

56-1689



# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name Nims Mansion

Other names/site number Bee Tree Mansion

Name of related Multiple Property Listing N/A

## 2. Location

Street & number 2701 Finestown Road N/A not for publication

City or town Oakville N/A vicinity

State Missouri Code MO County St. Louis Code 189 Zip code 63129

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

Applicable National Register Criteria:  A  B  C  D

Toni M. Prawl AUG 11 2017  
Signature of certifying official/Title Toni M. Prawl, Ph.D., Deputy SHPO Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register  determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register  removed from the National Register

other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

for Edson H. Beall 10.2.17  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Nims Mansion  
Name of Property

St. Louis County, Missouri  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box.)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	private
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
1	0	sites
5	0	structures
0	1	objects
7	2	<b>Total</b>

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

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

VACANT/not in use

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Tudor Revival

foundation: Limestone

walls: Limestone

roof: Slate

other: wood

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION ON CONTINUATION PAGES**

Nims Mansion  
Name of Property

St. Louis County, Missouri  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**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.

**Areas of Significance**

Architecture

**Period of Significance**

1929

**Significant Dates**

N/A

**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 grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Maritz and Young/Architects

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE ON CONTINUATION PAGES

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreege of Property** 6.7

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 38.410937 -90.326192      3 38.408745 -90.323929  
Latitude: Longitude:      Latitude: Longitude:

2 38.410358 -90.326781      4 38.409419 -90.323251  
Latitude: Longitude:      Latitude: Longitude:

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

\_\_\_\_\_ NAD 1927    or    \_\_\_\_\_ NAD 1983

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone    Easting    Northing

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone    Easting    Northing

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone    Easting    Northing

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone    Easting    Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (On continuation sheet)

**Boundary Justification** (On continuation sheet)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Nikole Meyer edited by Daniel Gonzales and Esley Hamilton

organization St. Louis County Parks and Recreation      date January 27, 2017

street & number 41 South Central Avenue      telephone 636-248-2245

city or town Clayton      state MO      zip code 63105

e-mail nmeyer@stlouisco.com

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:**
  - A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
  - A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Photographs**
- **Owner Name and Contact Information**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**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.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Nims Mansion

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## Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

## Photo Log:

Name of Property: Nims Mansion

City or Vicinity: Oakville

County: St. Louis State: Missouri

Photographer: Nikole Meyer

Date

Photographed: August 2016 & March 2017

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 11: Primary Elevation, camera facing southeast
- 2 of 11: Northern Elevation, camera facing south
- 3 of 11: Southeastern Elevation, northern side, camera facing northwest
- 4 of 11: Southeastern Elevation, windows, camera facing northwest
- 5 of 11: Southeastern Elevation, southern side, camera facing northwest
- 6 of 11: Southern Elevation, camera facing north
- 7 of 11: Garden, camera facing southwest
- 8 of 11: Gazebo, camera facing north
- 9 of 11: Smokehouse, camera facing west
- 10 of 11: Barn, camera facing northwest
- 11 of 11: Nims's Mansion from Finestown Ave, camera facing east

## Figure Log:

Include figures on continuation pages at the end of the nomination.

- Fig. 1 of 43: Servants' Entrance, camera facing southeast
- Fig. 2 of 43: Spiral chimney, primary elevation, camera facing southeast
- Fig. 3 of 43: Exterior servant's staircase, camera facing south
- Fig. 4 of 43: Rear House, camera facing west
- Fig. 5 of 43: Guest porch pulldown staircase, camera facing east
- Fig. 6 of 43: Rear patio from bottom, camera facing west
- Fig. 7 of 43: Rear chimney, camera facing northwest
- Fig. 8 of 43: Kitchen, camera facing east
- Fig. 9 of 43: Serving bells, camera facing east
- Fig. 10 of 43: Interior window alcove, camera facing southeast
- Fig. 11 of 43: First floor fireplace, camera facing southeast
- Fig. 12 of 43: Interior servant's staircase, camera facing west
- Fig. 13 of 43: Outside staircase, camera facing west
- Fig. 14 of 43: Floor plan of first floor, 1991
- Fig. 15 of 43: Floor plan of second floor
- Fig. 16 of 43: Floor plan for basement
- Fig. 17 of 43: Photo or original Maritz and Young design
- Fig. 18 of 43: Western guestroom, camera facing north
- Fig. 19 of 43: Eastern guestroom, camera facing north

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- Fig. 20 of 43: Guest porch murphy bed, camera facing south
- Fig. 21 of 43: Master fireplace, camera facing northeast
- Fig. 22 of 43: Eastern parrot, camera facing south
- Fig. 23 of 43: Western parrot, camera facing south
- Fig. 24 of 43: Basement fireplace, camera facing south
- Fig. 25 of 43: Ship wheel light, camera facing north
- Fig. 26 of 43: West bench in garden, camera facing west
- Fig. 27 of 43: South bench of garden, camera facing south
- Fig. 28 of 43: Garden fountain, camera facing east
- Fig. 29 of 43: Gazebo floor, camera facing north
- Fig. 30 of 43: Southern elevation of smokehouse, camera facing north
- Fig. 31 of 43: Western elevation of smokehouse, camera facing east
- Fig. 32 of 43: Northern elevation of barn, camera facing south
- Fig. 33 of 43: Southern elevation of barn, camera facing north
- Fig. 34 of 43: Western elevation of maintenance building, camera facing east
- Fig. 35 of 43: Eastern elevation of maintenance building, camera facing west
- Fig. 36 of 43: Aerial map from 1937
- Fig. 37 of 43: Aerial map from 2015
- Fig. 38 of 43: Boundary Map
- Fig. 39 of 43: Contextual Map
- Fig. 40 of 43: Copy of 1936 article "AN ESTATE OVERLOOKING THE ROLLING MISSISSIPPI"
- Fig. 41 of 43: Photograph of the main elevation of the Gene Bussen House located at 5501 Remington Villas Ct.
- Fig. 42 of 43: Photograph of the main elevation of the Hillcrest Country Club located at 8100 Fine Road.
- Fig. 43 of 43: Photo Key Map

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Nims Mansion
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N/A
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**Summary:**

The Nims' Mansion at 2701 Finestown Rd in Oakville, within St. Louis County, is a two-story mansion made of local stone. Currently the mansion resides within the St. Louis County Park of Bee Tree. The land the park occupies was once the land owned by the Nims and purchased through grant funding by St. Louis County (Fig. 39). The dwelling is a two-story Tudor revival with multiple gables bookended by sleeping porches and having a walk out basement. The mansion is a single dwelling that is currently unoccupied, but was once home to Eugene and Lotawana Nims, and then later a riverboat museum. A unique feature of the mansion is the steep gable roof with flared ridgelines in the gable ends. The roof is shingled with strategically broken multi-colored slate tiling placed to create a one of a kind appearance.

**Setting:**

The setting for the Nims' Mansion, the primary resource in this nomination, has changed very little since the dwelling was built in 1929. Originally built as a country estate and working farm, the dwelling was constructed upon the bluffs of the Mississippi River. Just adjacent to the Mansion is a garden and gazebo that contribute to the nomination (See Photo 7 & 8). Falling within Bee Tree Park, the nomination is separated by native trees and flowers, from the urban sprawl of Oakville, an unincorporated region located in south St. Louis County. Areas that were once used by the Nims family as an orchard, garden and farm have been replaced to accommodate the needs of the park, but remain mostly undeveloped.

As is visible on the boundary map and aerial photograph from 1937 (See Fig. 38 and 36) Finestown Road, the road that leads into the park and curves up the bluff from the west, has from an early period led to the Nims' Mansion (See Photo 11 for a view of the home from Finestown Road). At the entrance to the park property there are two limestone pylons with a wrought iron gate. This entrance is outside of the nomination boundary (see boundary map fig. 38). The construction date of this is unknown.

From the Nims' Mansion, it is possible to see a maintenance shed, built in 1973 (Fig 34 and 35). This is a non-contributing resource in this nomination. Adjacent to the maintenance building is a smokehouse and red multi-level barn (See photo 9 and 10 and Fig. 30, 31, 32, 33). Constructed contemporaneously with the main house in 1929, the structures contribute to the nomination.

Just south of the Nims' mansion, and outside of the nomination boundary, the Finestown Road splits. If you continue straight, you pass by a parking lot which was originally paved in 1973. Also, outside the nomination boundary, and on the southern edge of the parking lot and within view of the mansion is a playground that was recently rebuilt in 2015. Beyond the playground, down a hill, and beyond the view of the mansion is a man-made lake created in 1974 and stocked with fish by the Missouri Department of Conservation. Next to the lake is a small shelter called Lower Shelter, and named after Jack Lower, a long-time employee of St. Louis County Parks, who passed away in 1984.

The eastern portion of the Finestown road divergence passes by the Nims' mansion just outside the southern boundary of the nomination. Across the road from the nomination boundary is the original visitor center that was built around 1973. The building is a small wood-frame structure covered with wood paneling and painted green. It is now used as storage, bathrooms, and occasionally dressing rooms for wedding parties. To the left of the visitor center, and down the Finestown Road split, is an additional shelter. It is named Frisbee Shelter after Emmett Lyle Frisbee, a WWII veteran and long-time employee of St. Louis County Parks.

All of the additions to the property surrounding the Nims' Mansion, have been done within open spaces created during the Nims family tenure. This is evident in aerial photos from 1937 and 2015 (Fig. 36 and 37). The lack of demolition allowed for the gentleness of the river and the original setting of natural trees to be retained.

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**Contributing Building #1: Nims' Mansion**  
**West (primary) elevation (Photo 1)**

The front façade of the Nims' Mansion faces northeast towards the entrance gates of the park. It is composed of local limestone. The front facade is dominated by two prominent gables (Photo 1). The first floor of the western façade has five and a half windows and two doors. On the second floor are six windows of varying size.

The first bay from the south side of the facade has a group of five metal multi-light casement windows, there are ten panes on the bottom and four panes in the upper portion. The lower portion of the windows opens outwards and is bounded by a heavy red brick sill. The upper portion is bounded by a heavy timber lintel. The windows within all elevations will have the same sill and lintel unless otherwise noted. Moving to the north is another grouping of windows. This grouping covers virtually the entire bay, from the foundation to the roof, and mirrors the previous windows in style and construction. The next bay contains the entrance door, this is made of heavy timber and a glass flower window protected by a wrought iron cage. The door is recessed into the entrance. The entrance has a heavy timber surround and stones that are arranged to create a pediment above the surround. Moving further north is a pair of metal multi-light casement windows, each with ten lights. The next bay is slightly recessed from the rest of the house and contains a single multi-light window arranged in an eight light casement. North of this window is a second entrance. Its wooden door contains a diamond shaped glass pane window. Further north of the door is a portion of the building that is a single story and is clad with stone and has a shed roof, this area is covering an external stairwell, with diamond cross windows on the western and northern elevation. On the first level of the primary elevation, the northern corner the servant and kitchen entrance is visible on the front edge of the home (Fig. 1).

The second level of the primary elevation is bookended by sleeping porches on either end. Starting from the north end of the second story of the facade is the guest sleeping porch that has heavy wood timber supports and is atop the recessed portion of the main building. Moving south, the next bay has a gable with a grouping of four windows with multi-light metal casement of eight lights. Moving south is another pair of windows with a multi-light casement in two portions, the lower portion containing 10 panes and the upper portion containing four panes. To the south is the previously described two story window. Just south of the window, in the next bay is a gable and another grouping of small metal casement windows that are the same as those within the previous gable. South and the outside of the bay is small dual multi-light casement with eight panes in a two by four arrangement in each window, these have no lintel. The final bay of the façade has the second sleeping porch that is attached to the master bedroom. This sleeping porch also has heavy timber supports and decorative railings.

The roof of the Nims' Mansion is made of multicolored slate tile. Each tile is broken and placed in a unique pattern. The roof is intentionally designed to appear concaved in the centers between gables. The other unique feature of the roof is the spiral chimney (Fig. 2) that is a cooking chimney. A second chimney is visible from the façade (it will be further described with the east elevation)

**North Elevation**

The north elevation (Photo 2) has all three stories exposed because of the change in grade at the site. The basement, level of the northern elevation has a heavy wooden door with a diamond pane window and heavy timber screen door to the east and a staircase enclosed by wood and wood framed diamond paned windows that ascends to the first floor (Fig. 3). The windows are the same as the north portion of the facade. Above the slate roofing of the basement door is a multi-light casement of dual eight pane windows similar to other places on the house, this window is to the maid's quarters on the first floor. Above the first floor is a guest sleeping porch that is supported by heavy timber (Fig. 4). The railing is made of carved wood that sits outside of the framing for the porch screens. Above the sleeping porch is an end gable with timber siding and an octagonal louvered vent to the small attic that helps to provide ventilation. The attic is only accessible from within the porch, by way of a pull down staircase (Fig. 5).



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**Rear East Elevation**

The rear or east elevation is three stories (because the basement level is exposed) with a patio and fountain (these are later described as contributing structures) that is located down the hill (Fig. 6). The northern side of the rear elevation (Photo 3 and 4) begins with the lower basement wall that extends a short distance past the rest of the mansion. Aside from this small protrusion the rear facade is defined by one protruding bay at the center, containing a two story bay window, with an extension on either side, each marked by one gable on the roof. Along the basement level of the northern extension, are three of the standard dual multi-light casement windows with eight panes and the same sill and lintel that was described as being on the primary elevation. They are about evenly spaced across the northern extension. Directly to the south of these windows, still on the basement level, but now within the protruding central bay, is a recessed area that contains a recessed double door that leads into the basement office. The door is made up of multi-light casements that are two panels wide and six panes tall. The door is flanked to either side with single multi-light casement windows that are a single pane across and four panes tall. The side walls of the protruding bay each contain one stand dual multi-light casement window with eight panes. On the southern extension is the rear chimney that services the three levels of the house starting in the basement (Fig. 7). To the south of the chimney is one last window that is a multi-light casement with three windows, each has eight panes. From this point the dwelling continues as a retaining wall for the upper patio.

The first level of the south end of the rear elevation has a large multi-light casement window with a grouping of five windows with two portions. The lower portion of the windows are made up of ten paned windows and the upper portion of four paned windows. To the north is the first story of a two story bay window. The south side of the window is comprised of a grouping of four multi-light casements each made of a lower section of ten panes and an upper section of four panes. The eastern side of the alcove is comprised of a grouping of two multi-light casements on either side of the multi-light casement door. The windows and doors are made of ten pane lower sections and four pane upper sections. The northern side and southern side of the window both contain a grouping of three windows on both the first and second floor. They are in the same format as the eastern side, being made up of ten paned windows and the upper portion of four paned windows. Moving to the first story on the northern extension is another multi-light casement of eight panes and red brick sill and heavy lintel. This window is repeated again to the north, but at a slightly lower elevation while still on the first level. The window is not repeated again until the gutter spout and below the guest sleeping porch on the north side (Fig. 4.)

On this same northern extension, but moving to the second story, to the far north the house has a screened in wooden sleeping porch. Directly to the south of the sleeping porch, the façade has several more dual-multi light casement windows each with eight panes on each side. One is just south of the sleeping porch and a set of two, of the same type, are placed further south in the center of the northern gable.

The central protruding bay on the second story, as has already been explained is an extension of the bay window from the first floor. The only significant difference between the first and second story in the section of the home is the second story does not contain a windowed door.

Finally the southern extension on the second story is a direct mirror of the northern extension with a sleeping porch on the far end, a single dual multi-light window, and a set of two dual multi-light windows at the center of the southern gable.

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**Southern Elevation**

The southern elevation is only two stories (Photo 6). The first level is mostly composed of a large bay window and double glass doors that curve slightly outwards. These windows are made of a grouping of two multi-light casements, ten pane lower sections and four pane upper section, to either side of the double doors. The doors are made of wooden twelve pane windows, two across and six high, on the lower section and four panes on the upper section. The window and doors curve slightly outwards below the master bedroom sleeping porch that is supported by two stone supports that jut out from the mansion. The bay window only has the brick sill and not the lintel timber of the rest of the mansion.

The master sleeping porch is nearly identical the guest sleeping porch located on the northern elevation. The same type of railing was used for both porches. Above the sleeping porch is a similar gable end with siding and an octagonal louvered vent. Two full bays and two half bay openings overlook the garden.

**Interior:**

On the first floor just inside the main entrance there is a door to the north that leads to a small restroom. A second door past the restroom to the east leads to the kitchen area and servant's quarters. The style of the kitchen has been mostly untouched (Fig. 8), except repairs to the plumbing. The cabinets, counters, and floors are all original. The floor is made of linoleum.

Northwest from the kitchen there is a preparation area. It has a doorway to the north that leads to the basement/servant staircase and two exits (Fig. 12). One of the exits is on the first floor and exits to the west. The second is on the basement level and exits to the north. On the east wall of the preparation area is box of bells that are likely servant bells (Fig. 9). From the preparation area, the maid's quarters can be seen to the east. It includes a bedroom with wood flooring and small bathroom.

To the east of the front entrance is a large two story bay window that overlooks the patio area and the Mississippi River to the east (Fig. 10). Just to the south of the grand bay window is the main fireplace, made of limestone (Fig. 11). The remaining space on the first floor is one large room that was once used as a living room and entertainment space. The ceiling of which extends to the second story.

The main staircase for the home is located just to the south of the main entrance. It is completely enclosed and built in spiral design. The staircase extends down into the basement and up to a second story balcony. The second story balcony contains a wrought iron railing and overlooks the large open space on the first floor.

The second story of the house is broken into two main portions on the north and south. The interior balcony on the second floor (Fig 15) diverges north and south from the top of the main staircase. To the north are two guestrooms (Fig. 18 and Fig. 19) that are color coordinated. Each room has a flower theme and a connected toilet (in the western room) or full bathroom (in the eastern room). Both guestrooms share the same sleeping porch that is accessible by a single door at the north end of the rooms. The guest sleeping porch has two murphy beds (Fig. 20) that still have the original mattresses and flower design on the bed frame. The sleeping porches are made of heavy timber and are screened in. The screens are in need of repair and nearby plants have grown into the porch.

On the south side of the second story, to the right of the staircase, is the master bedroom of Eugene and Lotawana Nims. The wallpaper in this room is heavily damaged and is designed as a field of wildflowers. In the northeastern corner of the room is a fireplace covered in a yellow wallpaper that replicates bricks and drawings of small buildings. This fireplace (Fig. 21) connects to the flume of the fireplaces on the first floor and in the basement. To the south of the master bedroom is a bathroom. The bathroom contains two tiles depicting parrots (Fig. 22 and Fig.23). The parrots are interesting as two parrots were cared for on the grounds of the house<sup>1</sup>. The closet to the south of the bathroom has wooden

<sup>1</sup> *Women's Sunday Magazine- St. Louis Post-Dispatch* "An Estate Overlooking the Rolling Mississippi" May 10, 1936, 4-1

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shoe racks and shelving built into it, which can be seen on the original floor plans of Maritz and Young (Fig. 17).

The master sleeping porch, to the south of the bedroom, is made of heavy timber, like the guest porch. This porch only has one bed closet; the Murphy bed has since been removed. The master porch is in better condition than the guest area and overlooks the sunken garden.

On the basement level, the space is mostly unfinished (Fig. 16). The exception is a small study and toilet. The study has carpet and wood paneling with a fireplace on the southern side (Fig. 24). The shelving within the room is built into the southern wall. A large set of glass doors leads to the back patio area that overlooks the river on the eastern side of the house. The decorative motif is different from the other rooms with a slight nautical theme instead of the floral themes seen throughout other portions of the house. Most notably the light fixture is shaped like a ships wheel (Fig. 25).

On the northeastern side of the house is a basement cellar. Shelves are built into the cellar and lend to the idea that food was stored here. The servant's staircase extends down to the basement on the northern end of this space.

**Contributing Structure #2: Garden (Photo 7) Built c.1929**

The garden is just to the south of the Nims' Mansion and accessible from the bay doors of the southern elevation. The garden was remodeled when the mansion ground was turned into a park in 1969.<sup>2</sup> During the renovation many of the original stone garden paths were paved over. In addition, the layout of the plantings was redone, and a new fountain installed. While much has changed, the basic outline of the garden including its original limestone walls remain and contribute to the integrity of the historic site.

The garden is a rectangular shape that is accessible from four points; the southern patio, rear elevation patio, staircase on the south side, and a staircase on the western edge. The original wall remains on the northern edge of the garden. The western wall is original with a staircase that descends around a built in semi-circle bench, this is one of four benches in the garden, situated in the center of the wall (Fig. 26). The top of the northern and western walls are level with the ground in the above elevation.

The southern wall is very short and creates a curbed edging for the flower bed. The staircase of the southern side has raised walls to create a bench backing and railings for the stairs that descend on either side of the bench (Fig. 27). The southern wall is viewable from the south side.

The eastern wall of the garden is bordered with many trees and faces the river. In front of the eastern wall is a non-contributing fountain (Fig. 28) that was built in memory of Lindell Gordon, who helped raise funds for St. Louis County Parks to purchase the property. The fountain is a dying leaf with the inscription "The imprint of a dying leaf is wondrous to behold"<sup>3</sup> (further described below).

According to a 1936 article (Fig. 40) there was once a different fountain within the garden where the memorial is today. It is unknown when the reflection fountain was removed or by whom.<sup>4</sup>

**Contributing Structure #3: Gazebo (Photo 8) Built c.1929**

The gazebo/cistern, is located to the west of the primary elevation and north of the entrance path. The stone gazebo is original to the property and is caged by a wrought iron top. On top of the caging is a

<sup>2</sup> St. Louis County Parks, "Bee Tree Park", <http://www.stlouisco.com/Portals/8/docs/Document%20Library/parks/PDFs/ParkHistory/BeeTreeHistory.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> St. Louis County Parks, "Bee Tree Park", <http://www.stlouisco.com/Portals/8/docs/Document%20Library/parks/PDFs/ParkHistory/BeeTreeHistory.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Walker, Josepheine, "The House You Live In: An Estate Overlooking the Rolling Mississippi", St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 10, May 1936

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rooster. The structure is made of the same stone as the house and the interior has a circular bench. The gazebo sits atop a large cistern accessible from a panel on the flooring of structure (Fig. 29).

**Contributing Structure #4: Smokehouse (Photo 9) Built c.1929**

The smokehouse is a contributing building that is located west of the Nims' Mansion and across the main park road, Finestown Road. County records indicate that the structure is original to the property. Unlike other contributing structures and buildings within the boundaries, this building is made of brick with a metal gable roof.

The smokehouse consists of two rooms that appear to have been constructed at slightly different times from different material. The front elevation of the smokehouse faces east, towards the mansion. This elevation has a single wood door and a small window covered in wood. The bricks of this part of the building are of various colors of red and cream. The southern elevation (Fig. 30) of the smokehouse exhibits the two parts of the building. The first part is connected to the primary elevation and is multicolored brick. The rear part has a slightly lower roof level with the same metal roofing. This part of the building is made of a consistent colored red brick. The western elevation (Fig. 31) is composed of a single wooden door surrounded by the red brick. The northern elevation is the same as the southern elevation, but is inaccessible because of the tree line.

**Contributing Structure #5: Barn (Photo 10) Built c. 1929**

The barn is a two level red bank barn that is located west of the Nims' Mansion. The barn is made of wood and concrete cast bricks with a metal chimney pot in the center of the roof. The primary elevation of the barn faces east, toward the primary elevation of the Nims' Mansion. This elevation is marked by the low gambrel roof and large wood barn doors. Four small metal fixed windows are cast into the brick foundation.

The northern elevation of the barn (Fig. 32) faces the non-contributing maintenance shed. This elevation has two levels, the first being the brick level with a single wood barn door and a metal garage door. The second level has two small square wooden windows to either side of the steeped roof. The western elevation is comprised of concrete blocks and red siding, the roof swoops low and five square metal cased windows are within the concrete brick and meet the siding.

The southern elevation (Fig. 33) has two single wood barn doors and two square wood windows in the concrete block level. The second level of the barn has a larger red squared opening atop the two lower windows. Nearer to the roof is two small square windows and hay loft doors.

**Contributing Structure #6: Patio Structure (Fig. 6 and 14) c. 1929**

A contributing structure is located off the rear or east elevation. This is a patio supported by a decorative fountain/grotto space that was once a part of the main staircase leading to the river. This stone structure supports a circular patio space that has a wrought iron railing on the patio level (Fig. 6 and 7). The patio is supported by decorative stone work; in this stone structure is a recessed arched area with a small reflecting pool at the bottom. It is believed this space once had a fountain. The lower area is accessible from a small stair case north of the patio (Fig. 13). The lower area is also surrounded by a low rock wall that creates a second patio space around the reflecting pool.

**Non-contributing Building #7: Maintenance Building (Fig. 35) Built 1973**

The non-contributing maintenance building was built in 1973, shortly after the area's dedication as Bee Tree Park. The metal and concrete building is a green with a tan roof that is built into the side of the embankment (Fig.34 and 35). The primary elevation for the building is on the western side. This elevation is composed of three large windowed metal garage doors located more to the southern side. The northern side of the building is a triangular wall that meets to the rear embankment. The eastern elevation is a small amount of green siding emerging from the embankment and meeting the tan roof. The southern elevation is the same as the northern elevation, with the exception of a single black door.

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**Non-Contributing Object #8: Fountain (Fig. 27) Built 1974**

The non-contributing object is located within the garden to the south of the Nims' Mansion. The fountain is of a dying ginkgo leaf in memorial to Lindell Gordon, who was instrumental to the attainment of the land. While dying Gordon worked tirelessly with the Open Space Foundation in order to turn the Nims' property into Bee Tree Park. People originally wanted to name the park in his honor, but the county settled by installing the memorial fountain.

**Contributing Site #9 (Fig. 37)**

Overall the area surrounding the Nims Mansion is a contributing site to the Nims Mansion. The Nims Mansion is on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River. The majority of the site maintains its historic character. Sidewalks are located throughout this site. See figure 38 for a map of the location of the sidewalks. Also included in the site is the Finestown Road, this is an asphalt paved road that is located in its historic alignment. These features have been improved overtime so that the public may have easier access to the mansion, garden, and other portions of the park. These sidewalks follow alongside Finestown Road and connect to the original entrance path leading to the mansion and garden. At the path entrance in front of the mansion, some of the original path stones are still in place, but the rest has been paved over, perhaps for accessibility reasons. This was likely done before the opening of the park around 1973, and possibly redone since then (no records were found of repaving). Overall the site retains its historic character with the mature trees, manicured lawn, and the view of the Mississippi River.

**Integrity**

The Nims' Mansion retains a high level of historic integrity. It still sits on its original site, and through the years not much has changed around or within the dwelling. The home was originally a country estate, so its maintenance as a park has allowed its setting to closely mirror what would have been seen during the period of significance. Though what sets the Nims' Mansion apart in regards to integrity is its large number of original architectural and design features, including original fixtures, windows, roofing, patio, and interior. While not all materials are original to the period (there have been minor repairs to portions of the wooden siding on the sleeping porches for example) nothing has been done that would not be entirely reasonable in the general maintenance of an historic building. All changes have been done with an eye to rehabilitation and preservation best practices. This gives the home high marks for design integrity. Additionally, elements of the design that speak to the workmanship of the original builders have all been retained. One can look to the original slate roof, or the detailed stone work of the home as examples of this. Finally, the building retains its historic feeling as a country estate overlooking the Mississippi River, and its association with its historic owners the Nims through elements of their original garden as well as interior design features that speak to their personality. This includes depictions of birds in one portion of the house, similar to those owned by the family. All of these things when taken together give the Nims' Mansion a very high degree of historic integrity.

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**Statement of Significance**

**Summary**

The Nims' Mansion, 2701 Finestown Road, Oakville, St. Louis County, Missouri is locally significant, and eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria C in the area of ARCHITECTURE. The Nims' Mansion was designed in 1928 by the Maritz and Young architectural firm for Eugene and Lotawana Nims. Maritz and Young were one of the most prolific, and influential architecture firms in the St. Louis region during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The home was completed in 1929 and is an excellent example of the Tudor Revival architectural style. Few examples of the style remain in the surrounding area of Oakville from this time period. Of those that remain, The Nims' Mansion is significant in its retained integrity and quality of design. Included in its significance is that the surrounding area has been turned into and maintained as a park, thus encapsulating the property in a setting close to the original.

**Narrative:**

As mentioned above, the Nims' Mansion has retained both its original environment and style. This is important because the house was designed to coexist with the rural area. Across St. Louis County many historic houses have been built around by the expanse of cities leading the original setting of the property to be lost. While in many places the neighborhoods retain their historic houses and lawns, highways now pass by closely and large shopping centers are across from the main entrance. The Nims' Mansion remains untouched by the spread of Oakville, an unincorporated region of St. Louis. Oakville was originally settled by French and German farmers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with many moving South from St. Louis and the community of Carondelet. As the century wore on, these farmers grew grain, fruit, and raised livestock which they sold to a Farm-to-Market delivery service, or sold directly at one of St. Louis's farmers markets. It was amongst this farming community that Eugene and Lotawana Nims established their country estate. As the original settlers passed away or grew elderly, their land was often subdivided amongst heirs, and gradually the large farms gave way to smaller parcels often run as truck farms. In the post-WWII period, as the process of suburbanization accelerated across in St. Louis County and across the United States, the land in Oakville was rapidly subdivided.<sup>5</sup> Oakville is now a suburban community, having left behind its rural feel decades ago. This makes the Nims' mansion all the more important, as it has largely been protected by the encroachment of large subdivisions because of its location in a public park. In this way, it has retained its historic feel as an early 20<sup>th</sup> century country estate. Based upon aerial photographs of the area from different years, it can be determined that the St. Louis County Parks worked with the already open areas of the estate when building on the site (Fig. 36 and 37).

The house is an excellent example of the Tudor Revival style that Maritz and Young are known for.<sup>6</sup> The firm of Maritz and Young was very fond of using local stone in the masonry. For the Nims' Mansion, the stone used was from a quarry located less than two miles north of the site<sup>7</sup>. The gable roof with flared ridgelines in the gable ends, timbered lead paned windows, arched doorways and massive chimneys make this home an excellent example of the eclectic period Tudor Revival style.

Unique to the Tudor Revival style is the large amount of windows. On the eastern side of the house there is a two story bay window overlooking the Mississippi River (Fig. 10). The large number of windows present at the house is unique to the style. The internal placed chimney is also a unique feature because of its turning brick design that covers the chimney pot (Fig. 2). Finally, the roof with its multi-color slate tile placed in an irregular style is a striking and distinctive feature (Photo 1)

<sup>5</sup> Waddock, Barbara "Foundations of A Community: Oakville before the Turn of the Century" 1977.

<sup>6</sup> Amsler, Kevin and L. John Schott, *The Architecture of Maritz & Young: Exceptional Historic Homes of St. Louis* (St. Louis: Missouri History Museum, 2013), 9

<sup>7</sup> *Women's Sunday Magazine- St. Louis Post-Dispatch* "An Estate Overlooking the Rolling Mississippi", May 10, 1936, 4-1

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In the Nims' Mansion, Maritz and Young were able to combine the Tudor Revival style with the personality of the Nims and the surrounding landscape. The mansion blends perfectly with the surrounding natural landscape and is reminiscent of the gardens once tended by the owner. The architects were able to combine this seamlessly with the strong wood and stucco outlines of the Tudor Revival style.

Very little has changed outside and within the house. Many features from when the house was first built have been retained over the years, even as modern updates to heating and plumbing have occurred. The home is situated in an environment similar to when it was first built, but still surrounded by a landscape that blocks the development around the property.

### Tudor Revival Style

The Tudor Revival Style takes its features and styles from a variety of English building traditions, from simple cottages to grand Renaissance palaces. More than that however, the style often borrows features from the Craftsman style houses that were popular at the same time. The style is typified by steeply pitched roofs, tall narrow windows in sets of multiple panes, large decorative chimneys, and often the presence of half-timbering. The Nims' Mansion contains most of these features, with strong examples in both the roof and chimney. In addition, the Nims' Mansion is built with multiple materials, an arched front entryway, and informal patterned stonework which are all typical of the Tudor Revival style.<sup>8</sup>

### Comparisons

**5501 Remington Villas Court-** This two-story Tudor Revival home, located in Oakville, MO was constructed in 1936 for Gene Bussen, owner of the Bussen Quarry.<sup>9</sup> The home is a strong comparison to the Nims' Mansion as they share an architectural style and are both of a limestone construction (See Fig. 41). However, the Bussen House is significantly more modest than the Nims Mansion in terms of size, and lacks some of the high-end architectural features like the spiral chimney (See Fig 2), the multi-color slate roof, or the multistory windows (See Fig 6 & 7). Additionally, the Nims' Mansion stands out when compared to the Bussen House because of the integrity of the setting. The extant gardens, and the surrounding rural environment, that has been maintained by the sites location in a county park, give the Nims' Mansion a strong connection to its historic use as a country estate. That same setting does not exist at the Bussen House which is now surrounded by a modern subdivision Remington Villas at Cliff Cave, which was platted in 1998.

**Hillcrest Country Club Clubhouse-** The cottage at what was historically called Hillcrest Country Club, and is now known as Sherwood Country Club, is a good example of Tudor Revival near Oakville, MO (See Fig. 42). The property is sometimes described as the George Woods-Smith house, named thus for the buildings first owner. Woods-Smith had the 12-room frame house built in 1926. The building is an impressive example of its style, but lacks many of the high-end architectural features that are present in the Nims' Mansion. Some of these include the impressive limestone construction. The Hillcrest Country Club Clubhouse is covered mostly in wooden siding. Additionally, the multi-color slate roof of the Nims' Mansion is quite impressive when compared to the monochromatic slate of the Hillcrest Country Club Clubhouse. The final distinction of note when comparing the two buildings is condition. The Nims' Mansion is unique in the degree to which its original structure has been maintained. The Hillcrest Country Club Clubhouse on the other hand was damaged by a fire in 1964, and significant alterations designed by

<sup>8</sup> McAlester, Virginia, *A Field guide to American houses: the definitive guide to identifying and understanding America's domestic architecture*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014). 449-459

<sup>9</sup> Hamephin, Jacqueline, Preliminary National Register of Historic Places Eligibility Assessment for the Gene Bussen House, January 01, 2012.

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architect Edward Thias were proposed in 1969, although it is unclear how much of his plan was actually implemented.<sup>10</sup> Finally, the building, sadly, has fallen into disrepair in recent years. Whole bays of the home, which once contained windows have been boarded up. Despite this it remains a beautiful example of Tudor Revival and is a quality comparison for the Nims' mansion.

## Background

### Maritz and Young, the Architects

The design for the Nims' Mansion was created in 1928 by the Maritz and Young architectural firm. The Maritz and Young architectural firm was established in 1920 by Raymond Maritz and his manager, and fellow architect, W. Ridgely Young<sup>11</sup>. This architectural firm was recognized in its day as the leading designer in St. Louis of period revival houses, comparable to Harrie Lindberg and Howard Van Doren Shaw in other parts of the country. They attracted clients from all the wealthy social circles in the city and built in all the most fashionable neighborhoods of St. Louis for the time period, in some cases, such as Carrswold, and Forsyth Boulevard, they designed a majority of the houses. It is estimated that more than sixty of their works are listed in the National Register, such as the Wydown-Forsyth, Brentmoor Park, and Carrswold districts in Clayton, the Maryland Terrace district in University City.<sup>12</sup> They worked in Colonial Revival, French, Italian and Spanish styles as well as Tudor Revival, and were especially known for the fine craftsmanship of their houses, including wood carving, terrazzo floors, wrought iron detailing, slate roofs, and masonry. Whenever possible, they used the same skilled teams of suppliers of these materials. Three volumes were published about their work during this period: a two-volume monograph in 1929 and a supplement as the magazine *Architecture & Design* in 1939. The Nims House, published too late for inclusion in the earlier publication, was included in the later one. Interest in the house began even before it was completed, when a picture was featured in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* on April 7, 1929. Bee Tree House is typical of the firm's use of the Tudor Revival, with its blend of wood and stone allowing it to compliment the natural landscape of the bluffs and gentle hills near the Mississippi River. The setting and use of the house, however, set it apart from the run of city and suburban Tudor Revival houses in that it was specifically designed for entertaining in its riverfront site.

Raymond Maritz was born in St. Louis in August of 1893. He went to college at Washington University and was an officer within the architectural society on campus. To finish his school Maritz spent time at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, it was here that Maritz was greatly influenced by French design. Upon graduation Maritz started his first architectural firm with Gale Henderson<sup>13</sup>. Raymond Maritz volunteered with the American Field Services in France when World War I broke out in 1917. For this service he was awarded the Croix de Guerre. Upon returning after the war, Gale Henderson left to start his own practice. In 1920, Maritz created a new partnership with William Ridgely Young<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* "Hillcrest Club Building Burns; 8 Hospitalized." July 27, 1964; Foster, Al "Wood-Smith Castle: A Scottish Castle on the Mississippi River?" Saint Louis Home Magazine, December 1987.

<sup>11</sup> Esley Hamilton. "Raymond E. Maritz: An Appreciation." Lecture, Raymond E. Maritz: An Appreciation, Washington University, St. Louis, February 7, 1997.

<sup>12</sup> Amiser, Kevin and L. John Schott, *The Architecture of Maritz & Young: Exceptional Historic Homes of St. Louis* (St. Louis: Missouri History Museum, 2013), 7; Esley Hamilton. National Register of Historic Places Nomination. Brentmoor Park. September 1982. Published online at: <https://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/npsnr/82004716.pdf>; Beverly A. Fleming. National Register of Historic Places Nomination. Wydown-Forsyth District. July 1988. Published online at: <https://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/nps-nr/88000628.pdf>; Esley Hamilton. National Register of Historic Places Nomination. Carrswold Historic District. September 1981. Published online at: <https://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/nps-nr/82004889.pdf>; Paul Marsh. National Register of Historic Places Nomination. Maryland Terrace Historic District. September 1997. Published online at: <https://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/nps-nr/98001137.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid* 14.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*



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William Ridgely Young was born in Louisville Kentucky in November of 1893. He also attended Washington University to pursue architecture. Like Maritz, Young also attended school in France at the E.F. Art Training Center in Bellevue. During World War I, Young was enlisted in the army and served as a second lieutenant in the infantry<sup>15</sup>.

Besides homes, the firm of Maritz and Young also designed various building throughout St. Louis from offices to churches. Among those buildings are the Westwood Country Club (11801 Conway Road), Clayton City Hall (10 N Bemiston Ave, Clayton), Seven Holy Founders Church (6737 S Rock Hill Rd., Affton) and Annunziata School (9333 Clayton Road, Ladue)<sup>16</sup>. After Ridgely Young's departure following World War II, the firm continued with Maritz and his twin architect sons. An indication of the firm's stature is the decision of Washington University in St. Louis to add the entire collection of the firm's papers to its archives when the firm finally closed after 2000, only the third firm it has accepted. The university's School of Architecture also has named an endowed professorship for Raymond Maritz. The continuing popularity of the firm's work can be gauged by the frequency with which it is named in real estate advertising and in St. Louis Magazine's periodic listing, "The 10 Most Beautiful Homes in St. Louis," most recently in September 2016.

#### History of Eugene & Lotawana Nims

The history surrounding the mansion at Bee Tree Park is one that is an example of the elegance and nature of the historic home design. Designed by the architectural firm, Maritz and Young, the mansion was built for Eugene Nims and his wife Lotawana. Reflected in the abode is both the personality and life of the Nims as well as the Tudor Revival style that the Maritz and Young are remembered known for. There are no records of a landscape architect being involved with this property.

Eugene Dutton Nims was born on April 3, 1865 near Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. In 1886 he moved to Kansas City after a failed banking venture and became employed by an investment firm. When the Cherokee Strip, a large swath of land in northern Oklahoma, opened to settlers in 1893, many raced to claim a portion so they could settle into new towns and farms. Nims moved to this area to take advantage of the new frontier by opening a grocery store, and later organizing the Arkansas Valley Telephone Company in 1896. This company became the Pioneer Telephone and Telegraph Company of which Nims was president<sup>17</sup>. In 1904, the Pioneer Telephone and Telegraph Company would merge with the Bell Telephone Company and become the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company. In addition to being a director of Southwestern Bell, throughout his life at various times Nims was also a director of the First National Bank in St. Louis, St. Louis Union Trust Company, Scruggs-Vandervoort-Barney, Inc., Huttig Sash and Door Company, Dr. Pepper Company, as well as the president of the St. Louis Council of Boy Scouts in 1932<sup>18</sup>.

Mr. Nims had a lifelong passion for the Boy Scouts and often hosted campouts at the Bee Tree estate. In 1940 Eugene D. Nims was awarded the Silver Buffalo Award, an award that honors the service that the recipient has given to the Boy Scouts. After his death his legacy lived on in the donation his wife made to build the Eugene D Nims Lake at a Boy Scout camping area in southern Missouri. Given his experience coming from humble roots and rising to command a telephone empire, Eugene Nims wanted to support development of the nation's young men, as evident by his dedication to the Boy Scouts.

Mrs. Lotawana Nims was born Lotawana Flateau in Pittsburgh, Texas in 1877. She was the third of seven children and claimed to be of Native American heritage. Though her name is accredited to being Cherokee, she did not have any known Native American ancestors. However, her father knew some of the

<sup>15</sup> *ibid*

<sup>16</sup> "Raymond E. Maritz, Architect, Dies at 79." *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, 10 June, 1973.

<sup>17</sup> *Globe-Democrat*, "Eugene D. Nims, 88, Dies: Headed Southwestern Bell.", January 31, 1954.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid*.

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language and had a love for the Cherokee<sup>19</sup>. Growing up in Texas afforded Lotawana the privilege to enjoy outdoor sports. In her youth she was a champion shooter and set many records<sup>20</sup>. Named one of the most beautiful young ladies in Texas, Lotawana was married shortly after her eighteenth birthday to a man named Walker Ellis. It is unknown what happened to her husband, but they had no children<sup>21</sup>. Her high society connections eventually brought her to St. Louis where she met Eugene Nims. The previous marriage unfortunately led to scandal within the high society of St. Louis during her engagement and marriage to Eugene Nims.

After the Nims' marriage in 1914, Lotawana became an icon for the latest fashion trends among the wealthy and was often pictured and mentioned within newspapers. Lotawana Nims was an avid gardener, and was so adept at gardening that the National Garden Club visited her garden at Bee Tree on at least one occasion in 1937<sup>22</sup>. Many newspaper of the time make mentions of dinner parties and engagement announcements for the girls Mrs. Nims knew. The Bee Tree garden was designed to fit with the landscape of the river bluff, and included over 10,000 daffodils on the bluff below the house. To this day an occasional daffodil can be seen among the brush (Photo 5). Though the original garden has been changed the outline still remains and new flowers are in place to welcome visitors to Bee Tree Park.

When Lotawana Nims died in 1966 the contents of the property were put up for auction and the St. Louis County Parks Department set out to acquire the land and house. The property was purchased in 1968 using funds that had been donated by the Open Space Foundation and with matching funds from the Federal Government. A 1969 bond issue allowed for the park facilities to be built before the park finally opened in 1973. For a time period from 1974 to 2004 the Nims' Mansion was occupied by the Golden Eagle River Museum. Since 2004 the home has remained vacant and used for the occasional meeting space by St. Louis County.

### Conclusion

In 1936 an article was published with a photo and story about the Nims Mansion estate overlooking the rolling Mississippi (Fig. 40)<sup>23</sup>. The illustrations presented in the article show the home as it looked at that time. What is most striking, after observing the home in this early period and examining the home today, is that very little has changed. Back then it was just as awe inspiring as it is today, speaking strongly to the sites historic integrity.

The Nims' were lovers of nature, and as such treasured their country estate. They placed a lot of care into making sure that the garden was just right and that the surrounding area was filled with natural vegetation. When the Nims' hired Martiz and Young to build their home, they hired a team that was more than capable of building a home that would last, and in a style, Tudor Revival, for which they were well-known regionally.

The Nims' Mansion is an excellent example of the Tudor Revival style that has few comparisons within the Oakville area. This is why the Nims' Mansion is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria C, for ARCHITECTURE as an excellent example of the Tudor Revival style.

<sup>19</sup> Day, Judith, "The American Gardens of Lotawana Nims," *Spiritsail, A Journal of the History of Falmouth & Vicinity* (published by the Woods Hole Historical Museum), Vol 8, No. 1 (Winter 1994), accessed June 2017 at <http://woodsholemuseum.org/oldpages/sprtsl/v8n1-AmGardenNims.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> *Wichita Eagle* "A Champion Wing Shot," January 7, 1898.

<sup>21</sup> *St. Louis Post Dispatch* "A Bell of Dallas Weds.," December 22, 1898

<sup>22</sup> *St. Louis Star and Times* "Another Garden Inspected.," May 18, 1937, 13.

<sup>23</sup> *Women's Sunday Magazine- St. Louis Post-Dispatch* "An Estate Overlooking the Rolling Mississippi." May 10, 1936, 4-1.

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*Wichita Eagle* "A Champion Wing Shot." January 7, 1898.

*Women's Sunday Magazine- St. Louis Post-Dispatch* "An Estate Overlooking the Rolling Mississippi." May 10, 1936, 4-I.

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**Verbal Boundary**

SEE SITE MAP (Fig. 38)

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries include resources historically associated with the period of significance that contribute to the historic sense of the property. By following the tree line and the natural grade of the property, which slopes down on the east toward the Mississippi River, the boundary captures the rustic feel of the Nims' Mansion within Bee Tree Park. Outside of the nominated boundary the rest of the roughly 190 acres of the original Bee Tree has been developed by St. Louis County Parks for a variety of recreational purposes.

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Fig. 1 of 43: Servants' Entrance, camera facing southeast, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016



Fig. 2 of 43: Spiral chimney, primary elevation, camera facing southeast, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016



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Fig. 3 of 43: Exterior servant's staircase, camera facing south, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016



Fig. 4 of 43: Rear House, camera facing west, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016





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Fig. 5 of 43: Guest porch pulldown staircase, camera facing east, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016



Fig. 6 of 43: Rear patio from bottom, camera facing west, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016



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Fig. 7 of 43: Rear chimney, camera facing northwest, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016





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Fig. 8 of 43: Kitchen, camera facing east, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016



Fig. 9 of 43: Serving bells, camera facing east, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016



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Fig. 10 of 43: Interior window alcove, camera facing southeast, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016



Fig. 11 of 43: First floor fireplace, camera facing southeast, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016



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Fig. 12 of 43: Interior servant's staircase, camera facing west, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016

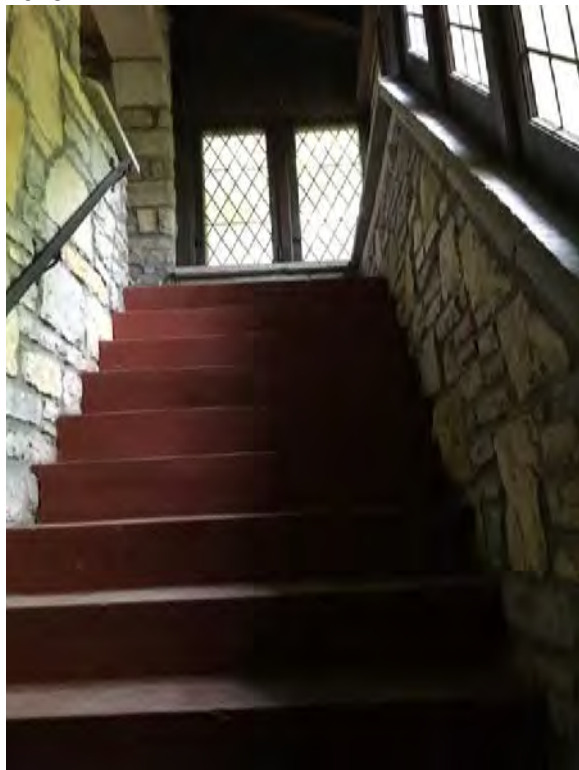


Fig. 13 of 43: Outside staircase, camera facing west, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016

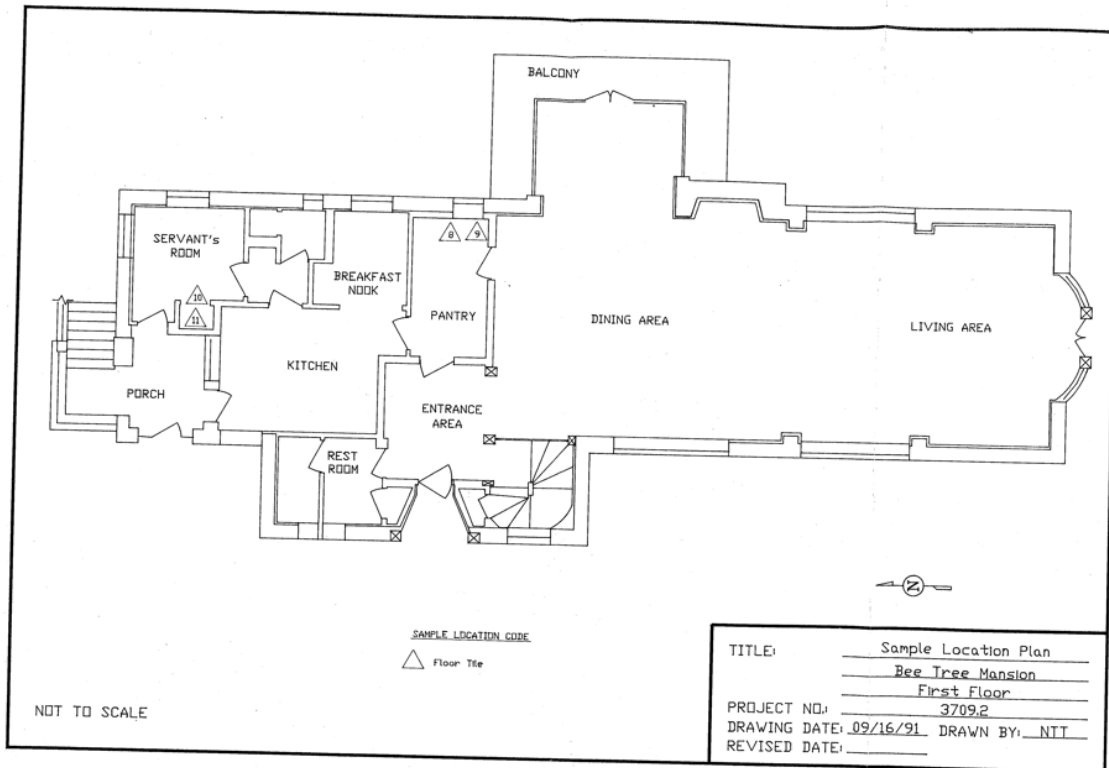


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Fig 14 of 43: Floor plan of first floor, 1991, current floor plan  
Source: St. Louis County Parks and Recreation

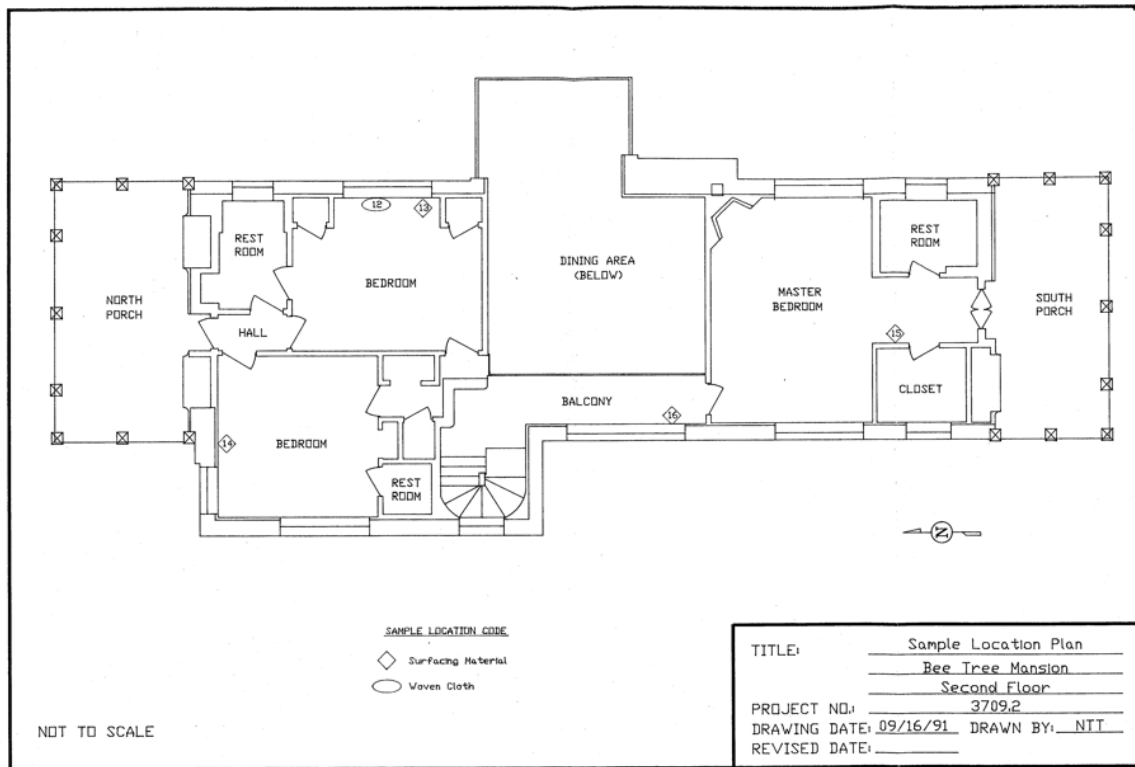


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Fig. 15 of 43: Floor plan of second floor, 1991, current floor plan  
Source: St. Louis County Parks and Recreation

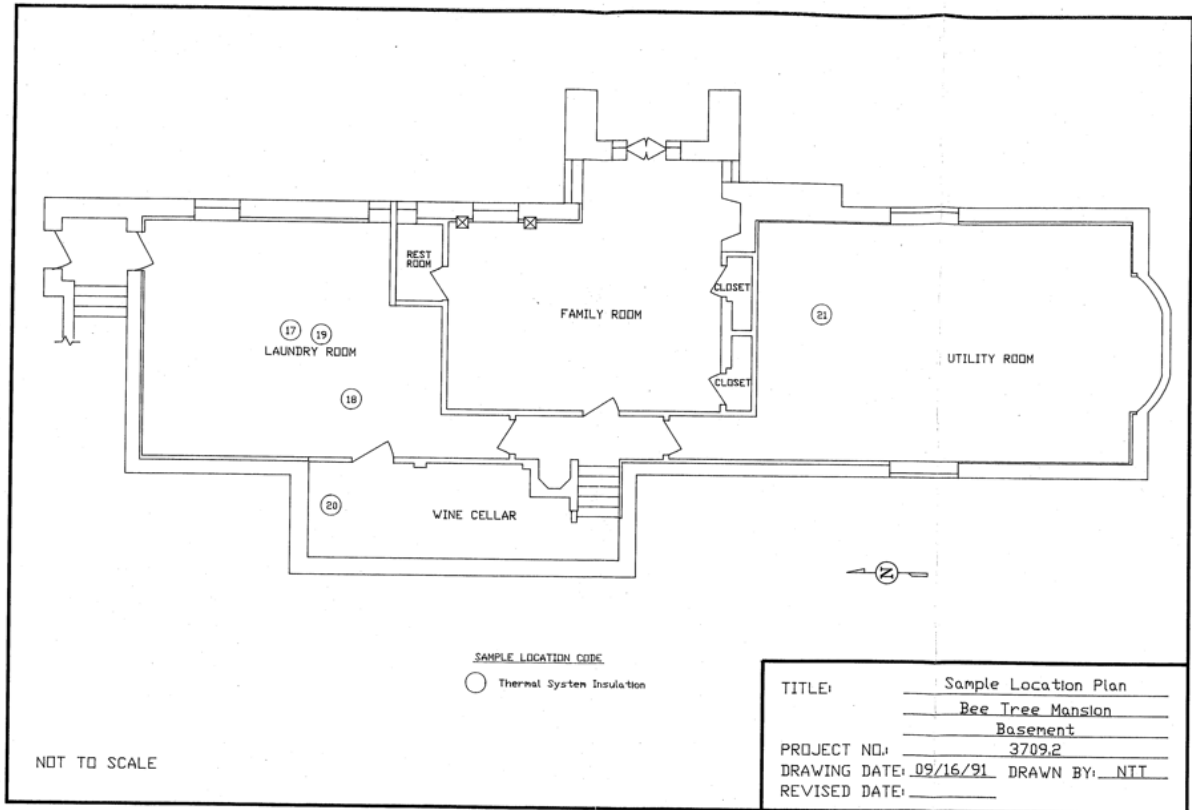


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Fig. 16 of 43: Floor plan for basement, 1991, current floor plan  
Source: St. Louis County Parks and Recreation



