

Form 10-300
(Dec. 1968)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Massachusetts	
COUNTY: Berkshire	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: "The Mount"
AND/OR HISTORIC: Edith Wharton Estate

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
CITY OR TOWN: Lenox
STATE: Massachusetts CODE: COUNTY: Berkshire CODE:

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)		OWNERSHIP			STATUS		ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC	
District <input type="checkbox"/>	Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Public <input type="checkbox"/>	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/>	Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>			
Site <input type="checkbox"/>	Structure <input type="checkbox"/>	Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	In Process <input type="checkbox"/>	Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/>	Restricted <input type="checkbox"/>			
Object <input type="checkbox"/>		Both <input type="checkbox"/>	Being Considered <input type="checkbox"/>	Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/>	Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/>			
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)								
Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/>	Government <input type="checkbox"/>	Park <input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation <input type="checkbox"/>	Comments <input type="checkbox"/>				
Commercial <input type="checkbox"/>	Industrial <input type="checkbox"/>	Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Specify) <input type="checkbox"/>	_____				
Educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Military <input type="checkbox"/>	Religious <input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____				
Entertainment <input type="checkbox"/>	Museum <input type="checkbox"/>	Scientific <input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____				

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNERS NAME: Mrs. Thomas Mumford, Headmistress
STREET AND NUMBER: Foxhollow School for Girls
CITY OR TOWN: Lenox STATE: Massachusetts CODE:

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Registry of Deeds, Berkshire County Superior Court
STREET AND NUMBER:
CITY OR TOWN: Pittsfield STATE: Massachusetts CODE:
APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 100

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
STREET AND NUMBER:
CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

STATE:
COUNTY:
ENTRY NUMBER
DATE
FOR NPS USE ONLY

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Fair <input type="checkbox"/>	Deteriorated <input type="checkbox"/>	Ruins <input type="checkbox"/>	Unexposed <input type="checkbox"/>
INTEGRITY	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	Altered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Unaltered <input type="checkbox"/>		Moved <input type="checkbox"/>	Original Site <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Edith Wharton's estate, "The Mount," is accessible through a gateway at the south side of Plunkett Street, about five hundred feet east of its intersection with Route 1. Near the gate, and to the east of the driveway, is the gatehouse, a three-bay, two-story, stucco building with a hipped roof and a central chimney. The central bay projects from the facade and has a cross gable roof with a circular window in its pediment. Below is a single-story entrance porch with a gable roof and four Roman Doric columns. About 700-feet south of the gatehouse is a one-and-a-half-story, white stucco stable. This building has two cupolas and rises to two full stories at the center of the south elevation, where there is a projecting section with an arched facade and a wide arched doorway.

"The Mount" itself is approximately a thousand feet south of the stable. It is a large white stucco house, built in the style of Christopher Wren. It has quoins, a modified hipped roof, a deck formed by placing a railing between the four interior chimneys, and a central cupola. The main entrance is in the west elevation, which faces a court surrounded by a high brick wall, a section of which has recently collapsed. The main section's west elevation has three-and-a-half stories, seven bays, and a central doorway. The two bays at the north and south ends are set in projections which have hipped roofs and single dormers with hipped roofs. Over the central bay of the elevation is a dormer with an arched roof, flanked by two dormers which have gable roofs. Unlike the other windows of this elevation, the central three windows of the second floor are arched. To the south of the main section is a three-story, four bay wing with an interior chimney. On this elevation, the wing has a single story porch with four square columns.

The east elevation of the main section faces a raised terrace and hence has only two-and-a-half floors. This elevation has nine bays, with French windows on the first floor. The three central bays are set close together in a projection with a cross gable roof and an oval window in its pediment. Flanking this are a pair of bays with gabled dormers. On each end of the main facade is a two-bay projection with a hipped roof and a single dormer. To the east and south of the house is a terraced formal garden.

The main doorway, in the ground floor of the west elevation, is flanked by engaged, rusticated Roman Doric columns, and has silver handles. It leads into a lateral entrance hall, in which is a statue set in an arched niche. To the left is a cloak room, and to the right is a stair hall, beyond which is a hydraulic elevator. From the stair hall, a door leads south into a section of the house containing the main (disused) kitchen and various service rooms.

On the first floor, over the entrance hall, is a lateral foyer with an arched ceiling. To the east of this is a large drawing room with an elaborately moulded ceiling, and a brown marble mantle with an ornamental iron panel in the rear of the fireplace. A set of French chairs, and the tapestries on the north and south walls, are said to date from the Wharton's residency.

(continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Pre-Columbian 16th Century 18th Century 20th Century
 15th Century 17th Century 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Aboriginal	Education <input type="checkbox"/>	Political <input type="checkbox"/>	Urban Planning <input type="checkbox"/>
Prehistoric <input type="checkbox"/>	Engineering <input type="checkbox"/>	Religion/Philosophy <input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Specify) <input type="checkbox"/>
Historic <input type="checkbox"/>	Industry <input type="checkbox"/>	Science <input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Agriculture <input type="checkbox"/>	Invention <input type="checkbox"/>	Sculpture <input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Art <input type="checkbox"/>	Landscape <input type="checkbox"/>	Social/Humanitarian <input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Commerce <input type="checkbox"/>	Architecture <input type="checkbox"/>	Theater <input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Communications <input type="checkbox"/>	Literature <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Transportation <input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Conservation <input type="checkbox"/>	Military <input type="checkbox"/>		_____
	Music <input type="checkbox"/>		_____

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Include Personages, Dates, Events, Etc.)

Edith Wharton was one of the finest American novelists of the early twentieth century. She observed her own exclusive milieu without illusion, and described it with an honesty which makes her best works "a clear mirror of the age /which/ will hold a permanent place in our literature."¹ But Mrs. Wharton was more than an analyst of polite society, as attested by her famous novel Ethan Frome, a stark tale of rural New England. Her artistic dedication and technical skill were such that in her later life she came to stand at "the head of the realistic novelists of the older generation..."²

"The Mount," which survives in relatively unchanged condition, was of central importance to Mrs. Wharton's career. Several of her best books were written during the period when she spent much of each year there. One of her biographers has called the estate "both physically and symbolically, the climactic peak for both the /social and literary/ lives of Edith Wharton."³ In later years, the novelist herself wrote: "The Mount was my first home, and though it is nearly 20 years since I last saw it (for I was too happy there ever to want to revisit it as a stranger) its blessed influence still lives in me."⁴

Biography

Edith Wharton was born in New York City on January 24, 1862. Her childhood was, in her own words, "safe, guarded, and monotonous."⁵ She was carefully groomed by tutors and governesses for the refined, patrician life of her family, which boasted three centuries of New World ancestry. They lived fashionably, traveling throughout Europe and maintaining several residences in this country. Her Pulitzer prize winning book, The Age of Innocence (1920), draws heavily on memories of this period.

1. Thorp, p. 19
2. Millett, p. 24
3. Kellogg, p. 88.
4. Wharton, p. 125
5. Wharton, , quoted by Kunitz, p. 1504

(Continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bell, Millicent, Edith Wharton and Henry James, N.Y.: George Briziller, 1905
 Kellogg, Grace, The Two Lives of Edith Wharton, N.Y.: Appelton-Century, 1965
 Kunitz and Haycroft, ed.s, Twentieth Century American Authors, New York:
 H. W. Wilson Company, 1942, pp. 1503-1505.
 Millett, Fred B., Contemporary American Authors, N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace and
 Company, 1940, pp. 24-25, 66, 86-87, 633-639.
 Thorp, Willard, American Writing in the Twentieth Century, Harvard University
 Press, 1963.
 Wharton, Edith, A Backward Glance, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN ONE ACRE		
CORNER	LATITUDE			LATITUDE		LONGITUDE
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	42 °	20'	09"	73 °	17'	18 "
NE	42 °	20'	09"	73 °	16'	31 "
SE	42 °	19'	48"	73 °	16'	31 "
SW	42 °	19'	48"	73 °	17'	18 "

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Edmund Preston, Historian, and Christopher Redburn, Assistant

ORGANIZATION **Division of History, Office of Archeology and
 Historic Preservation, National Park Service** DATE **June 17, 1971**

STREET AND NUMBER:
801 - 19th Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington,** STATE **D.C.** CODE

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION **NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

<p>As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Title _____</p> <p>Date _____</p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p>_____ <i>Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</i></p> <p>Date _____</p> <p>ATTEST:</p> <p>_____ <i>Keeper of The National Register</i></p> <p>Date _____</p>
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Massachusetts	
COUNTY	
Berkshire	
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ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

7. Description: (1) "The Mount" (Edith Wharton Estate)

To the south of the drawing room is the dining room with two original paintings set in its paneling. Beyond this room is a newer kitchen and five related chambers. A door at the north end of the foyer leads into Edith Wharton's writing room, which is connected by a disused "hidden" door with the library at the northeast corner of the house. The library has wood paneling rising to the ceiling and shelves on three walls. A wood relief coat of arms hangs over the marble mantle.

The second floor has a lateral hall and four bedrooms. Opposite the northeast bedroom, said to have been Mrs. Wharton's, is a boudoir containing paintings similar to those in the dining room. The wing on this floor contains the butler's room, a servants' sitting room, and several smaller rooms. The third floor has seven bedrooms, another servants' sitting room, and a storage room.

Sources differ as to the exact dates of Edith Wharton's association with "The Mount." The house was built for the Whartons either in 1901 or 1902.¹ Mrs. Wharton lived here from June to December until about 1909, and then used it less frequently until she sold it at the time of her divorce in 1913.² According to one source, she spent only her summers here after 1906.³

It is not known who bought the property in 1913. Perhaps it was a family named Shattuck, who are known to have sold it in 1938 to Louise D. Vananda. "The Mount" was bought by its present owner, Foxhollow School for Girls, in 1941 or 1942. The main house is used as a dormitory, and the gatehouse and stable as residences for employees.

The historic area of the property comprises approximately 100 acres. Its boundaries are as follows: from the intersection of Route 1 and Plunkett Street, west along Plunkett Street to its intersection with the estate's property line; south and then east along the property line to Laurel Lake Road; south along Laurel Lake Road to its intersection with the unnamed road leading toward "The Mount;" from this point, due west to Route 1; north along Route 1 to its intersection with Plunkett Street.

Changes to "The Mount" since the time of Mrs. Wharton's residency include: the addition of a staircase between the north ends of the second and third floors; the placement of two fire escapes on the east facade, and

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1. Bell, p. 78, says 1901; Kellogg, p. 87, says 1902.
 2. Kellogg, p. 195.
 3. Kunitz, pp. 1503-1505.

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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Massachusetts	
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7. Description: (2) "The Mount" (Edith Wharton Estate)

the modification of two dormers to provide emergency doorways; the filling in of a pool in the northern part of the garden, and the removal of a dolphin statue which it contained to a more southerly pool. The house is maintained in good condition, and has a high degree of historical integrity.

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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Massachusetts	
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(Number all entries)

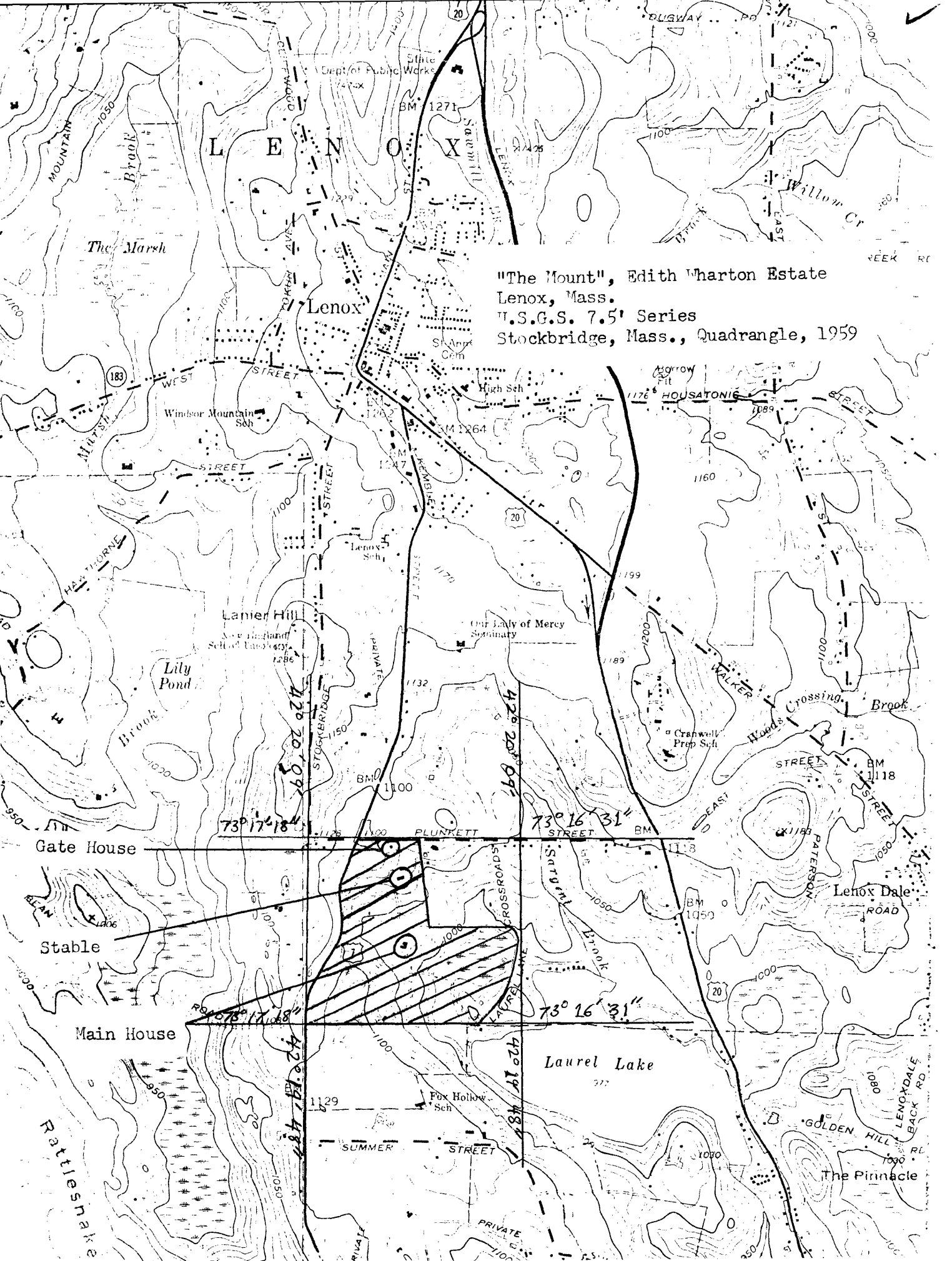
8. Significance: (1) "The Mount" (Edith Wharton Estate)

She married Edward Wharton, A Bostonian of similar background, in 1885. They lived in New York, Newport, and then Lenox, Massachusetts, when not traveling. In 1889 her first poem was published in Scribner's Magazine, and in 1899 The Greater Inclination, a collection of short stories, appeared. Her first popular success was a novel, House of Mirth published in 1905. The next year she moved to Paris, although she continued to summer at "The Mount" in Lenox. Her most famous work, Ethan Frome (1911), is set in an area much like the hilly region surrounding Lenox.

Henry James, whom she met during this time, had a large influence on her work, and they were close personal friends until his death. She inherited from James a highly refined idea of the nature and purpose of art, and they shared a preoccupation with the development and resolution of moral problems in their work.

In 1913, she divorced her husband and settled permanently in Europe. During World War I, she organized and supported large refugee-care centers and was heavily involved in other philanthropic efforts. She returned to the United States only once before her death in France in 1937. In an introduction to Edith Wharton's autobiography, A Backward Glance, Louis Auchincloss writes, "In short her life was a revolution against the idea that a lady should be in everything a mere amateur. Mrs. Wharton was always determined to be surrounded with a beautiful world, even if she had to build it herself."⁶

6. Wharton, p. Viii



"The Mount", Edith Wharton Estate
Lenox, Mass.
U.S.G.S. 7.5' Series
Stockbridge, Mass., Quadrangle, 1959

L E N O X

Lenox

Lanier Hill

Laurel Lake

The Pinnacle

Gate House

Stable

Main House

Rattlesnake

Dept of Public Works

Silice Works

BM 1271

St Ann's Cem

High Sch

Lenox Sch

Our Lady of Mercy Seminary

St Ann's Cem

High Sch

Lenox Sch

Our Lady of Mercy Seminary

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