Collection 0013 Gheens Barn Shop Buildings 9010 Klein Home Dogwood Collection 40023 Yew Dell Gardens (Velding Machine) Office Secret Carden Magnolia Greenhouse Collection Holly Allee Potting Formal Shed Grden ( Beech Log Cabin 0019 Collection Arboretum Serpentine Serpentine Nursery Garden/Conifer Collection

Entrance to Yew Dell Gardens 6220 Old LaGrange Road

# UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

#### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION	
PROPERTY Yew Dell Farm NAME:	
MULTIPLE NAME:	
STATE & COUNTY: KENTUCKY, Oldha	m
	DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/03/11 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 8/23/11
REFERENCE NUMBER: 11000540	
REASONS FOR REVIEW:	
OTHER: Y PDIL: N PER	DSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N IOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N
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ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:	
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RECOM./CRITERIA Accept A	DISCIPLINE
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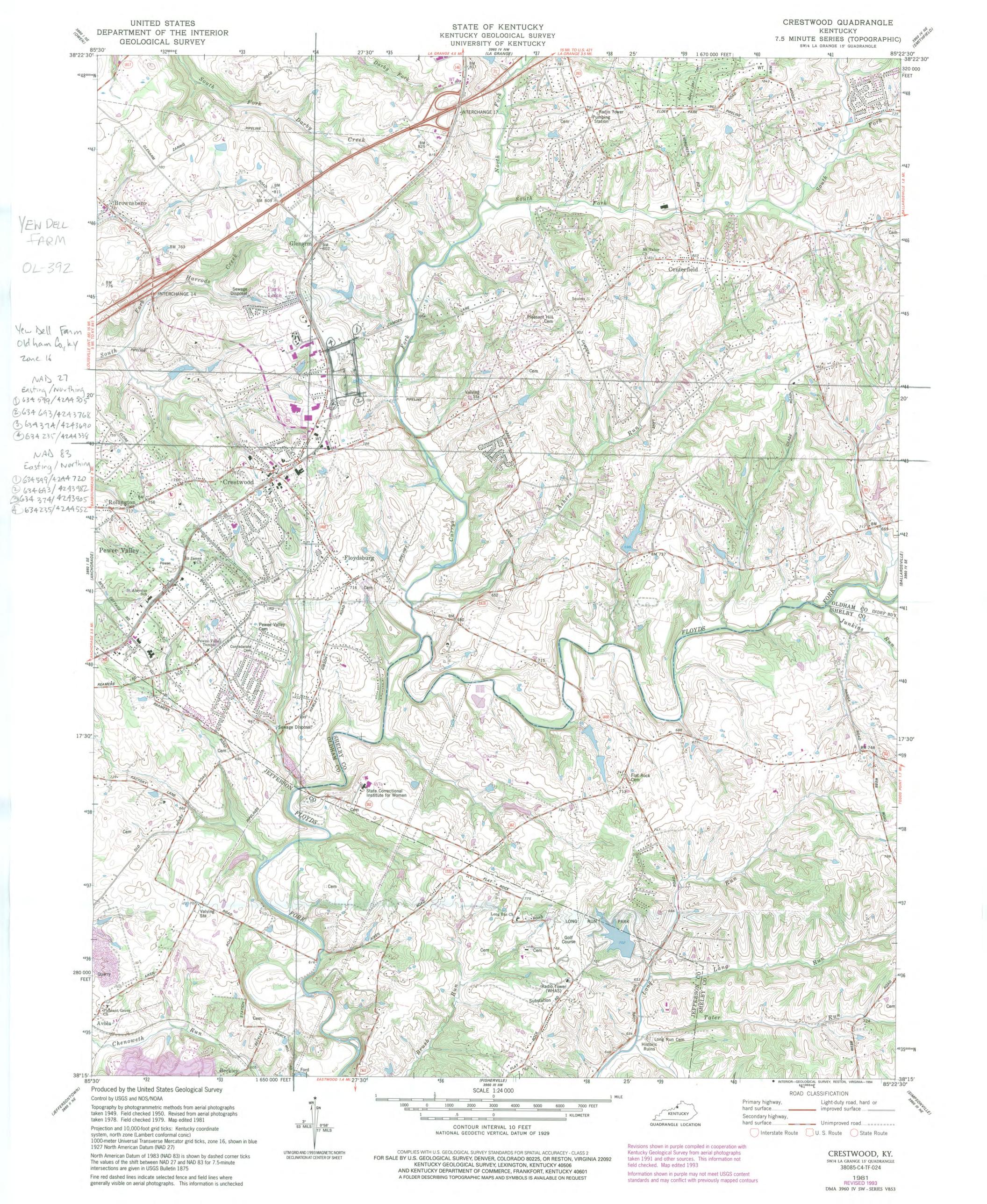














RECEIVED 2280

JUL - 8 2011

STEVEN L. BESHEAR GOVERNOR

## TOURISM, ARTS AND HERITAGE CABINETSISTER C. HIMARCHETA STARROW ATIONAL PARK SER SECRETARY KENTUCKY HERITAGE COUNCIL

THE STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE 300 WASHINGTON STREET FRANKFORT, KENTUCKY 40601 PHONE (502) 564-7005 FAX (502) 564-5820 www.heritage.ky.gov

MARK DENNEN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

July 6, 2011

Ms. Carol Shull, Keeper National Register of Historic Places National Park Service 2280 National Register of Historic Places 8th Floor 1201 "I" (Eye) Street, NW Washington DC 20005

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed are nominations approved at the May 17, 2011 Review Board meeting. We are submitting them for listing in the National Register:

Courtney Mathews House, Fayette County, Kentucky Mayfield Light and Water Company, Graves County, Kentucky Conrad-Seaton House, Jefferson County, Kentucky Cox Building, Mason County, Kentucky Union Station School, McCracken County, Kentucky Yew Dell, Oldham County, Kentucky

We appreciate your consideration of these nominations.

Sincerely,

Mark Dennen, SHPO and

**Executive Director** 

Kentucky Heritage Council



Recommendation: SLR\_Return Action: SLR\_Return\_None **Documentation Issues-Discussion Sheet** State Name: KyCounty Name Oldham Resource Name You Dill Reference No. 11 - 540 \_\_\_\_Multiple Name\_ Solution: Disk to be 8 SPEGS on disc. Problem: Resolution: SLR: Yes No Database Change: