

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

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received Feb 11 1986  
date entered MAR 13 1986

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Christopher Todd House

and/or common Elm Springs (preferred)

**2. Location**

street & number Mooresville Pike

N/A not for publication

city, town Columbia X vicinity of

state Tennessee code 047 county Maury code 119

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Fred H. Gillham, Sr.

street & number Route 6 Box 62

city, town Columbia X vicinity of

state Tennessee 38401

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Maury County Courthouse

street & number Public Square

city, town Columbia

state Tennessee

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Maury County Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1983 - 1985  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Tennessee Historical Commission

city, town Nashville

state Tennessee

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Elm Springs, built by Nathan Vaught in 1837, is a large 2½ story brick house on the Mooresville Pike south of Columbia (pop. 26,571), Maury County, Tennessee. Elm Springs is a local adaptation of the Greek Revival style which prevailed in the area in the 1830s. The three bay central passage house, built of light brown brick laid in Flemish bond, sits on a limestone foundation and is topped by a side gable roof of tin shingles. A low 1½ story ell section containing the original kitchen and smokehouse, is located at the north side of the residence. The interior retains many original elements, including paneled doors and fluted window trim, while the central hall is one of the larger halls in the area. Elm Springs has been altered very little and retains most of its original features. The Todd and Looney family cemetery is located south of the house and is included within the boundaries of the nominated property.

The main facade faces east towards the Mooresville Pike. The three bay front is centered around a two story pedimented portico with plain tympanum supported by four Roman Doric columns. The columns are made of molded brick covered with plaster, very rarely found in Maury County. Behind the portico is a recessed porch with plastered walls and a second floor balcony with original balustrade. The porch itself rests on a stylobate, the stone flags reached by three broad steps. Entries on both floors consist of a seven-panel door flanked by sidelights over dado panels and topped by transoms. Fenestration is comprised of 6/6 double hung sash windows topped by wooden beam lintels with ball and target cornerblocks. A molded wooden entablature is located beneath the eaves.

The north elevation is three bays deep, the bays separated by interior brick chimneys joined at the top by a parapet wall. Two 6/6 double hung sash windows are featured on both floors while another window is located between the chimneys on the attic floor.

The rear or west elevation is three bays wide and centered around a recessed one story porch supported by Tuscan columns. The entry, somewhat simpler than the front, is defined by sidelights and a transom. Fenestration is similar to that on the facade.

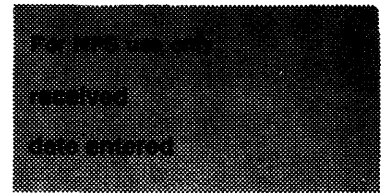
The south elevation is roughly identical to the north but is joined at the front by a low one story side gable wing connecting the main house with the side ell. This section, apparently a later addition, is being reconstructed during the ongoing renovation, and will serve as a modern kitchen/service area.

The 1½ story side ell possibly predates the main structure. The front gabled structure is constructed of common bond brick and rests on a stone foundation. Decorative features include a corbeled brick cornice, stone corbels at the overhanging eaves, and a large blind arch on the front of the ell. Although this section once served as a farm kitchen and smokehouse, it was remodeled for use as a guest house in the 1960s. A modern carport of intrusive nature is joined at the rear of the ell.

Elm Springs retains most of its original interior elements. The central hall is one of the largest in the area. Approximately 30 feet by 45 feet, it features a broad staircase against the north wall. Eight-panel doors with ball and target cornerblocks and fluted casings open to the side halls, parlors, dining room and rear of the residence. The double parlor to the south is separated by huge seven-panel double packet doors. Each section of the

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parlor features a late Federal period mantel with a molded shelf supported by engaged Tuscan columns. Dado panels are placed below most windows. The dining room and study, located across the hall, present basically identical features. A narrow hall on the north side contains a dog-leg service stair while a seven-panel door at the end gives access to the side ell.

Upstairs, the house follows a similar plan with four bedrooms arranged around the central hall and service hallway to the north. All rooms retain their original paneled mantels and wood trim. A small enclosed staircase rises from the central hall to the unfinished attic above.

A small cemetery containing the graves of some nine or ten members of the Todd and Looney families is located a short distance south of the house.

Elm Springs is well-sited on the crest of low ridge overlooking the Mooresville Pike. The house faces Fairmont (NR 1983), a house of similar design built at the same time by Nathan Vaught. It is said that on a quiet night the families could sit on the front porches and talk to each other across the broad valley. The two homes together form one of the most picturesque scenes in Maury County.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1837 **Builder/Architect** Nathan Vaught

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Elm Springs, the Christopher Todd House on Mooresville Pike south of Columbia, is being nominated under National Register criterion C for its architectural significance in Columbia and Maury County, Tennessee. The large, brick, 2½ story Greek Revival mansion was built in 1837 by master builder Nathan Vaught for James Dick, a wealthy merchant from New Orleans, as a wedding present for Dick's sister. The fourteen room house is one of the most finely detailed homes from the period surviving in Maury County. The house has undergone few major alterations and retains its historical and architectural integrity.

The house was built in 1837 for James Dick, one of three Dick brothers of New Orleans. He gave it to his only sister, Sarah, wife of Christopher Todd. Tradition holds that James Dick, as a bachelor, while traveling through Italy, was attracted by an Italian villa, proceeded to secure a description of the same, and built this house in accordance therewith. Nathan Vaught, Maury County's master builder, was the contractor.

Nathan Vaught (1799-1880) is credited with building 118 houses, churches, and store-houses, most in Maury County. Of these, only ten documented places still stand. Vaught, an orphan, was bound out in 1810 by the Maury County Court to builder James Purcell, from whom he learned his trade. As early as 1828, Vaught was in business for himself. By the time he was selected by James Dick to build Elm Springs (1837), he had already built a number of other imposing homes in the county. One of the most interesting features Vaught included in the design of Elm Springs is the spacious central hall, perhaps the largest hall in any of Maury County's many fine homes from this period. Because of its size and the social inclinations of the family, the mansion was the setting of many brilliant dances and other gala affairs.

The Todd farm originally consisted of 250 acres and was known as "Elm Springs." There were a number of springs on the place and an elm tree supposedly grew over each of them. The name appears in dispatches from as early as the 1860s. Most of the elms were destroyed by Dutch elm disease in recent decades.

During the Civil War, the house narrowly escaped destruction on November 27, 1864, when Federal troops under General John Schofield set fire to the back stairway. Schofield's men were routed by advancing Confederate troops under General John B. Hood. The Federal troops erected breastworks to prepare for the expected Battle of Columbia and cleared a line of battle from the Mooresville Pike to the Mt. Pleasant Pike, burning some of the county's fine homes along the way. Elm Springs was fired on as skirmishers advanced, but the flames were extinguished by Confederate soldiers under General F. C. Armstrong and family house-servants. Following the Battle of Franklin two days later, wounded

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approximately 7 acres

Quadrangle name Columbia, Tennessee

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

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4	9	7	2	4	0
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Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Richard Quin, Historic Preservation Planner

organization South Central TN Development District date 30 September 1985

street & number Post Office Box 1346 telephone 615-381-2040

city or town Columbia state Tennessee

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer signature Herbert L. Hryze

title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission date 2/5/86

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the National Register

date 3-13-86

Keeper of the National Register

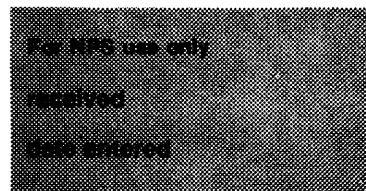
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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General John C. Brown, C.S.A. was brought here and remained several weeks until Federal troops reentered the county. For a while during the war, the family abandoned the house and moved to town.

Colonel A. M. Looney, a distinguished Columbia lawyer and former Confederate soldier, married the Todd's daughter and lived in the house for many years, rearing a family of eight children. The house is still known to some local residents as the old Looney Place. The Looney family continued to live in the house until 1910 when the property passed out of the family.

For a brief period in the 1920s, the farm boasted a commercial daffodil operation that shipped approximately 1,500 dozen picked blooms to the Chicago market each year. The farm has largely been devoted to tobacco and dairy operations for some time.

Architecturally, the house is one of the best examples of Greek Revival style in Maury County. Its main feature is an impressive central pedimented portico supported by four Roman Doric columns. The unfluted columns are made of molded brick covered with plaster. Behind the columns is a recessed porch with a second story balcony and an elaborate sidelighted entrance. The house is different from most of the larger country houses in Maury County in that the ell is located to the side, rather than the rear, of the house. Elm Springs retains many outstanding original interior elements, including the broad main staircase, the rear service stairs, original mantels and pocket doors, and other woodwork trim. Although somewhat neglected in recent years, the home is currently being restored.

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Auction handbill for Elm Springs, 27 September 1944.

Garrett, Jill K. "Elm Springs on the Mooresville Pike." The Daily Herald (Columbia),  
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Redman, Louise Sowell. "Beautiful Elm Springs on APTA Tour." The Daily Herald  
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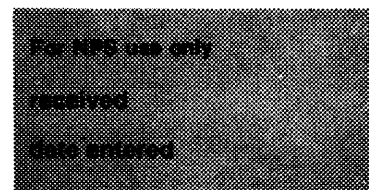
\_\_\_\_\_. "Spring Brings Joy to Columbia's Daffodil Lady." The Daily Herald  
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Sowell, Louise. "Restored to Former Beauty." The Daily Herald (Columbia), 1940.

Vaught, Nathan. "Youth and Old Age," 1882. Located at Tennessee State Library and  
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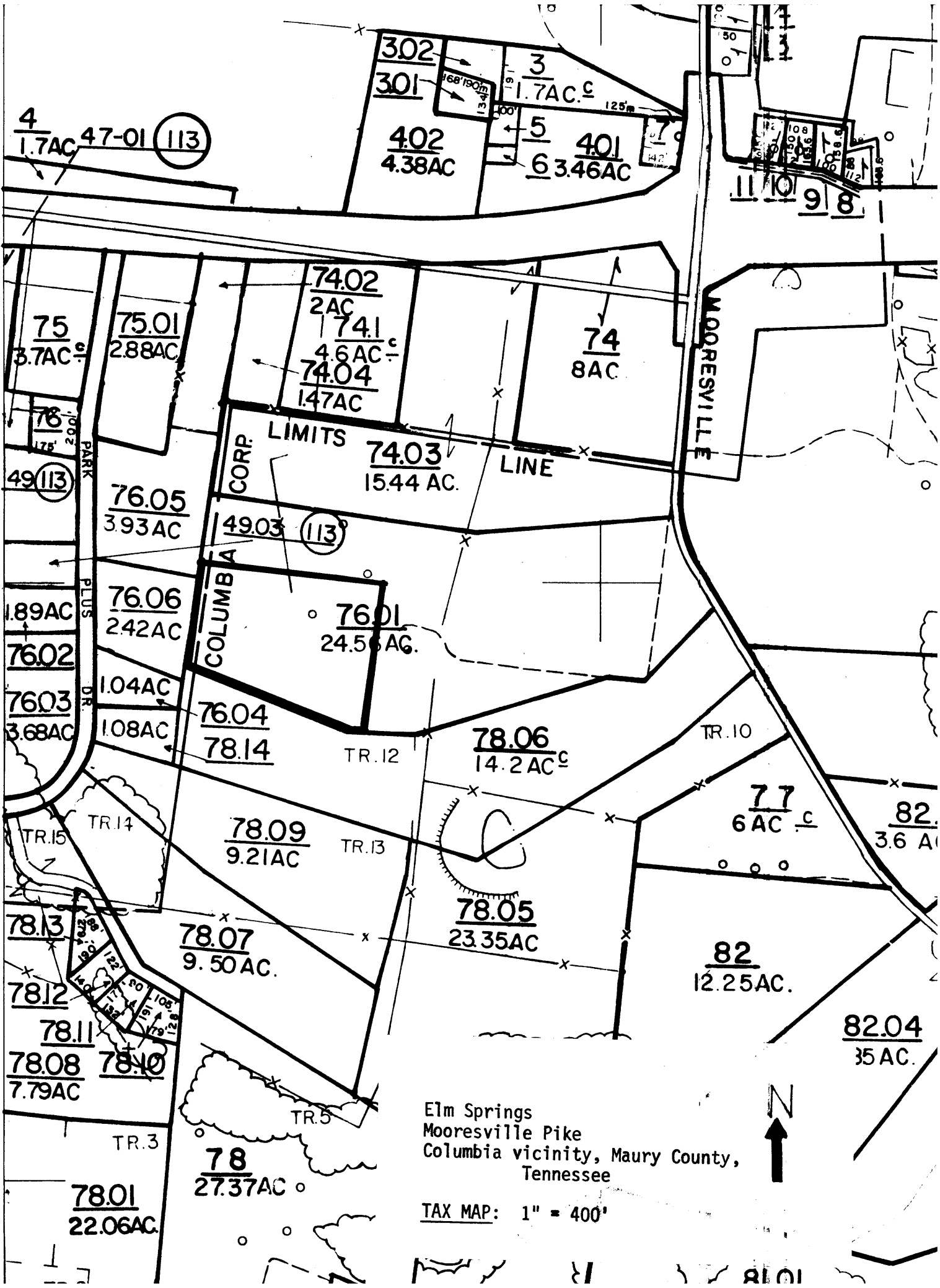
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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

The nominated property is approximately rectangular in shape and approximately seven acres in size. The boundary is as follows: beginning at a point at the intersection of the south and west property lines, the boundary moves north along the west property line approximately 400 feet; the boundary then moves east approximately 600 feet until it intersects with a low stone retaining wall; the boundary then moves south approximately 500 feet until it intersects with the south property line; the boundary then moves along the southern property line approximately 700 feet to the point of the beginning. (See tax map.) This includes sufficient land to protect the historical setting and architectural integrity of Elm Springs.





Elm Springs  
 Mooresville Pike  
 Columbia vicinity, Maury County,  
 Tennessee

TAX MAP: 1" = 400'