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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Klir Beck House ("The Gnomes")
AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: W of Mt Vernon St #154
CITY, TOWN: Vienna, Mt. Vernon
STATE: Maine CODE: 23 COUNTY: Kennebec CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 1st Hon. David Emery
NOT FOR PUBLICATION

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME: Arthur Frederick
STREET & NUMBER:
CITY, TOWN: Mt. Vernon STATE: Maine
VICINITY OF:

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Kennebec County Registry of Deeds
STREET & NUMBER: State Street
CITY, TOWN: Augusta STATE: Maine

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE:
DATE:
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
CITY, TOWN: STATE:

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Built in 1927 by the remarkable artist, Klir Beck, "The Gnomes" enjoys a rural setting of woods, fields, and lakes. The one and a half story house was intended to be the artist's summer residence and, being owner-designed and built, is utterly unique.

The house obviously draws inspiration from the eclecticism of the early 20th century. The roof-line is complex; eaves project greatly with prominent bracket support; two of the gables end with projecting bracketed canopies which provide cover for very ornate balconies. Structurally, the house is supported by an exposed irregular stone foundation; the first story's walls are half timbered brick and the second story's walls are half timbered stucco. Part of the roof is covered with wooden shingles, part with asphalt shingles. There are four interior chimneys.

Except for the use of asphalt shingles on part of the house's roof, the exterior of "The Gnomes" is untouched. Whether of Swiss chalet, German, or English Elizabethan half-timbered inspiration, the facade is extraordinarily busy with detail. The diagonal, curving, horizontal, and vertical surface timbers break the walls into many rectangular, triangular and irregular panels. The larger panels contain additional decoration, including several remarkable lotus motifs in brick with stucco background. The windows are six over six (again, a striving for detail). There are double-doors at the entrance and to either side of it. The entrance is flanked to each side by three irregular stuccoed panels, one containing field-stone, one brick, and the third small windows framed and arched in brick; below the left window decorative brick is laid in a herring-bone pattern. Some second story panels contain small brick rosettes. The balconies feature elaborately cut wooden balustrades.

The interior of the Klir Beck House is equally detailed, not to say eccentric. For example, the living room floor is of flagstone with an inlaid compass near the hearth. The walls are decorated with handcarved black walnut panelling; a 300-pound door is of the same material.

This structure is a monument to personal design and construction. Blending charming details and structural form, "The Gnomes" is a classic example of the eclectic style of architecture which culminated in the late 1920's.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1927

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Klir A. Beck

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

As one might guess by the house itself, the designer and owner was an ingenious and multi-talented individual. Klir A. Beck, who was referred to during his lifetime as a modern Leonardo, possessed the gifts of an artist and the skills of a craftsman. Though little known by the public largely because of his retiring nature, he was widely admired within his professional circle.

Born in California of artistically inclined parents, he won, at an early age, a scholarship at the Art Student's League in New York and while there won another which took him to Paris. He was marked for greatness by his teachers but he refused to live in New York, or any other large city where greater opportunities for notoriety might have come his way. Instead, after much searching, he and his wife settled near the tiny town of Mt. Vernon in central Maine where he designed and built his most unusual home and where he remained the rest of his life.

An artist and sculptor of considerable merit, he was also an expert worker in iron, silver and gold, and became a skilled taxidermist. He was, as well, a self-trained naturalist and maintained yards and pens where he kept sick animals which he treated until recovery.

Putting all of these talents together he was retained by the State of Maine as a designer of exhibits for sportsmen's shows. In this capacity he developed an art form combining natural phenomena and creative art in such a manner that it was almost impossible to tell where one began and the other left off. He was honored at the Eastern States Exhibition for these remarkable displays and received several important offers to do promotional exhibits for governmental and private organizations. These, however, he refused, not wishing to be long away from his adopted state.

His most noted work is generally conceded to be the remarkable dioramas in the old State Museum in the Capitol in Augusta, Maine. These depict with great realism scenes in Maine drawn from nature and including both flora and fauna of the state.

Mr. Beck died in 1966 leaving for posterity the remarkable house which bespeaks so eloquently his originality and unique craftsmanship.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Lewiston Journal, November 9, 1929

Kennebec Journal, September 22, 1959

Portland Press Herald, March 14, 1966

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A

10	420400	49284810
ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

B

ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Frank A. Beard, Historian
Earle G. Shettleworth, Director

ORGANIZATION Maine Historic Preservation Commission DATE October 1976

STREET & NUMBER 31 Western Avenue TELEPHONE 207-289-2133

CITY OR TOWN Augusta, STATE Maine

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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE Earle G. Shettleworth DATE October 22, 1976

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Robert B. Rettig DATE 11/23/77

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: Charles H. ... KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER DATE 11/17/77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER