

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



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### National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

#### 1. Name of Property

historic name Laura Musser McColm Historic District  
other names/site number Laura Musser Art Gallery and Museum; Muscatine Art Center; Iowa Site No. 70-01585

#### 2. Location

street & number 1314 Mulberry Avenue not for publication N/A  
city or town Muscatine vicinity N/A  
state Iowa code IA county Muscatine code 139 zip code 52761

#### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination        request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets        does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant        nationally        statewide X locally. (        See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official

Date

7 DEC 2016

State Historical Society of Iowa  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property        meets        does not meet the National Register criteria. (        See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
  - See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
  - See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

1-24-17

### 5. Classification

#### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

#### Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

#### Number of Resources within Property

(do not include previously listed resources in count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>		sites
		structures
		objects
<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

#### Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

#### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

### 6. Function or Use

#### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
DOMESTIC/secondary structure  
LANDSCAPE/garden  
RECREATION AND CULTURE/music facility

#### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum  
RECREATION AND CULTURE/music facility  
LANDSCAPE/garden

### 7. Description

#### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/  
Colonial Revival  
LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN  
MOVEMENTS/Prairie School  
OTHER/Japanesque

#### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE/Limestone  
walls BRICK  
STONE  
WOOD/Weatherboard  
roof ASPHALT  
other WOOD  
GLASS

#### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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## 8. Statement of Significance

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### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

#### Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey  
# \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record  
# \_\_\_\_\_

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

PERFORMING ARTS

ARCHITECTURE

### Period of Significance

1908-1938

### Significant Dates

1908

1922

1929

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

### Architect/Builder

Zeidler, Henry W.

Howe, J.E., and Howe, A.D.R.

Laura Musser McColm Historic District  
Name of Property

Muscatine County, IA  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** 2.72 acres

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	_____	_____	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

See continuation sheet.

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jennifer A. Price, Ph.D. / Consultant email: pricepreservationresearch@gmail.com

organization Price Preservation Research date March 2016

street & number P.O. Box 5201 telephone (319) 594-9513

city or town Coralville state IA zip code 52241-0201

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

**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.

**Photographs:** Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

#### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

### Property Owner

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

name City of Muscatine Contact: Gregg Mandsager, City Administrator

street & number 215 Sycamore Street telephone (563) 264-1550

city or town Muscatine state IA zip code 52761

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 1 Property name Laura Musser McColm Historic District  
County and State Muscatine County, IA

**7. Narrative Description**

The Laura Musser McColm Historic District is located approximately 13 blocks northwest of the Mississippi riverfront in the northwest central section of the city of Muscatine, the county seat located in east central Muscatine County in southeastern Iowa. The historic district sits on the southwest side of Mulberry Avenue, bounded by Bartlett Street on the southeast, Parnham Street on the northwest, and Cedar Street on the southwest. This section of Mulberry Avenue is a tree-lined residential corridor and the historic district is surrounded by a number of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century houses. The historic district itself includes a large two-story Georgian Revival house with raised basement and prominent dormer (1908); a two-story and raised basement Prairie Style carriage house (before 1926); a one-story Music Room addition (1922); a Japanese Garden (1929); the Stanley Gallery (1976); and Exhibition/Office Annex (1983). See Table below.

**Table of Resources in the Laura Musser McColm Historic District**

Resource Name	Build Date	Architectural Style	Contributing/Non-Contributing
Laura Musser McColm House and Music Room	1908/1922	Colonial Revival	Individually Eligible and Contributing
Carriage House	before 1926	Prairie School	Contributing
Japanese Garden	1929	Japanesque	Contributing
Stanley Gallery	1976	Modern	Non-Contributing
Exhibition Gallery/Office Annex	1983	Modern	Non-Contributing

***Laura Musser McColm House (1908)***

The Laura Musser McColm House – a high-style, architect-designed Colonial Revival residence with Georgian Revival overtones – has been a landmark on Mulberry Avenue in Muscatine since its completion in 1908. The house has a generally rectangular, but asymmetrical footprint (approximately 66 x 48 feet) and a symmetrical, five-ranked façade. The house was built as a full masonry structure, consisting of a limestone foundation, the raised portion of which is clad with coursed rock-faced limestone, and brick masonry exterior walls. The exterior masonry walls are clad in a tan face brick laid in a running (or stretcher) bond pattern, indicating a cavity wall structural system bound together with metal ties. The exterior is trimmed with cut stone embellishments, such as lintels and keystones. The cornice is composed of frieze band windows, overhanging eaves with dentils and modillions, and a prominent central dormer with a broken scrolled pediment centered on the hipped roof. The façade is anchored by two masonry chimneys, one on each side; a third chimney is visible near the north corner of the house.

A stone watertable begins at each side of the front porch floor and wraps around to the south side. Originally, the porch wrapped around to the north side, as well, until the Music Room addition was built in

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 2 Property name Laura Musser McColm Historic District  
County and State Muscatine County, IA

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1922. A one-story front porch with second-floor balcony spans almost the full width of the façade and features eight Ionic column porch supports (three columns at each corner and two flanking the front stoop); a decorative open rail balustrade on both porch and balcony with carved newel posts flanking the front stoop; and wood plank floor and ceiling. The formal entrance features double wood and glass front doors within a classical stone surround (pilasters with acanthus leaf capitals/brackets, and entablature with egg-and-dart molding) with two inset oval sidelights, but no fanlight.

Fenestration is symmetrically arranged across the five-ranked façade, with two single 1/1 double hung sash windows on each side of the front entry. At the upper level, a central tri-part window is directly above the front entry, and consists of two narrow 1/1 double hung sash windows flanking a wider 1/1 double hung sash window, all of which have decorative leaded glass upper sashes. Two 1/1 double hung sash windows on either side of the central window are directly above those on the first floor. All double hung windows have wide flat stone lintels and stone sills. Above the second-floor windows is dentiled brick bandcourse that wraps around to both sides of the house. Above this bandcourse are five frieze-band windows, each a fixed six-spoke window that doubles as a transom for each second-floor window below (i.e., one central tri-part window flanked by four single windows, two on each side). Above these frieze-band windows is the cornice – a wide band of dentiled wood trim just below the overhanging dentiled eaves with modillions. The hipped roof is dominated by an exaggerated broken scrolled pediment dormer centered on the front slope. This dormer features three side-by-side fixed 6-spoke rectangular windows like those in the frieze-band flanked by two engaged Ionic columns. Most windows have been replaced with newer replicas.

On the southeast side near the front endwall is a 2½-story canted bay with a centered exterior stone and brick masonry chimney that tapers (with decorative stone ogees) just before extending through the eaves. Nearly all the details of the façade wrap around to this side, including the coursed rock-face limestone foundation, watertable, single 1/1 double hung sash windows, fixed 6-spoke frieze-band windows, bandcourse, and entablature, with the addition of four raised basement windows (also fixed 6-spoke windows). To the southwest of the canted bay is a single oval stained glass window that lights the interior stairwell, and further back, a single 1/1 double hung sash window with flat stone lintels and sills at each floor level.

Behind (southwest of) these windows is a porte-cochère supported by four Ionic columns (two at each outer corner) that rest on a closed coursed rock-face limestone balustrade with a stone cap that matches the foundation and watertable of the house. Beneath the porte-cochère is where the newer museum annex connects to the house and where the main entrance to the Musser Museum is located. The Ionic columns of the porte-cochère support a wood dentiled entablature similar in design to that above the front entrance, above which is a wood-clad sleeping porch (18¼ x 13 feet) with three sides of ribbon windows (3 on the northeast and southwest sides and 4 on the south side). All are 1/1 double hung sashes. The sleeping porch was not original to the house, but it was built sometime in the 1910s. The sleeping porch is topped with another dentiled entablature and a flat roof.

Part of the northwest exterior side is visible only from the second floor up due to the addition of the Music

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 3 Property name Laura Musser McColm Historic District  
County and State Muscatine County, IA

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Room in 1922 (see description below), including the exterior brick chimney that mirrors the one on the south side. A second exterior chimney is nearer the center of the north side on a large cross-hipped roof bay. This chimney – which serves the dining room fireplace – is set off-center and tapered on only one side. An exterior metal staircase provides access to both floors. All wall cladding, window types (except stained glass), and decorative details wrap around or repeat similar to the south side. Near the rear (north) endwall, the brick wall cladding ends and a narrow wood-clapboard with Doric pilasters clads the exterior of the rear rooms, including the kitchen on the first floor and sleeping porch (7 ribbon windows on southwest side and 2 on northwest side) on the second floor. A small integrated open porch with simpler Doric column supports is located at the south endwall, next to the rear wall and elevator shaft of the museum annex.

*Interior:* The Laura Musser McColm House contains twelve rooms flanking a generous central hall on the first and second floors. Many original materials and architectural details including staircase, mantelpieces, stained glass windows, woodwork, light fixtures and hardware are distinctive examples of the period and architectural style. The first floor of the house includes the reception room, front parlor, dining room, library, kitchen, and pantry. Original leaded glass bookcases in the library echo the design in the leaded glass upper sashes of the central tri-part window on the second floor façade. The interior room arrangement on the first floor remains intact, except for the south corner, where the museum annex connects to the house. The second floor originally included a master bedroom suite with a wardrobe room, two guest bedrooms, three servants rooms, a sleeping porch in back, and a sleeping porch over the porte-cochere, plus bathrooms. Some structural changes have been made to facilitate gallery space for museum collections and changing exhibitions, including an elevator that provides access from the basement to the second floor. The servants quarters and rear sleeping porch have been reconfigured to provide an open gallery space at the rear of the second floor (Muscatine Art Center, April 2014).

***Music Room (1922)***

This one-story brick addition with an L-shaped footprint is on the northwest side of the house adjoining at what was originally the lower section of the 2-story bay. The addition is clad in a similar tan face brick with stone trim and has a flat roof with a tall parapet. The façade (northeast side) features a stone water table and symmetrical fenestration, with a central ribbon window (four 1/1 double hung sash) flanked by two single 1/1 double hung sash windows. The ribbon window has a common stone sill and label mold lintel and is divided by three brick mullions. The two flanking windows have stone sills and lintels, as well. Above the windows is a stone belt course that echoes the label mold lintel below, as does the shaped brick parapet with decorative stone coping and two scrolled ogees. The north side features the same ribbon window near the northeast endwall, stone beltcourse and shaped parapet. The rear is without fenestration or parapet, but within the ell (between house and addition) is a third ribbon window, beltcourse, and tall parapet.

*Interior:* The original interior features oak walls and ceiling with a walnut stain and a diagonally cut natural oak floor. The Music Room was built to house a 1919 Estey player pipe organ, which is extant near the north side ribbon window. A 15-square-foot room screened by a wooden grill behind the organ houses the 731 pipes, 11 manual ranks, 2 pedal ranks, plus chimes and an unusual glass harp. The player mechanism

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 4 Property name Laura Musser McColm Historic District  
County and State Muscatine County, IA

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is essentially a computer and runs on air pressure (from a bellows generated in a blower and generator structure (about 5 by 8 feet), which is housed in the basement beneath the organ. The Music Room was originally used for musical events, concerts, and dances. Today, the Music Room is used for Muscatine Art Center public programs.

**Carriage House (before 1926)**

Approximately 62 feet from the rear of the house is the Carriage House, a two-story with raised basement Prairie-style combination garage-and-residence built into the steep hillside at the rear of the property. It has a raised basement level, main level (formerly the garage), and upper level (formerly the gardener's residence). It has a tan brick exterior similar to the house and a hipped roof with wide boxed overhanging eaves. An enclosed balcony is on the upper level, east side. Fenestration includes flat stone lintels, ribbon windows, and single windows, many with their original Prairie-style 4/1 double hung sashes.

*Interior.* The interior of the Carriage House has been somewhat modified and is used mainly for artifact storage, photography, and other curatorial work by Muscatine Art Center staff. The remodeled interior space is mostly confined to the ground floor, formerly the garage, where the large open space has been made into a curatorial work space with inner vaults for collections storage. A non-original metal spiral staircase in the southwest corner provides interior access from the ground floor to the second floor. Originally, the second floor living quarters had only an exterior entry door accessed by an exterior staircase. The second floor – built as residential quarters for the gardener and his family – retains its original room layout, which is used for additional storage and photography. An original open balcony on the east side has been enclosed. The basement is largely original, as well, and provides additional storage space.

**Japanese Garden (1929)**

The approximately one-half-acre Japanese style garden is located on the southeast side of the house. Laura Musser McColm had the Japanese Garden installed in 1929 (or possibly 1930, according to one newspaper source). The garden design is “in the Tsukiyama Style where ponds, streams, hills, stones, trees, and paths are used to imitate natural scenery. The ornamental yews that form the backdrop for the garden are part of the original plantings” (taken from the bronze plaque in the garden). The original design included four ponds, one stream, two waterfalls, a Torii gate, two small wooden boxes resembling shrines containing the water pump and a Buddha statue, respectively,, several wooden footbridges, a stone pathway, several cast concrete pagoda-shaped lanterns, and statuary that included a pair of bronze cranes.

Original landscape features and ornaments currently installed in the garden include the ponds and waterways of laid and formed concrete (as well as the plumbing that goes with them); volcanic rock in and around the pond and waterways; many original plantings, the highlight of which are the ornamental yews; and three cast concrete Japanese lanterns on cast concrete bases.

Original decorative objects that have been removed to more secure locations within the Muscatine Art



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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 5 Property name Laura Musser McColm Historic District  
County and State Muscatine County, IA

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Center include: two original, bronze, water fountain 'cranes' are on display in the Annex. (Historic photos show more bronze cranes in the garden as statuary, but these are no longer at the Muscatine Art Center); a large cast-iron garden urn pedestal planter (in use in the Stanley Gallery courtyard); a set of three elephant sculptures, which are metal with a green finish, the largest of which is 13 1/4 inches by 17 inches, are in storage; a pair of small, cast concrete "mushroom cap" garden ornaments (probably on a stem at one time) are in storage; and a cast concrete decorative seat/bench is also in storage.

Replacement features and ornaments that have been reproduced from historic photos and installed in the garden include the Torii gate; a wooden pump house (small shelter resembling a shrine with a locking door that houses the water pump); wooden statuary house (same style as the pump house with sliding doors on the front that opened to expose a Buddha statue, which is no longer at Muscatine Art Center); and wood arbor.

The garden was restored in 1990. Recent additions include the replacement footbridges, stairway banisters, and the pergola at the lower level, the latter being a popular site for weddings during the summer (Muscatine Art Center 2014).

**Stanley Gallery (1976)**

Completed in 1976, this three-level tan brick building with flat roof is built into the steep hill behind the house just southeast of the Carriage House. The gallery includes two levels of exhibit space and art classrooms. A first floor entrance on the northwest corner is accessible from the parking lot (1978), which allows vehicle access from Cedar Street. The building also connects to the Carriage House at the raised basement level.

**Exhibition Gallery and Office Annex (1983)**

This dark brown brick and glass addition with flat roof connects to the Musser House through what was an open back porch and the entry is beneath the porte-cochère. The building also connects to the Carriage House and the Stanley Gallery. The addition includes an elevator that provides access to the house from the basement to second floor; a reception area; and staff offices. The entire southeast wall is glass for unobstructed views of the outdoor sculpture courtyard on the southeast side.

**Integrity**

The Laura Musser McColm Historic District retains the seven aspects of integrity set forth by the National Register of Historic Places:

- **Location** – This is the location where the Musser McColm house was built in 1908, as well as the Music Room addition in 1922, the Carriage House (before 1926), and the Japanese Garden in 1929.
- **Setting** - The setting of the Laura Musser McColm Historic District remains intact, with its historic resources retaining their original relationships to one another. The surrounding setting – a tree-lined

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section   7   Page   6   Property name   Laura Musser McColm Historic District    
County and State   Muscatine County, IA  

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residential section of Mulberry Avenue – remains largely intact as well. Although modern museum additions and a parking lot have filled in the once-empty land south and southwest of the Carriage House, they are mostly hidden when viewing the historic property from Mulberry Avenue.

- **Materials** – The historic resources of the district retain a good deal of their original materials, The House retains exterior tan brick, stone, wood, and windows, as well as interior wood floors, doors, staircases, stained glass, fireplace surrounds and mantels, cabinetry, paneling, light fixtures, and moldings. The Japanese Garden retains the ponds and waterways of laid and formed concrete (as well as the plumbing that goes with them); volcanic rock in and around the pond and waterways; many original plantings, the highlight of which are the ornamental yews; and three cast concrete Japanese lanterns on cast concrete bases.
- **Design** – The design of the Musser McColm House as a landmark Georgian Revival style residence shows the work of local architect Henry W. Zeidler. The house retains the essential features of its style, including its asymmetrical footprint; symmetrical five-ranked façade; full-width front porch with Ionic columns; front entrance; cornice with frieze band windows and overhanging eaves with dentils and modillions; and prominent central dormer with a broken scrolled pediment centered on the hipped roof. The Music Room addition reflects its construction in 1922 as an architectural compliment to the original house, and the Carriage House retains its original Prairie style design. The original interior layout and decorative features of these resources have been retained to a good degree, as well. The Japanese Garden, installed in 1929, retains most of its original design and layout. Although some features have been replaced with modern replicas, original landscape, plantings, and ornamental features are extant.
- **Workmanship** – The House, Music Room, and Carriage House retain original configurations, fenestration patterns, and exterior materials and embellishments that show the workmanship of original builders and contractors. These resources also retain a good deal of their interior features, including woodwork, stained glass, etc. The Japanese Garden retains its original layout and many landscape, plantings, and ornamental features that show the workmanship of the original gardener.
- **Feeling** - The Laura Musser McColm Historic District still reflects the sense of time and place of the property during its period of significance. The modern museum additions to the property are mostly hidden when viewing the historic Musser McColm property from Mulberry Avenue, which was its originally intended viewshed.

**Associations** - Through its extant historic features, the historic resources of the district retain strong associations with its original and historic functions as an entertainment and performing arts center created by Laura Musser McColm, a wealthy and accomplished business and club woman, who made her architecturally significant Georgian Revival house into a popular social and cultural women’s clubhouse in early twentieth-century Muscatine.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section   7   Page   7   Property name Laura Musser McColm Historic District  
County and State Muscatine County, IA

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**Future Plans**

The Muscatine Art Center is currently working with A & J Associates to upgrade the HVAC system throughout the facility – historic Musser McColm House, Carriage House, Stanley Gallery, and office space. The project will include electrical upgrades in the Musser McColm House. Doug Steinmetz, Preservation Architect, is a consultant on the project. Window and door replacements and repairs are planned for the Carriage House and Stanley Gallery. Steinmetz is overseeing the window and door project. Projects expected to be completed between 2016 and 2018 include plaster repair to the ceiling of the pipe organ room, tuck pointing on the Music Room, roof replacement for the Carriage House, and replacement of wood structures in the Japanese Garden. Listing the Laura Musser McColm Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places will allow the Muscatine Art Center to access grants and tax credits for these maintenance and repair projects.

**Acknowledgements**

This nomination was made possible by a grant awarded to the Muscatine Art Center in 2015 from the Historical Resource Development Program (HRDP) of the State Historical Society of Iowa.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 8 Property name Laura Musser McColm House Historic District  
County and State Muscatine County, IA

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**8. Statement of Significance**

The Laura Musser McColm Historic District is locally significant and eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C.

*Criterion A:* The Laura Musser McColm Historic District is locally significant under Criterion A as an important local entertainment and performing arts space associated with Laura Musser McColm from 1922 to 1938. Laura Musser McColm was the daughter of Peter Musser, a wealthy Muscatine lumber baron, and the wife of Edwin L. McColm, the president and owner of McColm and Company, the leading dry goods store in Muscatine. In addition to her well-born place in Muscatine society, Laura Musser McColm was a highly trained and gifted soprano and frequently performed in highly publicized concerts, for special civic events, and as a member of her church choir, and in so doing became a popular public figure in early-twentieth-century Muscatine. She was also an active member of a number of local women's clubs devoted to music and other cultural pursuits. The addition of the Music Room and Estey player pipe organ to her house in 1922 transformed her Mulberry Avenue residence into a veritable music and performing arts center, where Laura Musser McColm, visiting musicians, and fellow clubwomen regularly performed. A number of remote radio broadcasts from the Music Room expanded the audience for her musical events even further. In 1929, Laura Musser McColm had a Japanese Garden installed on her property, adding to the cultural entertainment possibilities at 1314 Mulberry Avenue. Her residence continued as an entertainment and performing arts space until 1938, when the widowed Laura Musser McColm remarried and eventually moved to Kansas City permanently.

*Criterion C:* The Laura Musser McColm Historic District contains locally significant architecture and landscape features. The Laura Musser McColm House is locally significant and individually eligible as a well preserved example of a high-style, early twentieth-century Colonial Revival house with an emphasis on Georgian Revival details. The house represents a transitional phase in the evolution of Colonial Revival style houses in the United States during the first decade of the twentieth century. It is an example of the more authentically referenced Georgian Colonial Revival prototypes, one that includes a symmetrical five-ranked façade; full-width porch/balcony with Ionic columns and a classical entry with sidelights but no fanlight; a cornice with frieze-band windows and overhanging eaves with dentils and modillions; and a hipped roof with a very prominent central broken pediment dormer.

The house also represents the work of local architect and Muscatine native Henry W. Zeidler, whose work is extant in several local residences, the Greenwood Cemetery Chapel, and the Muscatine City Hall. Although early plans for the house by Zeidler included a one-story section on the north side, the Music Room was not built until 1922. It is nevertheless a historic addition that compliments the architecture of the house well and contributes to its Criterion C significance. The Carriage House is a well preserved Prairie Style carriage house/garage and servants quarters that largely retains its exterior architecture and contributes to the history and significance of the district. The contributing Japanese Garden is a rare pre-World War II survival of a private estate garden with original yew trees, landscape elements, and ornamentation reflecting Laura Musser McColm's devotion to her house as a center of culture. The modern

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 9 Property name Laura Musser McColm House Historic District

County and State Muscatine County, IA

museum additions – designed to be as unobtrusive as possible – are confined to the rear of the house, connecting to it only at the south corner. These modern additions to the property are mostly hidden when viewing the historic Musser McColm House property from Mulberry Avenue.

*Period of Significance:* The period of significance for the Laura Musser McColm Historic District is 1908-1938, from the date of construction of the Laura Musser McColm House to the year Laura Musser McColm remarried and moved to Kansas City, where she lived for the remainder of her life.

**Laura Musser McColm (1877-1964) and Her Mulberry Avenue Residence**

Laura Musser was born in Muscatine, Iowa, on November 23, 1877, the youngest child of wealthy Muscatine lumber baron Peter Musser and his wife Tamson Rhodes Musser. The Mussers had six children, only three of whom reached adulthood. After Tamson Rhodes Musser died in 1901, Laura Musser took over the care of her aging father and the management of his household. In 1903, Laura Musser married Edwin Leroy McColm, banker and junior partner in the McColm Dry Goods Company, the leading dry goods store in Muscatine. After the wedding, the newlywed couple lived in Peter Musser's house at the corner of Mulberry Avenue and Mississippi Drive for the next several years, during which the McColms had their only child, Alice, who died shortly after her birth in December 1907. In 1908, Peter Musser and the McColms moved into their new residence at 1314 Mulberry Avenue. The Georgian Revival mansion – planned by Peter Musser and Laura – was designed by Muscatine architect Henry W. Zeidler and built by local contractors J.E. and A.D.R. Howe. Peter Musser lived with his daughter and son-in-law in their new home until his death in 1910 (Muscatine Art Center 2014).

By the time Laura Musser McColm had moved into her new Mulberry Avenue residence in 1908, Muscatine had grown from a small, ante-bellum settlement on the Mississippi River into a bustling commercial and industrial river port and railroad city of more than 28,000 residents. Known as Bloomington until 1849, Muscatine had been incorporated as the Muscatine County seat in 1839. The town owed its rapid growth in the 1890s and early 1900s to three main industries; lumber, pearl buttons, and melons, the former of which was central to the Musser family wealth. As early as the mid-1860s, Muscatine was already one of America's important lumber cities. Wood from surrounding forests and later from lands in Wisconsin and Minnesota "supplied a seemingly endless stream of lumber for local mills. In 1865, more than 13 million feet of lumber, six million shingles, and four million laths were shipped by rail or river" (McHugh-Johnston 2010:7).

A number of entrepreneurs amassed fortunes in the Muscatine lumber business, including Peter Musser, Laura Musser McColm's father. In 1870, Peter joined with his brothers Richard and John Musser, his nephew Peter Miller Musser, and C.R. Fox to form Musser & Co. The Musser & Co. mill "was in operation from 1871 until its closing in 1905." Also in 1871, the Mississippi River Logging Co. was established "by Frederick Weyerhaeuser with Musser & Co. as an incorporator and large stockholder. The following year, Peter Musser became an official of the Mississippi River Logging Co., and in 1881 he became president of the newly incorporated Musser Lumber Company. In 1885, Musser purchased lands in Minnesota and

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 10 Property name Laura Musser McColm House Historic District

County and State Muscatine County, IA

---

Wisconsin for manufacture and speculation. The following year, the Musser-Sauntry Land, Logging & Manufacturing Company was organized to operate on the St. Croix River. Also in 1886, the Musser and Weyerhauser, Denkmann, Laird, and Norton interests organized the Pine Tree Lumber Company at Little Falls, Minnesota, which reached complete organization in 1891, with Peter Musser as president, his son R. Drew Musser as secretary-treasurer, and Charles A. Weyerhauser as general manager. Peter Musser continued to manage his lumber and banking interests until just before he died in 1910 (McHugh-Johnston 2010:7; Muscatine Art Center 2015:5; *Muscatine Journal*, 9/29/1910).

The success of Muscatine's lumber, pearl button, and melon industries supported the city's turn-of-the-twentieth-century population explosion, commercial growth, municipal improvements, and cultural life. In 1872, James McColm opened McColm's Dry Goods Store, an establishment that grew to become Muscatine's leading dry goods store for the next 92 years. In 1890, his son, Edwin Leroy McColm, joined him in running the business and changed the name to McColm Dry Goods Company. When James McColm retired, Edwin took over as president and owner and Laura Musser McColm took her husband's former place as secretary-treasurer. She also kept the store's account books for many years and often traveled with her husband on buying trips to Chicago. In 1917, the McColm Dry Goods Company moved into the new Laurel Building – a six-story building in downtown Muscatine named for Laura (and probably E.L. McColm) – after which the company reorganized and changed its name to McColm and Company (McHugh-Johnston 2010; Muscatine Art Center 2015:5; *Muscatine Journal*, 8/13/1917).

In addition to being an unusually active and respected businesswoman for her time, Laura Musser McColm also donated a large amount of her time as a board member of several municipal and social welfare institutions, including the Muscatine Cemetery Board, the Old Ladies Home Association, and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). Nevertheless, Laura Musser McColm was probably best known in Muscatine for her beautiful singing voice, which she showcased often as a member of her church choir, in special public concerts and radio broadcasts, and for fellow members of the numerous local women's clubs to which she belonged (*Muscatine Journal*, 11/23/1905; 3/22/1917; 11/29/1913; 12/3/1913; 5/4/1912).

Although born into wealth in the late nineteenth century, Laura Musser McColm was brought up like most women of the middle and upper classes of her time for a life of cultured domesticity. Indeed, the Mussers described their youngest daughter in her 1903 wedding announcement as having "grown up unspoiled and unselfish," a reference to the virtues of the early-nineteenth-century Cult of True Womanhood. "Piety, purity, domesticity, and submissiveness were the basic virtues that defined the four corners of a woman's world, if she was to be perceived as 'a lady'" (Muscatine Art Center 2015; Blair 1994:1).

Beginning in girlhood, she was guided to develop self-sacrificing traits, which would assure her success in creating a harmonious, moral, and industrious household, and would inspire her husband, children, and neighbors to renounce temptation and become almost as good-hearted, hard-working, and God-fearing as she (Blair 1994:1).

Education and training in the arts, especially vocal and instrumental music, literary study, painting and dancing "were portrayed as a handmaiden to the lady's duties in the service of her loved ones" and as "the

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 11 Property name Laura Musser McColm House Historic District

County and State Muscatine County, IA

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inspirer of desirable behavior in those around her.” As one lady’s magazine declared: “A female of cultivated taste, has an influence upon society wherever she moves” (Blair 1994:4).

As a young woman, Laura Musser studied music at Grant Seminary in Chicago and under Giovanni Sbriglia (the Italian tenor and prominent teacher of singing) in Paris. She returned home to Muscatine with a “beautiful mezzo-soprano voice,” and early on gave solo performances at church and special public concerts, for which she received much acclaim. After her marriage, with no children to raise and free from housework, for which she employed a number of domestic servants, the well educated and accomplished Laura Musser McColm continued to sing for appreciative Muscatine audiences, whether for one of her “good causes,” such as the Young Women’s Christian Association, or for sheer entertainment purposes, such as when she sang in the first concert of the season with the Muscatine Symphony Orchestra in the Grand Theatre in 1917 (*Muscatine Journal*, 11/23/1905; 3/22/1917). The *Muscatine Journal* described Musser McColm’s performance in that event as “a distinct personal triumph:”

Mrs. E.L. McColm as the soloist of the concert scored a distinct personal triumph. The appreciation of the immense audience at the close of her presentation of Leo Stern’s “Spring” proved a veritable ovation. Her splendid tone quality and excellent interpretation proved her artistry and demonstrated that Muscatine has no need to seek outside her own borders for musical talent greatly above par. . . .

“One Fine Day,” from Puccini’s “Madame Butterfly” was sung by Mrs. McColm following the overture. The selection is perhaps the most familiar of the numbers of Puccini’s most popular opera but its interpretation by the talented Muscatine soprano clothed it with new beauties. The varying moods of the heroine of the opera in the number gives the vocalist full opportunity for the display of versatility in portraying degrees of emotion. Mrs. McColm’s interpretation was a remarkable one, plaintive, appealing and joyous by turn leading to the dramatic climax with a tonal power and melody which swept the audience. Responding to the insistent demands of her hearers she presented “Ich Liebe Dich” by Grieg, a short, sparkling encore. . . .

Of surpassing difficulty, [Leo Stern’s “Spring”] proved a triumph for the soloist, demonstrating her coloratura ability in a succession of flowing passages, demanding the most exacting perfection of vocal control. The rendition was greeted by a spontaneous flood of applause in the greatest appreciative demonstration of the evening. The singer responded with “A Burst of Melody” by Seiler (*Muscatine Journal*, 3/22/1917).

Laura Musser McColm especially thrived in Muscatine’s women’s clubs. Women’s clubs flourished during the Progressive era and were filled with like-minded women devoted to music, arts, culture, and above all, self-development. In these early-twentieth-century women’s clubs, middle and upper class women discovered a new freedom of expression and action that had been otherwise stifled by the strictures of female domesticity (Blair 1994:20). As historian Karen J. Blair notes:

Such designations as the Women’s Century Club and the Twentieth Century Club, in their anticipation of the new century, simultaneously anticipated a new use of women’s developing talents. Although the idea of banding together was gaining acceptance in circles of forward-looking people, it required bravery for members to attempt to discuss new topics with one another, topics not previously addressed in a formal way, or to present a creative work for neighborly criticism. However rusty the club member’s mind might feel, in middle age she certainly welcomed the chance to read again and discuss new ideas with her peers, to polish tired musical skills, to shed mundane and tedious responsibilities briefly, and enter the wider world of thought and beauty. She felt easier about presenting her original paper, on Shakespeare, Beethoven or Rembrandt, or about singing before the group, knowing she was surrounded by like-minded supporters. The intellectual stimulation stirred self-respect among the members again, and soon propelled women to initiate community programs such as the founding of

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 12 Property name Laura Musser McColm House Historic District

County and State Muscatine County, IA

---

town libraries, concert series, and art exhibitions (Blair 1994:19-20).

Although many clubwomen in the Progressive Era felt pressured to forgo their devotion to the arts and culture in favor of the social welfare and civic reform that defined Progressivism, many of the women's clubs in Muscatine continued their commitment to cultural appreciation and expression (Blair 1994:20-23). Indeed, those clubs that counted Laura Musser McColm as a member always included music and singing as regular features of their monthly meetings. Thus, meeting programs of the Twentieth Century Club, the Muscatine Garden Club, and many others were punctuated with songs performed by its members, either in keeping with or regardless of that month's topic. It was in part through her membership in many of Muscatine's women's clubs that Musser McColm began making her house into a center for music and entertainment.

After her marriage in 1903, Laura Musser McColm entered the Muscatine women's club scene and her membership included, but was not limited to, the following: the Twentieth Century Club; the Mulberry Needle Club; the Kensington Club; the Muscatine Garden Club; the Fortnightly Club; the Women's Home Missionary Society of the First Methodist Episcopal Church; the Ladies Aid Society for the First Methodist Episcopal Church; and the P.E.O. (Philanthropic Educational Organization) Sisterhood.<sup>1</sup> In 1921, Musser McColm ordered an Estey player pipe organ (built in 1919) for her residence, and in 1922 had an addition to her home built – the Music Room – to house the instrument and more than 200 of its player rolls that included both classical and popular tunes. She purchased a Steinway piano for the Music Room in 1925 (Muscatine Art Center 2015).

The Music Room provided the ideal space for hosting women's club meetings, which were almost always enlivened with readings, interpretive dances, organ music, singing, and solo performances by Musser McColm (Muscatine Art Center 2015:7). Club meetings at 1314 Mulberry Avenue were always noted in the *Muscatine Journal and News-Tribune's* "Society" page. One noteworthy example – the Twentieth Century Club's Gala Day – took place in February 1931, during which club members donned costumes of famous movie stars of the era, with hostess Laura Musser McColm dressed to portray movie star Bebe Daniels:

"Bebe Daniels," movie star, was hostess to a novel movie-star reception given at the home of Mrs. E.L. McColm, 1314 Mulberry avenue, at one o'clock today for members of the Twentieth Century club when they held their annual gala day.

The luncheon and the stunt program, as well as the decorations of the music room were appropriate for the Hollywood delegation.

Guests, each costumed to portray a movie actor or actress, including Ramon Navarro, Mary Pickford, Emily Fitzroy, Colleen Moore, Charles Chaplin, Polly Moran, Clara Bow, Douglas Fairbanks, Lillian and Dorothy Gish, Louise Fazenda, Richard Dix, Ethel Wale, Mary Alden, Bessie Love, John Barrymore, Zasu Pitts, Mary Carr, Louis Stone, Pauline Frederick, Marian Davies, Richard Barthelmess, Ruth Chatterton, Tom Davis, were ushered into the serving room by the page.

The costumes worn were clever and unusual. Some were linked with college and seminary days, some were graduation frocks, others were entirely original, fashioned particularly for the character, some were particularly effective in the humor roles, while the men stars were unusually effective in their portrayal of the familiar stars.

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<sup>1</sup> See for examples *Muscatine Journal*, 9/16/1912; 5/8/1914, and *Muscatine Journal and News-Tribune*, 9/28/1928; 10/11/1928; 10/31/1928; 3/12/1929; 3/13/1929; 4/4/1929; 10/21/1930; 2/17/1931; 5/12/1931; 12/12/1931; 9/24/1935; and 5/1/1937.



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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 13 Property name Laura Musser McColm House Historic District

County and State Muscatine County, IA

The three-course luncheon was served at tables for four, covers for 31 being arranged. Each was attractively decorated in the co-scheme of the movie-star "lot," and the George Washington birthday season. Place cards used were novel, picturing the star. Floral arrangements, articles in keeping with the "lot" schemes, and cherries and miniature flags were effectively employed. A recital of organ music was played during the serving.

Following the serving the afternoon was spent with a stunt program, each member contributing something to the entertainment. A Virginia reel, with all members participating, was the climax of the afternoon's entertainment.

Preparations for the gala event were in charge of Mrs. F.H. Little, Mrs. Robert Thompson, and Mrs. Gena V. Cook, members of the entertainment committee. The luncheon committee members were Mrs. Raymond Titus, Mrs. Elmer Steinmetz, Mrs. G.A. Heldel and Mrs. C.W. Hendriks (*Muscatine Journal and News-Tribune*, February 17, 1931).

One former house servant recalled that people in Muscatine talked of the "Movie Star" party for several years after (Beveridge 2008). Another example took place in December 1931, when the Women's Home Missionary Society of the First Methodist Episcopal Church met in the Music Room for a musicale:

The home of Mrs. E.L. McColm, 1314 Mulberry avenue, was the scene of a musicale Friday afternoon when members of the Women's Home Missionary society of the First Methodist Episcopal church and their guests were entertained in the music room. Piano, organ, violin and vocal selections were included in the afternoon's program which was in charge of Mrs. F.H. Little. . . . The hostess graciously offered "The Old Refrain" by Kreisler, as a vocal solo (*Muscatine Journal and News-Tribune*, 12/12/1931).

And in September 1935, the Muscatine Garden Club enjoyed an afternoon's entertainment entitled "The Garden in Verse and Song:"

The music room of Mrs. E.L. McColm's home at 1314 Mulberry avenue afforded the delightful setting for an afternoon program entitled, "The Garden in Verse and Song," given by the Muscatine Garden Club Monday. Forty-five guests shared the charming event. It was truly the "garden in verse and song," with a wealth of lovely music and readings to tell of the beauty of a garden. Mrs. McColm opened the program with an organ solo, followed with two readings by Mrs. G.B. Samuels, "Whoever Makes a Garden," by Douglas Malloch, and "A Little Pink Rose," by Carrie Jacobs-Bond. . . . As a fitting close to the program, Mrs. McColm sang, "The Little Shepherd Song," "The Star" by Rogers, "Clouds," and by request Rasbach's "Trees" (*Muscatine Journal and News-Tribune*, 9/24/1935).

Laura Musser McColm's Mulberry Avenue residence thus was well known in Muscatine women's club circles as a center for music and culture.

In 1929 (or 1930, as the following quote suggests), Laura Musser McColm had a Japanese Garden started in the south side yard. Approximately one-half acre in size, the Japanese Garden, or "rock garden," as it later called, was viewed as "a symbol of cultural sophistication," a trait constantly cultivated by Musser McColm. Her Japanese garden, like the Music Room and Estey player pipe organ, became another cultural attraction for club meetings held at the Mulberry Avenue mansion:

Members of the Garden Club studied the model Japanese garden of Mrs. E.L. McColm, Mulberry avenue, at their meeting Monday afternoon at the home. An article in the March issue of *Country Life* was read by Mrs. George Hermann, which interpreted the idea of a Jap [sic] garden. . . . The Jap [sic] rock garden at the McColm home was carried out [in] the true Jap [sic] motif. There are the four pools, three waterfalls, and a stream meandering

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 14 Property name Laura Musser McColm House Historic District

County and State Muscatine County, IA

---

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for 75 feet. The garden, started last year, is at its full glory now, with the iris in bloom, and the flowers and shrubbery grown among the rocks to make a woodland scene. Even the bridges crossing the waterfalls and stream are representative. The stone lanterns are of Jap make. The tour of the garden was highly interesting and pictorial, in view of the study of the club (*Muscatine Journal and News-Tribune*, 5/12/1931).

In May of the following year, Musser McColm hosted the members of the Fortnightly literary club of West Liberty,<sup>2</sup> who toured the Japanese Garden and were entertained in the Music Room.

The women were taken through her rock garden, and then into the music room where the hostess sang a group of songs accompanied by Mrs. Gibson at the piano. Mrs. Frank Giesler contributed a group of readings. Both the music and readings pertained to flowers and gardens. . . . A tea was enjoyed at the conclusion of the afternoon, with Mrs. McColm and Mrs. F.H. Little pouring (*Muscatine Journal and News-Tribune*, 5/17/1932).

The Musser McColm garden was a very late example of the Japanese style estate garden, and despite their tremendous popularity in the first decades of the twentieth century, these gardens fell quickly out of favor during the 1930s because of political and economic tensions with Japan (Brown 2013).<sup>3</sup>

Outside her club meetings, Musser McColm used her Music Room as a ballroom for dances, private vocal performances, choir rehearsals, and, as one former upstairs maid remembered, weekly voice and music lessons for herself, some of which were broadcast from the Music Room by KTNT, Muscatine's first radio station, in the mid-1920s. Laura Musser McColm also performed at the KTNT studio at least once in 1926 (*Muscatine Journal and News-Tribune*, April 11, 1935; Carlson interview 2007; Program, KTNT, February 19, 1926, Muscatine Art Center Archives).<sup>4</sup> These radio broadcasts undoubtedly led to the culminating event that made the Laura Musser McColm residence the center of Muscatine culture (at least for one night) for Iowa's radio audiences. In 1932, Laura and her husband Edwin hosted the fourth in a series of WOC (Davenport) and WHO (Des Moines) joint radio programs called "Bigger and Better Muscatine," arranged by the Muscatine Chamber of Commerce. The program was broadcast by remote control from the Music Room and featured organ music and several solos and accompaniments by Laura Musser McColm. Dr. B.J. Palmer, famed Davenport chiropractor and owner of both radio stations, then addressed the listening audience, commending the McColms and their home as symbols of Muscatine graciousness and hospitality:

As I sit in this most beautiful private home of Mr. and Mrs. McColm; as I hear the strains of this beautiful pipe organ in their home; as I talk with Mr. and Mrs. McColm with their gracious and genial personality and hospitality, it seems that I see in them a cross section of warm hearted, real and genuine hospitality of Muscatine. I see Muscatine as I see them—as a group of plain, sincere, genuine and true type of the westerner who has his head ready to help you reason things through; his heart willing with aid and comfort, and his hand out to help you reach your objective goal.

The very act of Mr. and Mrs. McColm's opening their private home to a group of broadcasting public characters—doing so with open arms and a smiling welcome at the door as we come and shaking hands as we

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<sup>2</sup> West Liberty is a small town in northwestern Muscatine County.

<sup>3</sup> In 1932, the *Muscatine Journal* dropped the words "Japanese" or "Jap," which it had used to describe Musser McColm's garden in 1931, and substituted the generic term "rock garden."

<sup>4</sup> Other than the oral history of the upstairs maid and the handwritten program sheet for a 1926 KTNT musical broadcast, nothing more is known about this intriguing early history of Musser McColm's radio broadcasts from her Music Room.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 15 Property name Laura Musser McColm House Historic District

County and State Muscatine County, IA

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---

go, bidding us "Good night," is just a sample of what this entire town does to its visitors. I wish you knew Muscatine and its people, its background and its present value, as I do. I'm afraid though, that if you did, you'd wish you lived here instead of where you are (*Muscatine Journal and News-Tribune*, 2/9/1932).

The 1932 statewide radio broadcast from the Music Room confirmed Laura Musser McColm's expression and cultivation of her self-identity through her Mulberry Avenue residence.

Although Edwin L. McColm died just one year later, Laura Musser McColm continued hosting club meetings, choir rehearsals, and other entertainments in the Music Room, as her journal entries from 1936 and 1937 indicate:

"Twentieth Century Club Gala Day here. An immigrant party. Lots of fun. Twenty four came" (Laura Musser McColm Journal, Tuesday, April 14, 1936).

"William Anderson came this morning to fix the organ. The 20<sup>th</sup> Century Club meets here this afternoon, a musical program. Millie Little has the paper and the program is put on by Miss Parkin, Mrs. Bloom, Mrs. Willis and myself. Had a good attendance" (Laura Musser McColm Journal, Tuesday, March 2, 1937).

"P.E.O. [Sisterhood] meeting at 3:00, a goodly number here. Caroline Beveridge played two numbers and encore. Mrs. Fullwood sang a group of three pretty songs. Her voice is quite lyric. A pupil of Miss Milne gave a reading, then two organ rolls were played" (Laura Musser McColm Journal, Saturday, May 1, 1937).

"Am staying at home today because of the meeting here of the Fortnightly Club. Jessie & Gail having charge of the programs. Aldean gave a review of "Lena Geyer" and I sang a group of song, eight in number" (Laura Musser McColm Journal, Friday, April 30, 1937).

In 1938, Laura Musser McColm married William T. Atkins, vice president of the Skelly Oil Co., of Kansas City, Missouri, and for the next two years, the couple lived mainly in the Mulberry Avenue residence in Muscatine. After William T. Atkins died in August 1940, however, Laura Musser McColm moved to the Atkins home in Kansas City. Although she maintained ownership of the Mulberry Avenue residence and made frequent trips to Muscatine to visit relatives and tend to the McColm & Co. dry goods business, Musser McColm lived in Kansas City for the rest of her life. In 1954, she was awarded an honorary Doctor of Music degree from Iowa Wesleyan College in Mount Pleasant, an institution to which she and her husband had donated generously since at least 1913.<sup>5</sup> Laura Musser McColm died in 1964 and was buried along with her parents and first husband in Greenwood Cemetery in Muscatine (Muscatine Art Center, April 2014; Muscatine Art Center 2015).

In 1965, Laura Musser McColm's heirs – step-daughter Mary Catherine McWhirter and niece Mary Musser Gilmore – donated the Musser McColm house and grounds to the City of Muscatine as a museum and art gallery. An endowment fund was also donated to assist in the maintenance of the Laura Musser Museum and Art Gallery, which opened to the public the following year. A board of nine, known as the Muscatine

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<sup>5</sup> In 1928-1929, for example, the McColms made a major gift to renovate the Chapel Auditorium, which was in 1961 named the Laura Musser Atkins Auditorium. After receiving her honorary doctorate, Laura Musser McColm served on the Iowa Wesleyan College Board of Trustees until her death in 1964. (Information from collections of the Muscatine Art Center).

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**Section 8 Page 16 Property name Laura Musser McColm House Historic DistrictCounty and State Muscatine County, IA

Museum and Fine Arts Association, was formed to govern and control the institution. In addition to the endowment, the museum was also supported through taxpayer funding and memberships (*Muscatine Art Center*, April 2014; *Muscatine Journal and News-Tribune*, 12/30/1965). A decade later, from 1974 to 1983, Stanley Gallery and the Exhibit Hall and Office Annex were built to provide the museum with more exhibition and classroom space. A parking lot was built at the bottom of the hill to allow visitor access to the museum from Cedar Street. When the Stanley Gallery was completed in 1976, the Laura Musser Museum and Art Gallery was renamed the Muscatine Art Center (*Muscatine Journal and News-Tribune*, 9/10/1976).

**Henry W. Zeidler, Architect**

The Laura Musser McColm House represents the work of local architect and Muscatine native Henry W. Zeidler. Born in Muscatine in 1859, Henry W. Zeidler was the son of German immigrant parents, William and Christine Zeidler, two of Muscatine's early residents. William Zeidler had been a cabinet-maker in Germany and worked as a building contractor after settling in Muscatine. Considered by his contemporaries as "a born architect," Henry Zeidler, through his father, became interested and adept in the building arts. From 1873 to 1876, Zeidler attended Iowa Wesleyan College in Mount Pleasant, Iowa, where he studied architecture and draftsmanship. By 1890, Zeidler had established a practice in Muscatine, and by the early 1900s, he was the city's "leading architect," and, as the *Muscatine Journal* put it, "many of the city's "finest residential stores and office buildings" were "standing proofs of [his] skill and artistic ability."

In addition to designing the Musser House and a number of other prominent Muscatine residences, Zeidler also designed commercial and municipal buildings, including being the local supervising architect for Muscatine's City Hall and the First National Bank. In 1901, Zeidler designed the Romanesque Revival Greenwood Cemetery Chapel for Peter Musser, which the latter donated to the city-owned Greenwood Cemetery in memory of his wife, Tamson, who had died four years earlier.<sup>6</sup> Just six years later, Musser again hired Zeidler to design a new residence for himself and his daughter on Mulberry Avenue. Henry W. Zeidler died in 1951 and, like the Musser family, was buried in Greenwood Cemetery (*Muscatine Art Center* 2014; *Muscatine Journal* 12/21/1905; Rudisill 2000:8; Richman 1911:752).

**Colonial Revival / Georgian Revival Architecture**

The Laura Musser McColm House is a well preserved example of a high-style, early twentieth-century Colonial Revival house with an emphasis on Georgian Revival details. The architectural design represents a transitional or prototype phase in the evolution of Colonial Revival style houses in the United States during the first decade of the twentieth century. Beginning in 1876 with the Philadelphia Centennial, the Colonial Revival style grew out of a renewed interest in the colonial architectural heritage of America's past. The following year, fashionable architects McKim, Mead, White, and Bigelow took a widely publicized tour of New England to study colonial Georgian and Adam buildings, and in the succeeding decade they produced the country's first expressions of the Colonial Revival style: the Appleton House (1883-1884) in Lennox,

<sup>6</sup> Greenwood Cemetery Chapel was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2001.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 17 Property name Laura Musser McColm House Historic District

County and State Muscatine County, IA

Massachusetts, and the Taylor House (1885-1886) in Newport, Rhode Island. These houses represented the two subtypes of the style most common before 1910: “the asymmetrical form with perimposed colonial details” and the more authentically referenced Georgian and Adam examples with symmetrical hipped roofs, although both subtypes tended toward exaggerated proportions and details. These early examples were free interpretations with details inspired by, rather than copied from, colonial precedents. After the turn of the twentieth century, Colonial Revival fashion shifted toward the more carefully researched copies with more correct proportions and details (McAlester 2006:326).

The Laura Musser McColm House is an example of the latter, more authentically referenced Georgian Colonial Revival style, with a symmetrical façade; full-width porch with Ionic columns and classical entry with sidelights but no fanlight; cornice with frieze-band windows, overhanging eaves with dentils and modillions, and a hipped roof with a very prominent central broken pediment dormer. Although Henry Zeidler included a one-story section on the north side of the house in his early plans, the Music Room addition was not built until 1922.

**Laura Musser McColm’s Japanese Style Garden**

Although the specific inspiration behind Laura Musser McColm’s desire for her own Japanese style garden in 1929 remains unknown, Japanese gardens had been “part of a larger infatuation” in America “with ‘things Japanese’” since the late nineteenth century. The gardens were seen as antidotes to urban and industrial blight and social decay. Beginning in the 1890s, Americans were introduced to Japanese gardens, built by Japanese entrepreneurs and government officials, through international expositions, commercial tea gardens, and lavish publicized examples by wealthy private citizens. These early examples established the popular view of the landscapes as not only “exotic,” but also places of “artistic refinement.” Many wealthy Americans commissioned their own private estate gardens based on those they had seen at fairs or on trips to Japan. Women, especially, appreciated and commissioned Japanese gardens, seeing them as “spurs to the imagination” and “balms for the spirit.” Most of these gardens, like the one by Laura Musser McColm, “featured streams and ponds punctuated by wooden bridges, lanterns, and a viewing pavilion,” and often replicated “designs seen at fair gardens and large tea gardens.” Usually built around “an existing pond or low spot on the property,” the estate garden was typically “far removed from the European-style residence.”

Although the name of the designer of the Musser McColm garden is unknown, early-twentieth-century Japanese estate gardens were usually fashioned by Japanese immigrants (Brown 2013). The Musser McColm garden was a very late example of the Japanese style estate garden, and despite their tremendous popularity in the first decades of the twentieth century, these gardens fell quickly out of favor during the 1930s because of political and economic tensions with Japan (Brown 2013).<sup>7</sup> Laura Musser McColm continued to employ a gardener to tend her Japanese Garden long after she moved to Kansas City.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> In 1932, the *Muscatine Journal* dropped the words “Japanese” or “Jap,” which it had used to describe Musser McColm’s garden in 1931, and substituted the generic term “rock garden.”

<sup>8</sup> When the house was donated to the city of Muscatine in 1965, however, the Japanese Garden had fallen victim to neglect and vandalism.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 18 Property name Laura Musser McColm House Historic District  
County and State Muscatine County, IA

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

**Section**   9   **Page**   19   **Property name**   Laura Musser McColm House Historic District    
**County and State**   Muscatine County, IA  

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section   10   Page   20   Property name   Laura Musser McColm House Historic District    
County and State   Muscatine County, IA  

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

- |                         |                       |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1) Latitude: 41.4328507 | Longitude: -91.051231 |
| 2) Latitude: 41.4323339 | Longitude: -91.050679 |
| 3) Latitude: 41.4315386 | Longitude: -91.051929 |
| 4) Latitude: 41.4320695 | Longitude: -91.052500 |

**UTM References (NAD 1983)**

- |             |                    |                      |
|-------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1) Zone: 15 | Easting: 662816.76 | Northing: 4588642.02 |
| 2) Zone: 15 | Easting: 662868.93 | Northing: 4588585.79 |
| 3) Zone: 15 | Easting: 662766.48 | Northing: 4588495.14 |
| 4) Zone: 15 | Easting: 662717.41 | Northing: 4588553.01 |

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated property is a parcel located on Lot 25, the southeast 55 feet of Lot 24, and part of Lot 26 in Fletcher & Deshler's Addition No. 1 to the Town of Muscatine. The northeast boundary (along Mulberry Avenue) is 253 feet, the northwest and southeast boundaries are 453.5 feet each, and the southwest boundary is 250.5 feet.

**Boundary Justification**

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Laura Musser McColm House at 1314 Mulberry Avenue in Muscatine, Iowa.



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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Additional

**Section** Documentation **Page** 21 **Property name** Laura Musser McColm Historic District

**County and State** Muscatine County, IA

---

---

**Additional Documentation**

**Photographs**

**Photo Log**

**Name of Property:** Laura Musser McColm Historic District

**City or Vicinity:** Muscatine

**County:** Muscatine **State:** IA

**Photographer:** Jennifer A. Price

**Date Photographed:** May 9, 2014

**Description of Photographs:**

- 1 of 22. House and Music Room façades, view southwest
- 2 of 22. House and porte-cochere/sleeping porch, view east-southeast
- 3 of 22. House façade, view southwest
- 4 of 22. House and Music Room, view south
- 5 of 22. Music Room, view east
- 6 of 22. House, view east
- 7 of 22. Carriage House, view south
- 8 of 22. Carriage House and Stanley Gallery, view north-northeast
- 9 of 22. Outdoor Sculpture Garden, view southwest
- 10 of 22. House, interior, first floor, front entrance hall, view southwest
- 11 of 22. House, interior, first floor, west side front parlor, view west
- 12 of 22. House, interior, first floor, east side front parlor, view northeast

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Additional

**Section** Documentation **Page** 22 **Property name** Laura Musser McColm Historic District

**County and State** Muscatine County, IA

---

---

- 13 of 22. House, interior, first floor, library, view south
- 14 of 22. House, interior, first floor, dining room, view northwest
- 15 of 22. Music Room, interior, view northwest
- 16 of 22. Music Room, interior, view south
- 17 of 22. Music Room, interior, Estey player pipe organ, view southwest
- 18 of 22. House, interior, second floor, hallway, view northeast
- 19 of 22. House, interior, attic, view north
- 20 of 22. Japanese Garden, Torii Gate entrance, view north
- 21 of 22. Japanese Garden, upper level path, view southeast
- 22 of 22. Japanese Garden, hillside from lower level, view northeast

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Additional

**Section** Documentation **Page** 23 **Property name** Laura Musser McColm Historic District

**County and State** Muscatine County, IA

---

---

**List of Figures**

- Figure 1. General location of Laura Musser McColm Historic District in Muscatine, Iowa
- Figure 2. Aerial view of boundary lines of Laura Musser McColm Historic District
- Figure 3. Boundary lines of Laura Musser McColm Historic District
- Figure 4. Site Plan
- Figure 5. Site Plan and Photo Key (Photos 1 - 14)
- Figure 6. First Floor Plan and Photo Key (Photos 15 - 22)
- Figure 7. Second Floor Plan and Photo Key (Photos 23 - 25)
- Figure 8. Attic Floor Plan and Photo Key (Photo 26)
- Figure 9. Sketch Map of Japanese Garden and Photo Key (Photos 27-30)
- Figure 10. Laura Musser McColm House soon after completion, c.1908
- Figure 11. Ad for Henry W. Zeidler, Muscatine Architect, 1912
- Figure 12. Musser McColm House with front porch screened in, c.1910
- Figure 13. View north of Laura Musser McColm House, 1910s
- Figure 14. View north of the Laura Musser McColm House, c.1925
- Figure 15. 1314 Mulberry Avenue, 1926. Note the Music Room (right) and Carriage House (left)
- Figure 16. Postcard view south of "Mulberry Ave., Muscatine IA," 1910s, showing Musser McColm House
- Figure 17. Laura Musser McColm with her father, Peter Musser, in their new automobile, c.1910
- Figure 18. View of original porte-cochere and drive, before sleeping porch was added above, 1910s
- Figure 19. Laura Musser McColm at the rear of her Mulberry Avenue residence, 1910s
- Figure 20. Laura Musser McColm outside her Mulberry Avenue residence, probably 1930s
- Figure 21. Ad for the Estey Residence Pipe Organ, 1920
- Figure 22. Program of Musicale hosted by Laura Musser McColm for the Twentieth Century Club in 1926
- Figure 23. Laura Musser McColm's musical program for a K.T.N.T. radio broadcast in 1926
- Figure 24. Laura Musser McColm and clubwomen in early Colonial American costumes, early 1930s
- Figure 25. Movie Star Reception, Twentieth Century Club Gala Day, Music Room, 1931
- Figure 26. The Laura Musser McColm property donated by heirs to the City of Muscatine in 1965 as a
- Figures 27 and 28. Views of the Dining Room in the Laura Musser Museum and Art Gallery, c.1966
- Figures 29. The Music Room as furnished by Laura Musser McColm, 1965
- Figures 30 and 31. Views outside the Carriage House, probably 1920s, with gardener and chauffeur
- Figures 32-35. Views in the Japanese Garden, 1930s
- Figures 36 and 37. Views in the Japanese Garden, 1965

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Additional

Section Documentation Page 24 Property name Laura Musser McCole Historic District

County and State Muscatine County, IA

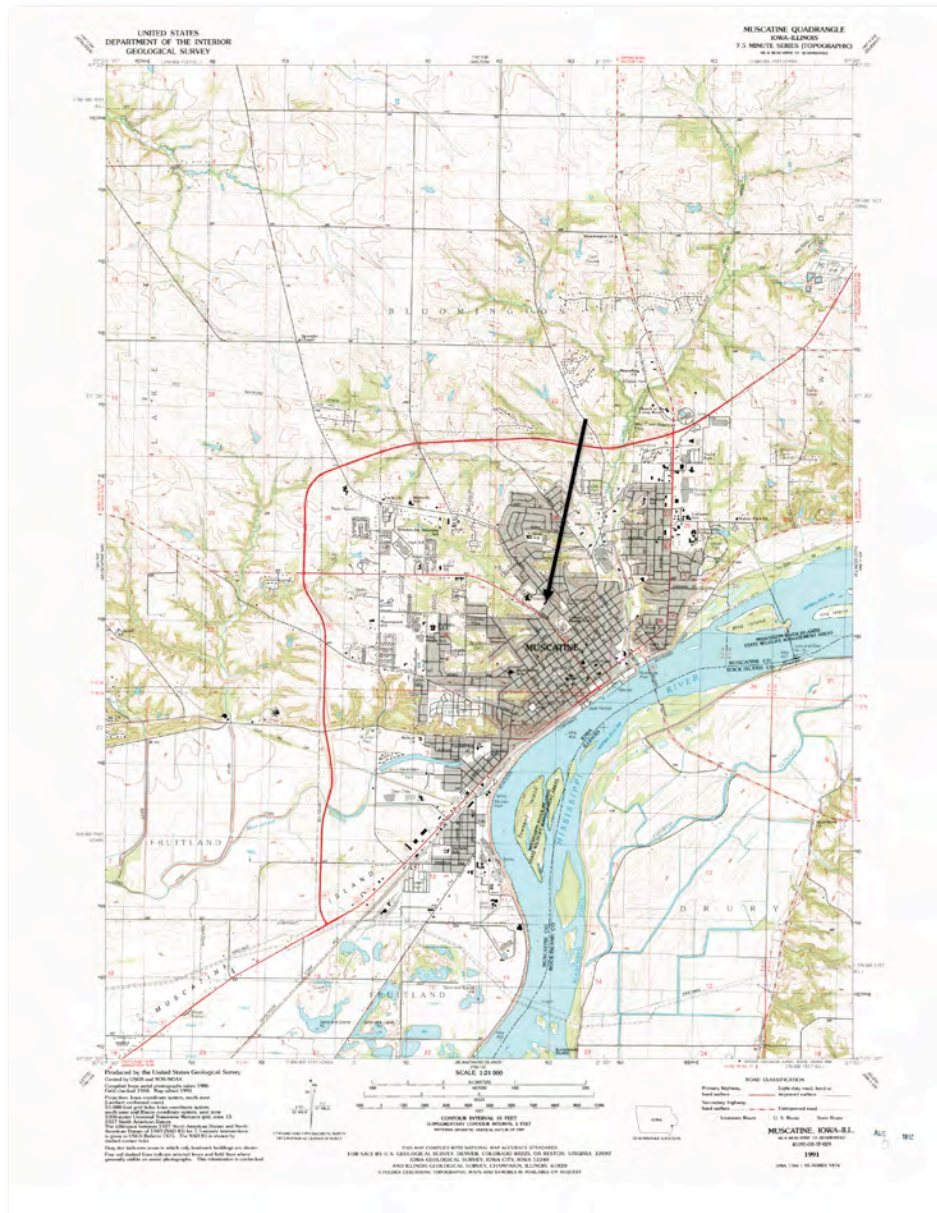


Figure 1. General location of Laura Musser McCole Historic District in Muscatine, Iowa N↑

Base map: USGS Topographical Map Muscatine Quadrangle Iowa-Illinois 7.5 Minute Series (Topographic), 1991

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Additional

**Section** Documentation **Page** 25 **Property name** Laura Musser McColm Historic District

**County and State** Muscatine County, IA



**Figure 2. Aerial view (2013) of boundary lines of Laura Musser McColm Historic District N↑**

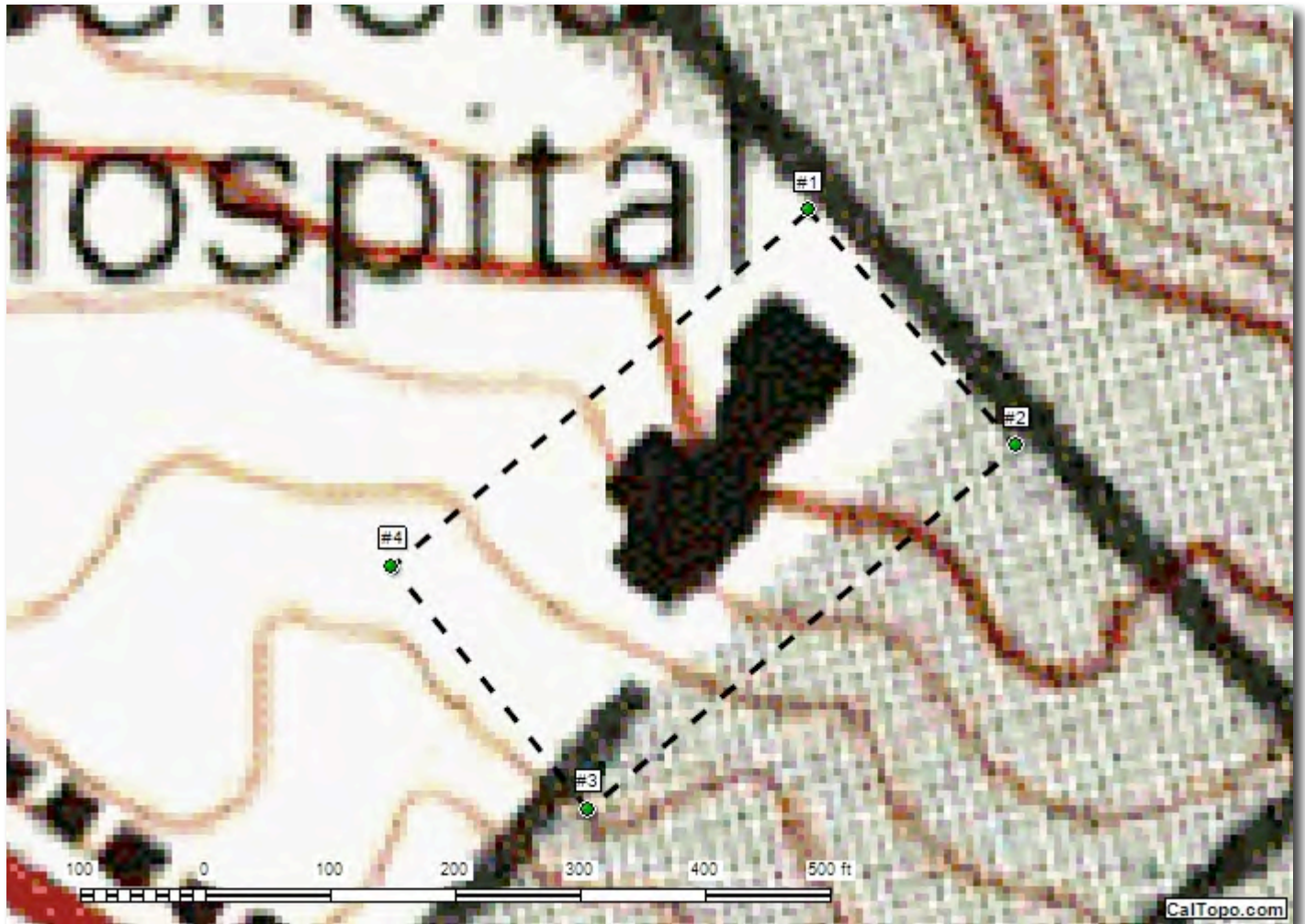
**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Additional

**Section** Documentation **Page** 26 **Property name** Laura Musser McColm Historic District

**County and State** Muscatine County, IA



**Figure 3. Boundary lines of Laura Musser McColm Historic District N↑**

Base map: USGS Topographical Map Muscatine Quadrangle Iowa-Illinois 7.5 Minute Series (Topographic),  
1991

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Additional

Section Documentation Page 27 Property name Laura Musser McColm Historic District

County and State Muscatine County, IA



Figure 4. Site Plan N↑

Base aerial view: Muscatine County Assessor website 2015

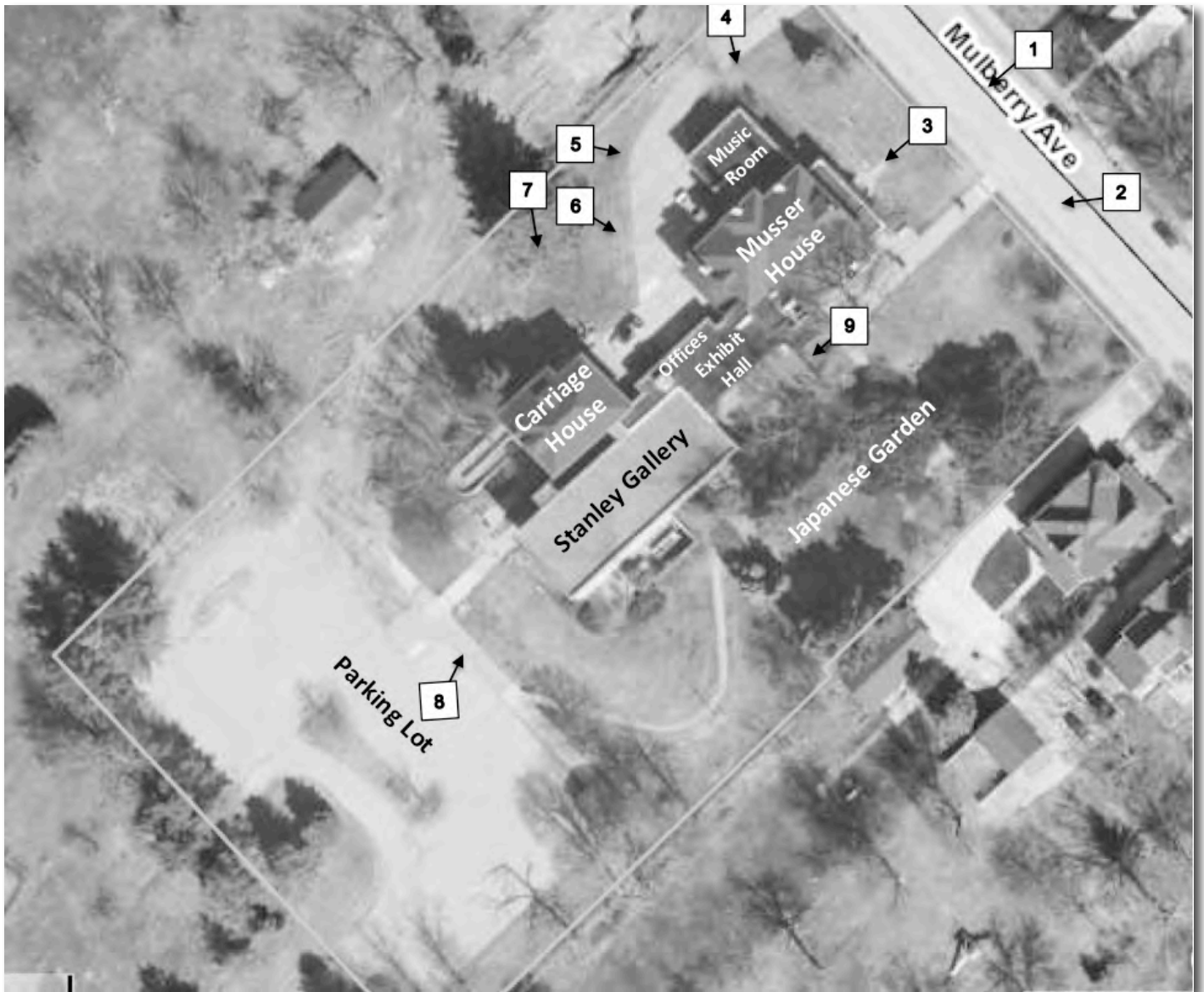
**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Additional

**Section** Documentation **Page** 28 **Property name** Laura Musser McCole Historic District

**County and State** Muscatine County, IA



**Figure 5. Site Plan and Photo Key (Photos 1 - 9) N↑**

Base aerial view: Muscatine County Assessor website 2015



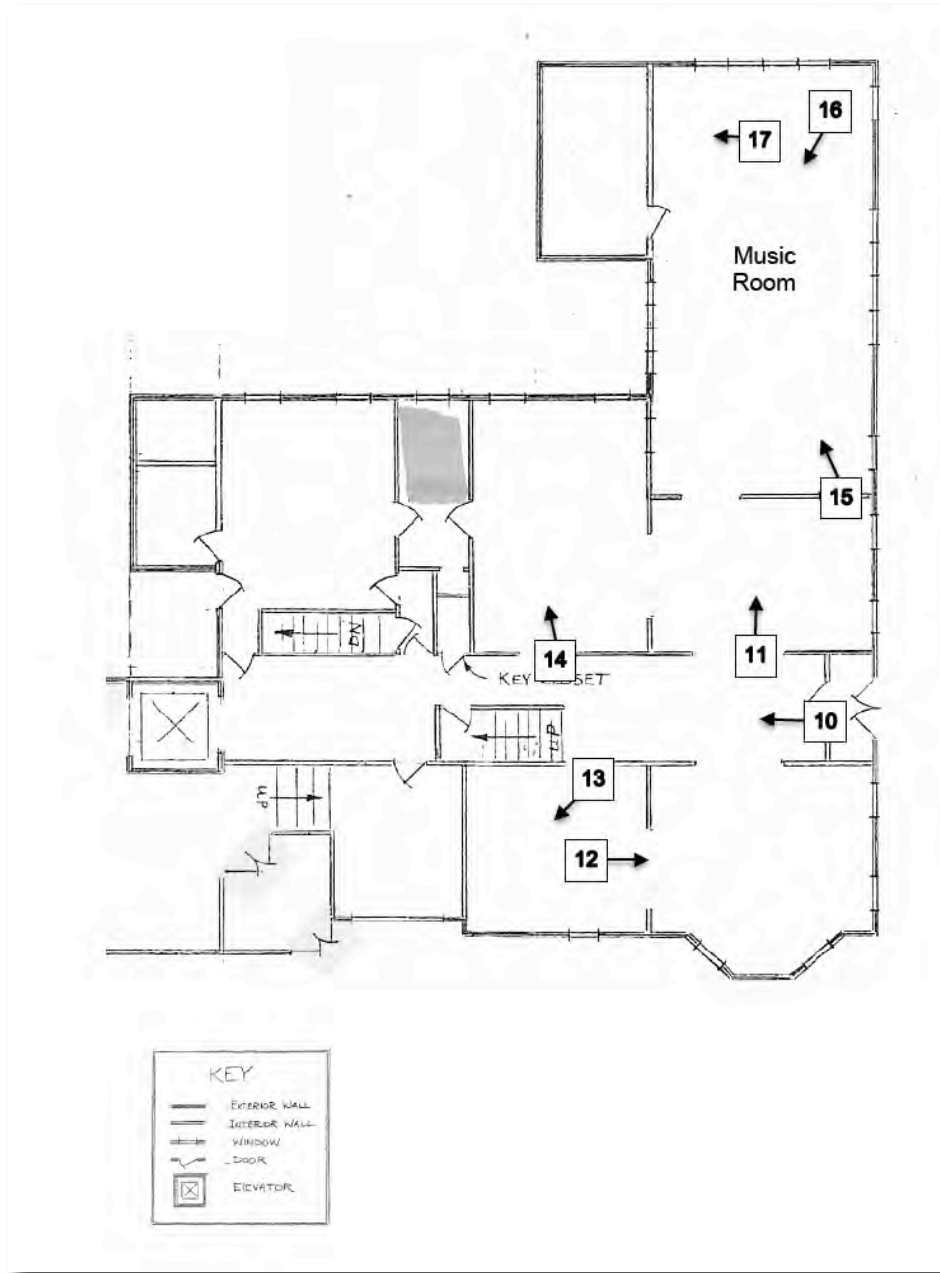
**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Additional

**Section** Documentation **Page** 29 **Property name** Laura Musser McColm Historic District

**County and State** Muscatine County, IA



**Figure 6. First Floor Plan and Photo Key (Photos 10 - 17) N↑**  
Source: Barb Veal, Stanley Consultants, 2004

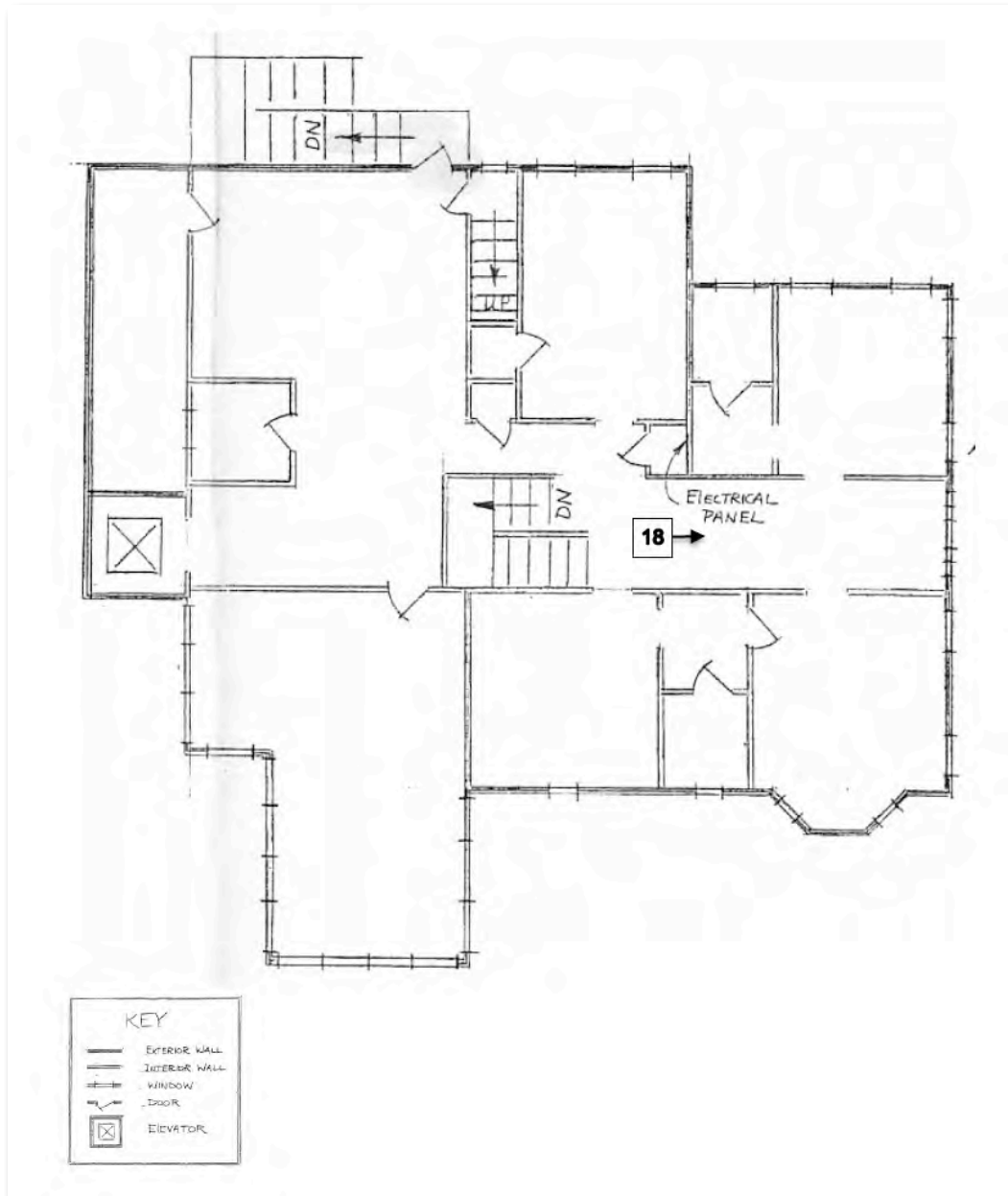
**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Additional

**Section** Documentation **Page** 30 **Property name** Laura Musser McColm Historic District

**County and State** Muscatine County, IA



**Figure 7. Second Floor Plan and Photo Key (Photo 18) N↑**

Source: Barb Veal, Stanley Consultants, 2004

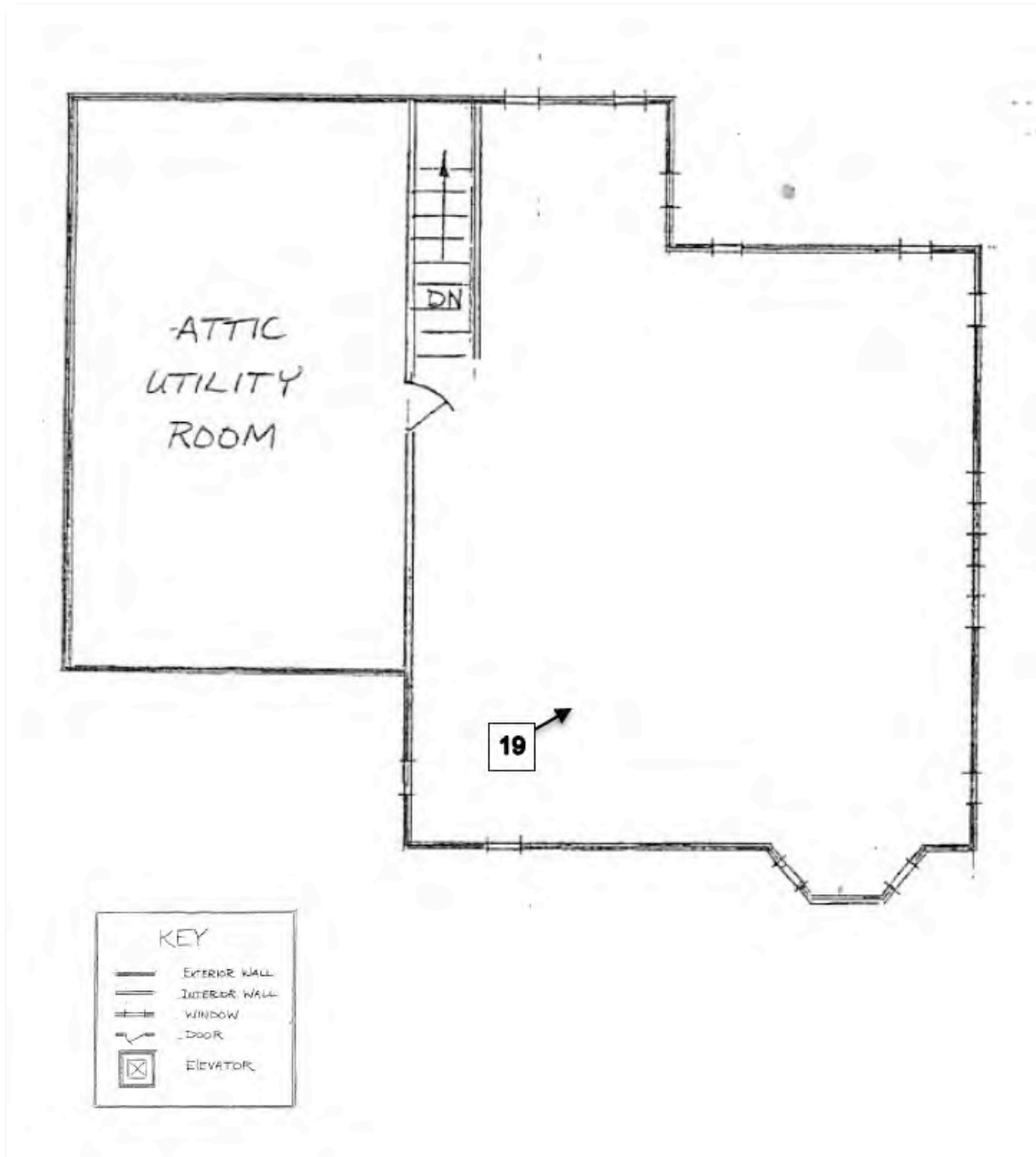
**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Additional

**Section** Documentation **Page** 31 **Property name** Laura Musser McColm Historic District

**County and State** Muscatine County, IA



**Figure 8. Attic Floor Plan and Photo Key (Photo 19) N↑**  
Source: Barb Veal, Stanley Consultants, 2004

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Additional

Section Documentation Page 32 Property name Laura Musser McColem Historic District

County and State Muscatine County, IA

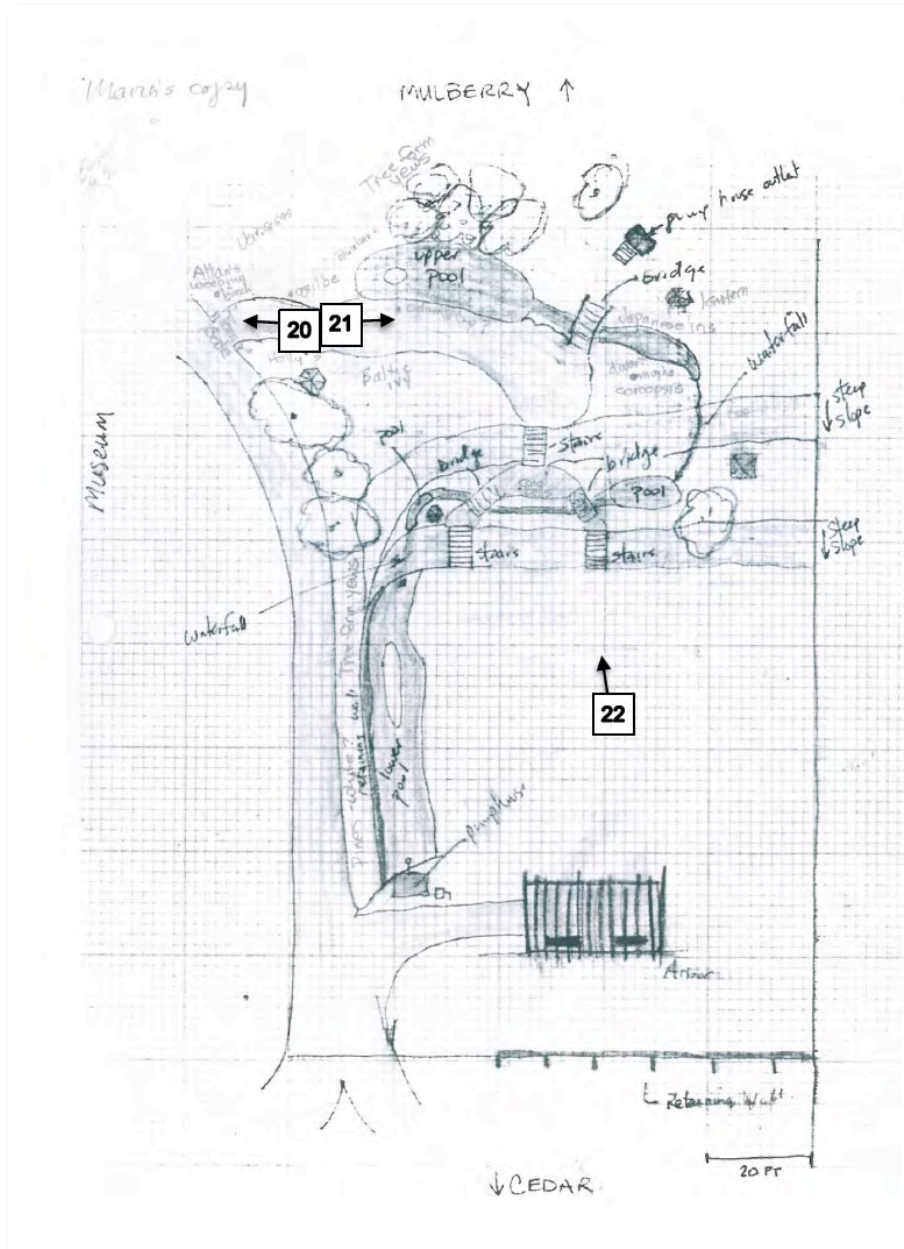


Figure 9. Sketch Map of Japanese Garden and Photo Key (Photos 20 - 22) N ←  
Source: Randy Elder, Landscape Architect, 1989

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Additional

**Section** Documentation **Page** 33 **Property name** Laura Musser McColm Historic District

**County and State** Muscatine County, IA



**Figure 10. Laura Musser McColm House soon after completion, c.1908. The figure standing at the front door is likely Peter Musser. Source: Muscatine Art Center, Muscatine, Iowa**

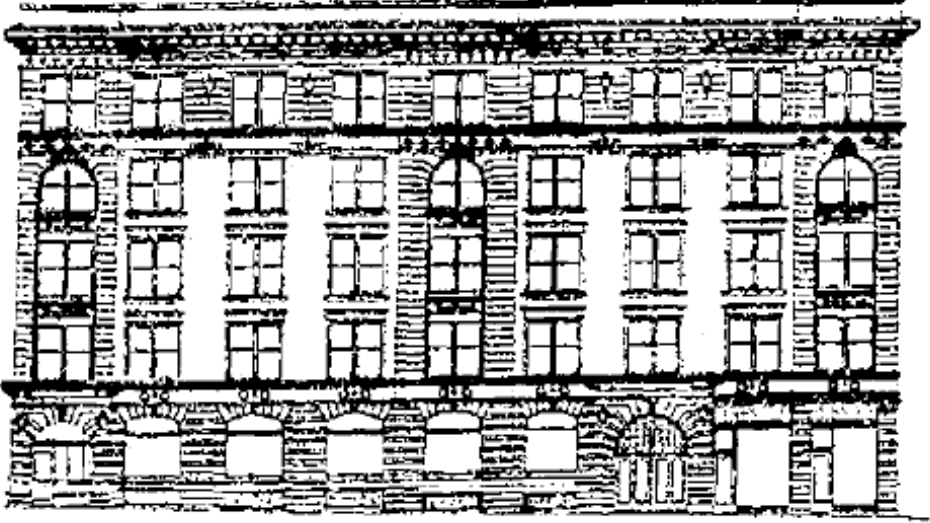
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Additional

Section Documentation Page 34 Property name Laura Musser McColem Historic District

County and State Muscatine County, IA



**Henry W. Zeidler**  
Muscatine Architect  
and Superintendent of Construction. Plans and Specifications  
furnished for any style of Building. Phone 791-J. 115 W. 7th  
St., Muscatine, Ia.

Figure 11. Advertisement for Henry W. Zeidler, Muscatine Architect, 1912  
Source: *Muscatine Journal*, December 14, 1912

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Additional

**Section** Documentation **Page** 35 **Property name** Laura Musser McColm Historic District

**County and State** Muscatine County, IA



**Figure 12. Musser McColm House with front porch screened-in, c.1910**  
Source: Muscatine Art Center, Muscatine, Iowa

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Additional

**Section** Documentation **Page** 36 **Property name** Laura Musser McColm Historic District

**County and State** Muscatine County, IA



**Figure 13. View north of Laura Musser McColm House, c.1910s. Note the barn behind the house. The extant Carriage House was built sometime before 1926.**  
Source: Muscatine Art Center, Muscatine, Iowa



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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Additional

**Section** Documentation **Page** 37 **Property name** Laura Musser McColm Historic District

**County and State** Muscatine County, IA



**Figure 14. View north of the Laura Musser McColm House, c.1925. Note the second floor sleeping porch has been built above the porte-cochere. Source: Muscatine Art Center, Muscatine, Iowa**

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Additional

**Section** Documentation **Page** 38 **Property name** Laura Musser McColm Historic District

**County and State** Muscatine County, IA



**Figure 15. 1314 Mulberry Avenue, 1926. Note the Music Room (right) and Carriage House (left). Source: Muscatine Art Center, Muscatine, Iowa**

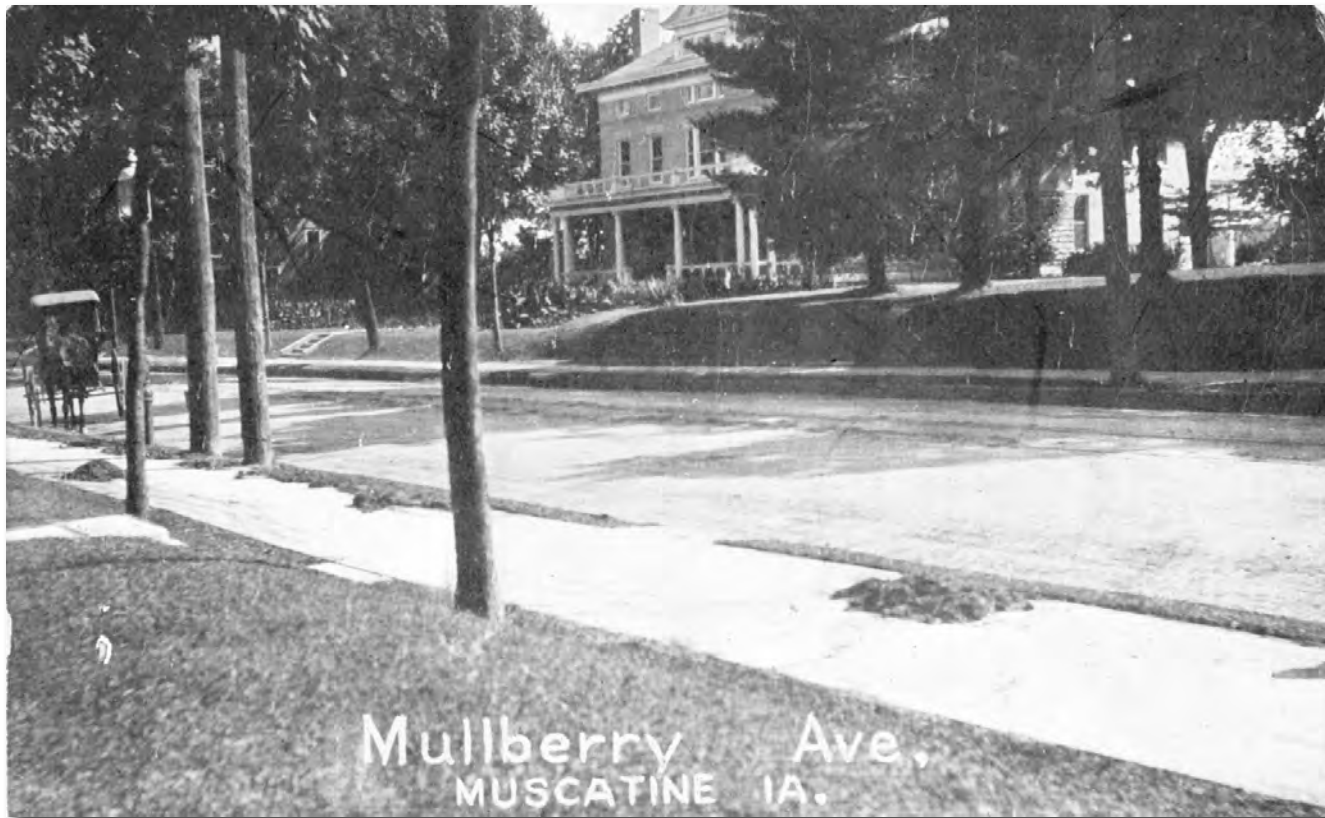
**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Additional

**Section** Documentation **Page** 39 **Property name** Laura Musser McColm Historic District

**County and State** Muscatine County, IA



**Figure 16. Postcard view south of "Mulberry Ave., Muscatine IA," c.1910s, showing the Laura Musser McColm House before the Music Room addition. Source: Muscatine Art Center, Muscatine, Iowa**

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Additional

Section Documentation Page 40 Property name Laura Musser McCole Historic District

County and State Muscatine County, IA



**Figure 17. Laura Musser McCole with her father, Peter Musser, in their new automobile at the rear of the Mulberry Avenue residence, c.1910. The photo was taken by Oscar Grossheim, Muscatine photographer. Source: Muscatine Art Center, Muscatine, Iowa**

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Additional

**Section** Documentation **Page** 41 **Property name** Laura Musser McCole Historic District

**County and State** Muscatine County, IA



**Figure 18. View of original porte-cochere and drive before sleeping porch was added above, early 1910s.**  
Source: Muscatine Art Center, Muscatine, Iowa

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Additional

**Section** Documentation **Page** 42 **Property name** Laura Musser McColm Historic District

**County and State** Muscatine County, IA

---

---



**Figure 19. Laura Musser McColm at the rear of her Mulberry Avenue residence, c.1910s**  
Source: Muscatine Art Center, Muscatine, Iowa

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Additional

**Section** Documentation **Page** 43 **Property name** Laura Musser McColm Historic District

**County and State** Muscatine County, IA

---

---



**Figure 20. Laura Musser McColm outside her Mulberry Avenue residence, c.1930.**  
Source: Muscatine Art Center, Muscatine, Iowa

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Additional

Section Documentation Page 44 Property name Laura Musser McCole Historic District

County and State Muscatine County, IA

August, 1920 COUNTRY LIFE 77



**THE ESTEY RESIDENCE PIPE ORGAN**

All the pleasure you are able to get out of music is deepened by hearing that music played on the pipe organ. And all that pleasure is enhanced when the pipe organ is your own, installed in your home, to be played at your command. It gives from its tremendous storehouse of harmonies as easily as the simplest music box. But the music it gives is the music of orchestras, played only as orchestras can play it, for the organ is really an orchestra. Its sets of pipes are each a separate instrument, the mingling of which under the leadership of a skillful conductor is what makes the symphony orchestra what it is.

The Estey Perforated Rolls give you the skillful conducting, and the Estey Organ gives you the orchestra's instruments.

THE ESTEY ORGAN COMPANY, BRATTLEBORO, VERMONT;  
Studios in New York, 11 West 40th Street; Philadelphia, 1701 Walnut Street; Chicago, Lyon & Healy; Boston, 120 Boylston Street; Los Angeles, 633 South Hill Street.

Digitized by Google

Figure 21. Ad for the Estey Residence Pipe Organ, 1920. Laura Musser McCole ordered one for herself at a cost of \$10,500. The new Music Room was built in 1922 to house the pipe organ. Source: *Country Life* (August 1920)



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Additional

Section Documentation Page 45 Property name Laura Musser McColm Historic District

County and State Muscatine County, IA

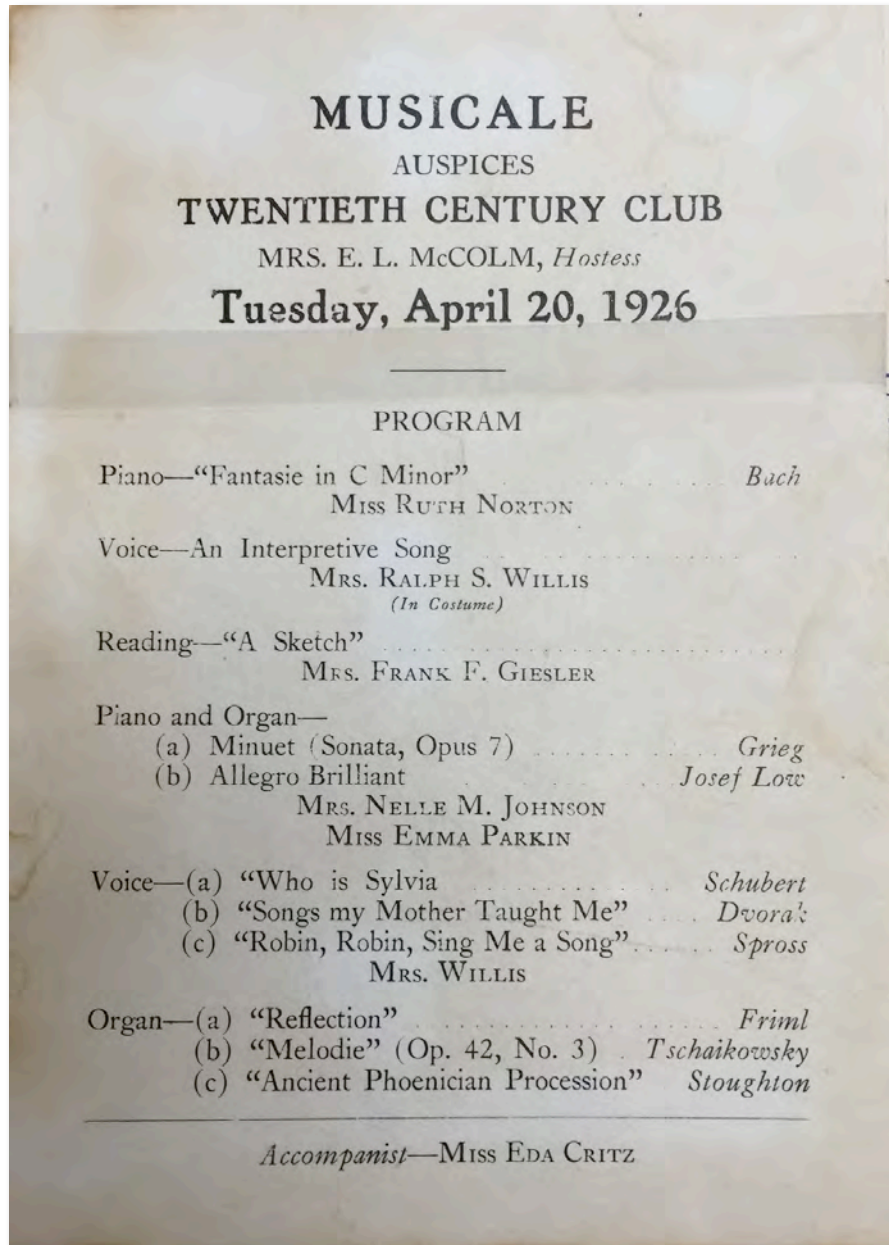


Figure 22. Program of Musicale hosted by Laura Musser McColm at her residence for fellow members of the Twentieth Century Club in 1926. The musical program was typical for Musser McColm's club meetings, which took place in the Music Room. Source: Muscatine Art Center Archives

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Additional

Section Documentation Page 46 Property name Laura Musser McColm Historic District

County and State Muscatine County, IA

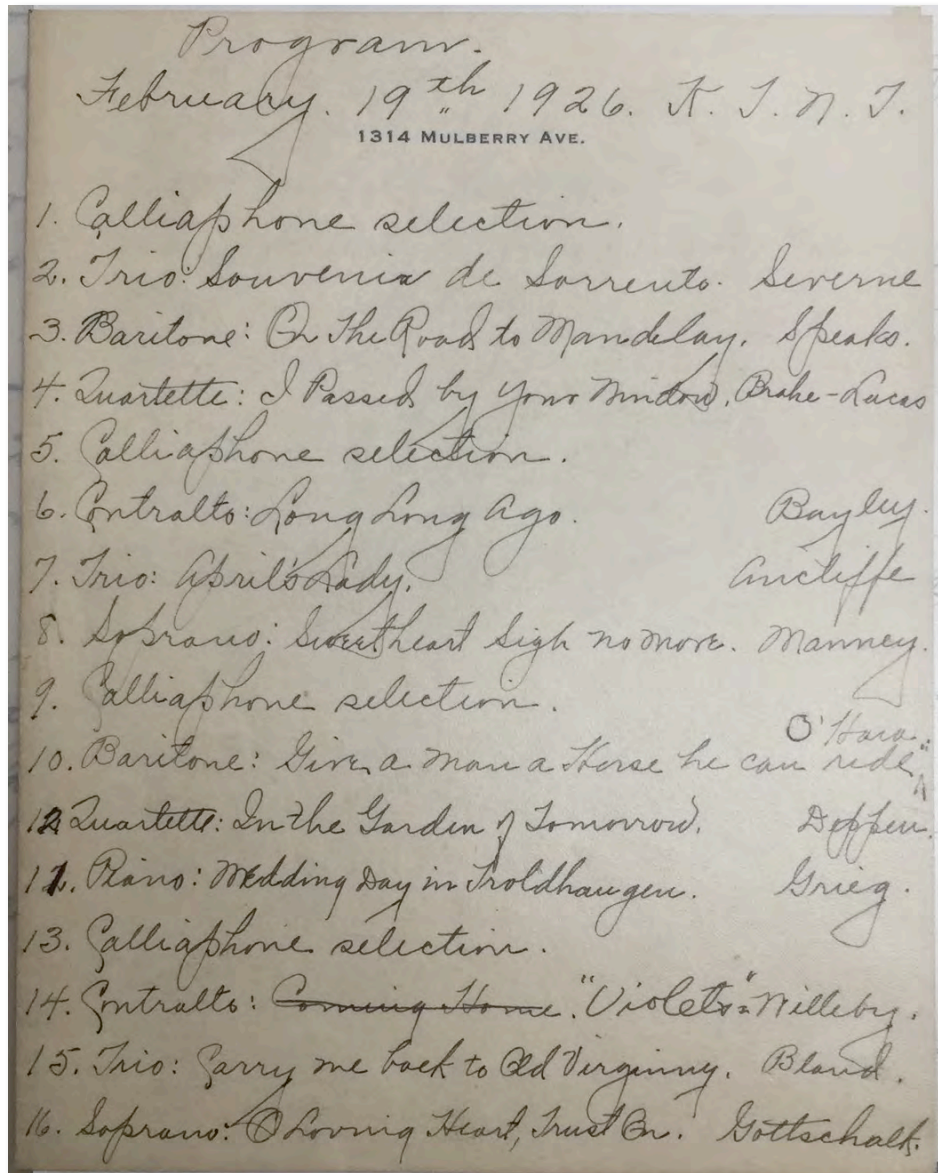


Figure 23. Laura Musser McColm's musical program for a K.T.N.T. radio broadcast in 1926. K.T.N.T. was Muscatine's first radio station. According to one of her former maids, Elizabeth Carlson, Musser McColm's weekly singing lessons were also often broadcast over the radio. Source: Muscatine Art Center Archives

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Additional

**Section** Documentation **Page** 47 **Property name** Laura Musser McColm Historic District

**County and State** Muscatine County, IA



**Figure 24. Laura Musser McColm and two fellow clubwomen dressed in early Colonial American costumes at a club meeting in the Music Room, early 1930s**

Source: Muscatine Art Center, Muscatine, Iowa

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Additional

Section Documentation Page 48 Property name Laura Musser McColm Historic District

County and State Muscatine County, IA



Figure 25. Laura Musser McColm and fellow members pose as Hollywood stars of the era in the Music Room during the Twentieth Century Club's Annual Gala Day, 1931. Laura Musser McColm, dressed as Bebe Daniels, is standing at far right. Photo by J.A. Chamberlin. Source: Muscatine Art Center, Muscatine, Iowa

**Top Row**

Mrs. Frank Giesler as Tom Mix (Silent & Western Film Star)  
Mrs. Frank Drake as Marion Davies (Silent & Sound Film Star)  
Mrs. Webster Hakes as Mary Arden (Silent & Sound Film Star)  
Mrs. Charles Hendriks as John Barrymore (Theater, Silent & Sound Film Star)  
Mrs. Harriet Heidel as Ramon Navarro (Silent Film Star)  
Mrs. Harriet Randall as Pauline Fredericks (Silent & Sound Star)  
Mrs. C.C. Hakes as Ruth Chatterton (Broadway & Film Star)

**Second Row**

Mrs. J.E. Hoopes as Emily Fitzroy (Film Star)  
Mrs. R.S. Willis as Clara Bow (Silent & Sound Film Star)  
Mrs. J.T. Martin as Mary Pickford (Silent Film Star)  
Mrs. C.H. Young as Zasu Pitts (Silent & Sound Film Star)  
Mrs. Emma Parlan as Louise Fazenda (Silent & Sound Film Star)  
Mrs. Ralph Reuling as Richard Dix (Silent & Sound Film Star)

**Third Row**

Mrs. E. C. Nichols as Billie Dove, Bessie Love (Silent & Sound Film Star)  
Mrs. Fred Beach as Dorothy Gish (Silent & Sound Film Star)  
Mrs. Elmer Steinmetz as a Theater Page  
Mrs. E. W. Smith as Lewis Stone (Silent & Sound Film Star)  
Mrs. Robert Thompson as Mary Carr (Silent & Sound Film Star)  
Mrs. William McQuesten as Charles Chaplin (Producer, Director, Composer, Silent Film Star)  
Mrs. W. R. Votaw as Colleen Moore (Silent Film Star)  
Mrs. Raymond Titus as Polly Moran (Silent & Sound Film Star)  
Mrs. F. H. Little as Douglas Fairbanks (Producer, Director, Screenwriter)  
**Mrs. E. L. McColm as Bebe Daniels (Theater, Radio, and Silent Film Star)**

**Front Row (seated)**

Mrs. Will Downer as Lillian Gish (Theater, Silent & Sound Film Star)  
Mrs. Austin Hoopes as Richard Barthelmess (Silent & Sound Film Star)  
Mrs. Millar Riggs as Ethel Wales (Silent & Sound Film Star)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Additional

Section Documentation Page 49 Property name Laura Musser McCole Historic District

County and State Muscatine County, IA



City's New Museum and Art Gallery

The former McCole mansion on Mulberry Avenue has been given to the city of Muscatine by the estate of the late Laura Musser McCole Jenkins. The building is being remodelled, and will open to the

public in the Spring of 1966 as the Laura Musser Art Gallery and Museum. The large music room, containing a grand piano and an electric organ, extends to the right toward the camera. (Journal Photo)

Figure 26. The Laura Musser McCole property was donated by her heirs to the City of Muscatine in 1965 as a museum and art gallery. The Laura Musser Museum and Art Gallery opened to the public in 1966.

Source: *Muscatine Journal*, December 30, 1965

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Additional

**Section** Documentation **Page** 50 **Property name** Laura Musser McCole Historic District

**County and State** Muscatine County, IA



**Figures 27 and 28. Views of the Dining Room in the Laura Musser Museum and Art Gallery not long after opening, c.1966. Source: Muscatine Art Center, Muscatine, Iowa**

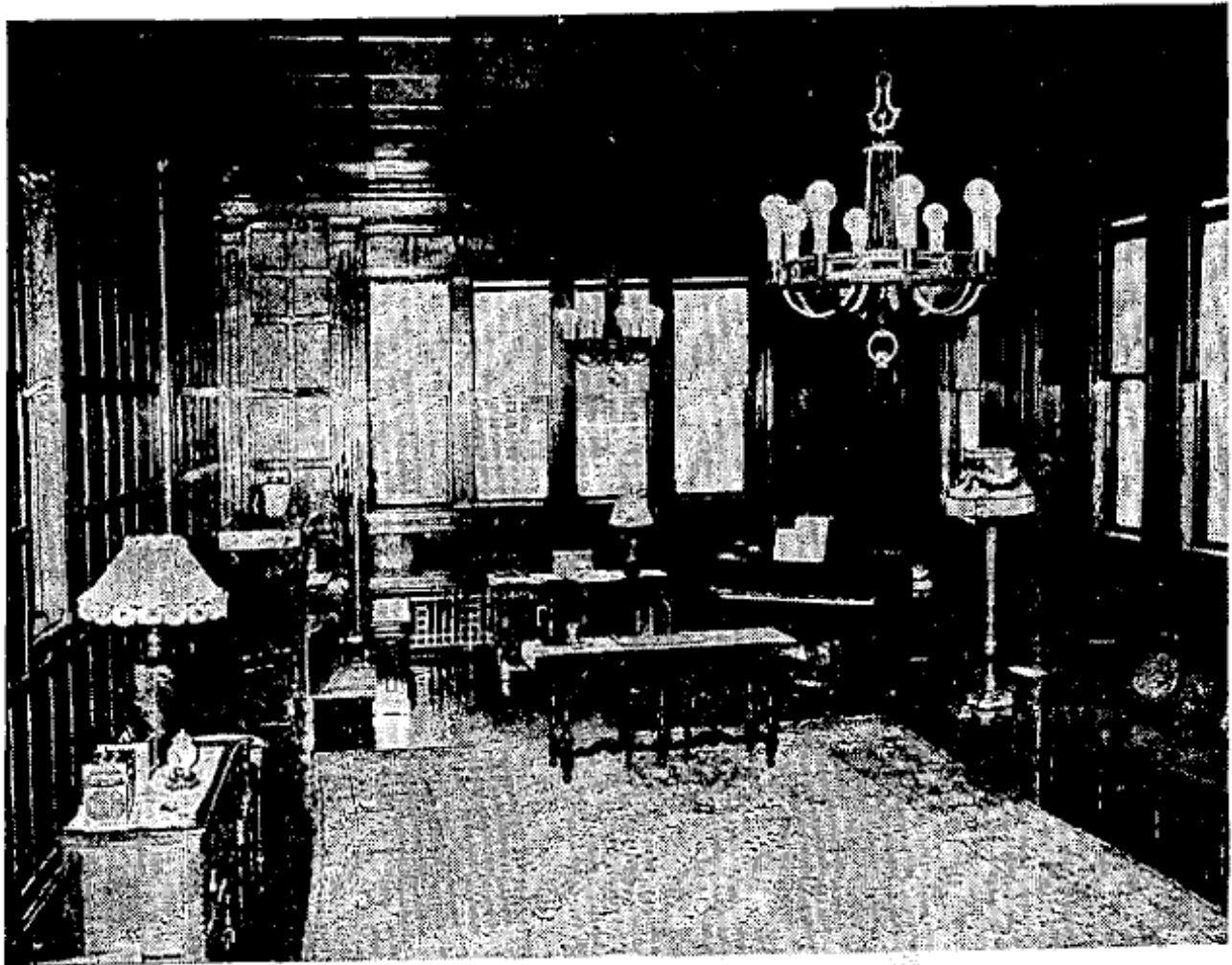


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Additional

Section Documentation Page 51 Property name Laura Musser McColm Historic District  
County and State Muscatine County, IA



**Museum's Large Music Room**

The music room of the museum will be air conditioned. The Estey player pipe organ will be reconditioned. Both the organ and Steinway grand piano will be available for use at

concerts and recitals. Lectures and board meetings will also be held there. Drapes will be hung at the windows and submerged flood lights will be installed in the ceiling.

Figure 29. The Music Room as furnished by Laura Musser McColm, 1965, and soon to be open as part of the Laura Musser Museum and Art Gallery. Source: *Muscatine Journal*, December 30, 1965

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Additional

**Section** Documentation **Page** 52 **Property name** Laura Musser McColm Historic District

**County and State** Muscatine County, IA

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**Figures 30 and 31. Views outside the Carriage House, probably 1920s, with gardener and chauffeur**  
Source: Muscatine Art Center, Muscatine, Iowa





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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Additional

**Section** Documentation **Page** 53 **Property name** Laura Musser McColm Historic District

**County and State** Muscatine County, IA

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**Figures 32-35. Views in the Japanese Garden, probably 1930s**  
Source: Muscatine Art Center, Muscatine, Iowa



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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Additional

**Section** Documentation **Page** 54 **Property name** Laura Musser McColm Historic District

**County and State** Muscatine County, IA



**Figures 36 and 37. Views in Japanese Garden, 1966**  
Source: Muscatine Art Center, Muscatine, Iowa







MUSCINE  
ART  
CENTER

1000 W. 10th St.









































WOODS MUSEUM







UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 12/9/2016      Date of Pending List: 1/11/2017      Date of 16th Day: 1/26/2017      Date of 45th Day: 1/24/2017      Date of Weekly List: 2/1/2017

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept       Return       Reject      1/24/2017 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria

Reviewer Edson Beall      Discipline Historian

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_      Date \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION:    see attached comments : No    see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF  
CULTURAL AFFAIRS

MARY COWNE, DIRECTOR  
JAMES KRAMEL, DEPUTY DIRECTOR

TERRY E. BRANSFORD, GOVERNOR  
KIM REYNOLDS, LT. GOVERNOR



December 7, 2016

J. Paul Loether, Deputy Keeper and Chief  
National Register and National Historic Landmarks  
1201 Eye St. NW, 8th Fl.  
Washington D.C. 20005

Dear Mr. Loether:

The following National Register nomination(s) from Iowa are enclosed for your review and listing if acceptable.

- Laura Musser McColm Historic District, 1314 Mulberry Avenue, Muscatine, Muscatine County

Please add the enclosed flash drive to the previously sent Wahington and Elizabeth Miller Tract Center-Soll Community Historic District, Des Moines, Polk County nomination

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elizabeth Foster".

Elizabeth Foster  
National Register Coordinator  
State Historical Society of Iowa