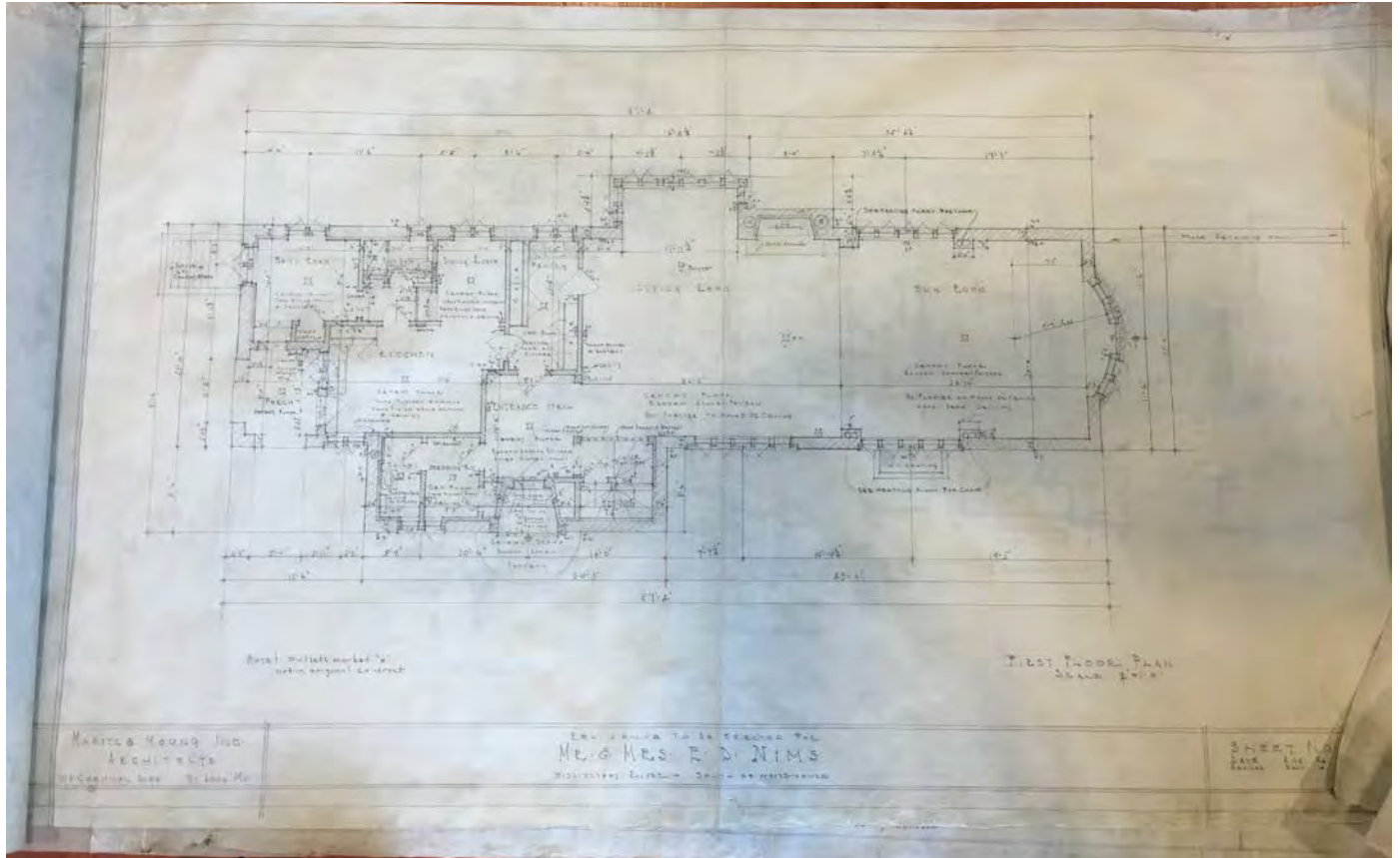


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Fig. 17 of 43: Original Floor Plan by Maritz and Young, 1928  
Source: Washington University Archives, Maritz and Young Collection (WUA00122)



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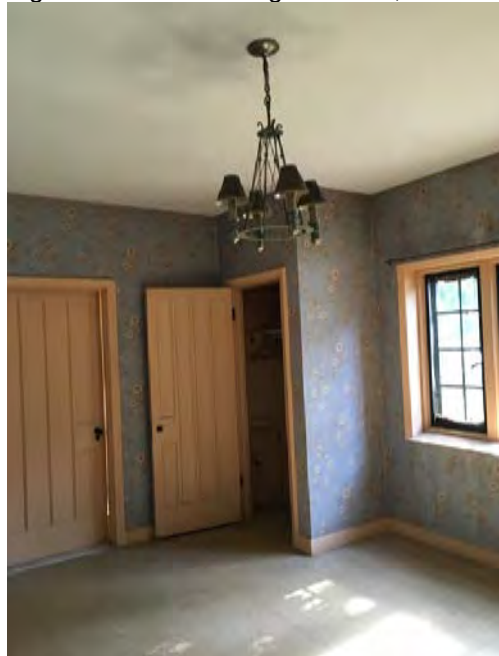
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Fig. 18 of 43: Western guestroom, camera facing north, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016



Fig. 19 of 43: Eastern guestroom, camera facing north, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016





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Fig. 20 of 43: Guest porch murphy bed, camera facing south, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016



Fig. 21 of 43: Master fireplace, camera facing northeast, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016



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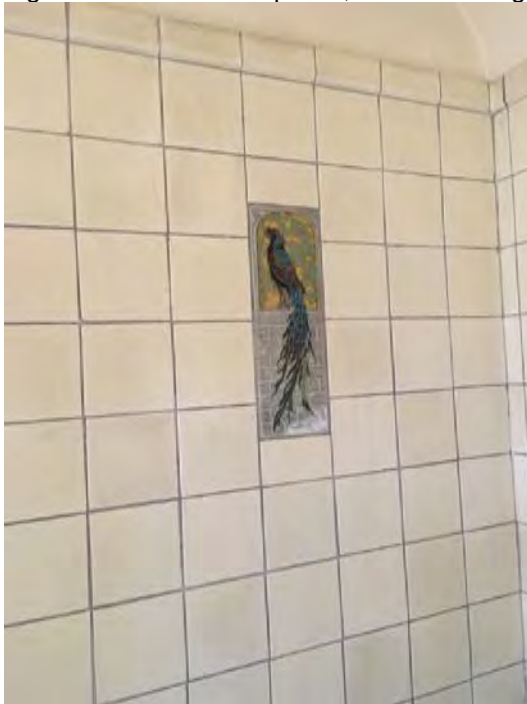
Section number Figures Page 28

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Fig. 22 of 43: Eastern parrot, camera facing south, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016



Fig. 23 of 43: Western parrot, camera facing south, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016



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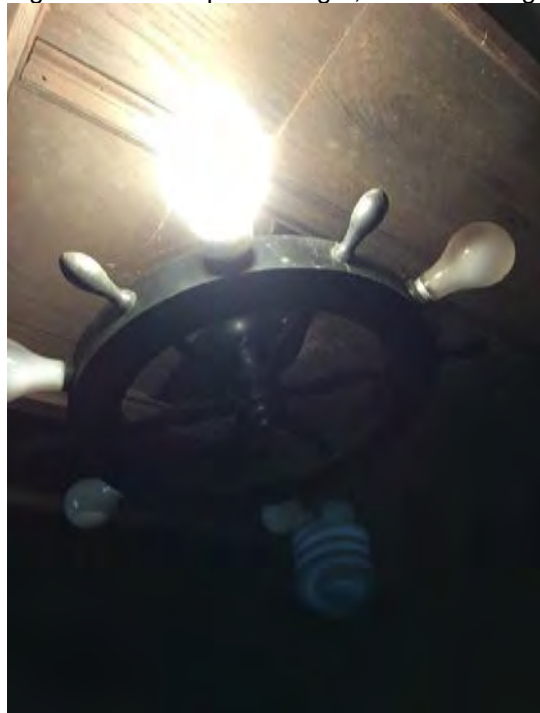
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Fig. 24 of 43: Basement fireplace, camera facing south, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016



Fig. 25 of 43: Ship wheel light, camera facing north, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016





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Fig. 26 of 43: West bench in garden, camera facing west, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016



Fig. 27 of 43: South bench of garden, camera facing south, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016



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Fig. 28 of 43: Garden fountain, camera facing east, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016



Fig. 29 of 43: Gazebo floor, camera facing north, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016





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Fig 30 of 43: Southern elevation of smokehouse, camera facing north, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016



Fig. 31 of 43: Western elevation of smokehouse, camera facing east, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016



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Fig. 32 of 43: Northern elevation of barn, camera facing south, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016



Fig. 33 of 43: Southern elevation of barn, camera facing north, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016



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Fig. 34 of 43: Western elevation of maintenance building, camera facing east, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016



Fig. 35 of 43: Eastern elevation of maintenance building, camera facing west, Photograph Taken by Nikole Meyer ca. 2016





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Fig. 36 of 43: Aerial map from 1937

Source: ArcGIS Map via St. Louis County Parcel Viewer, <http://maps.stlouisco.com/propertyview/>



Fig. 37 of 43: Aerial map from 2015

Source: ArcGIS Map via St. Louis County Parcel Viewer, <http://maps.stlouisco.com/propertyview/>



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Fig. 38 of 43: Boundary Map  
Source: ArcGIS Map



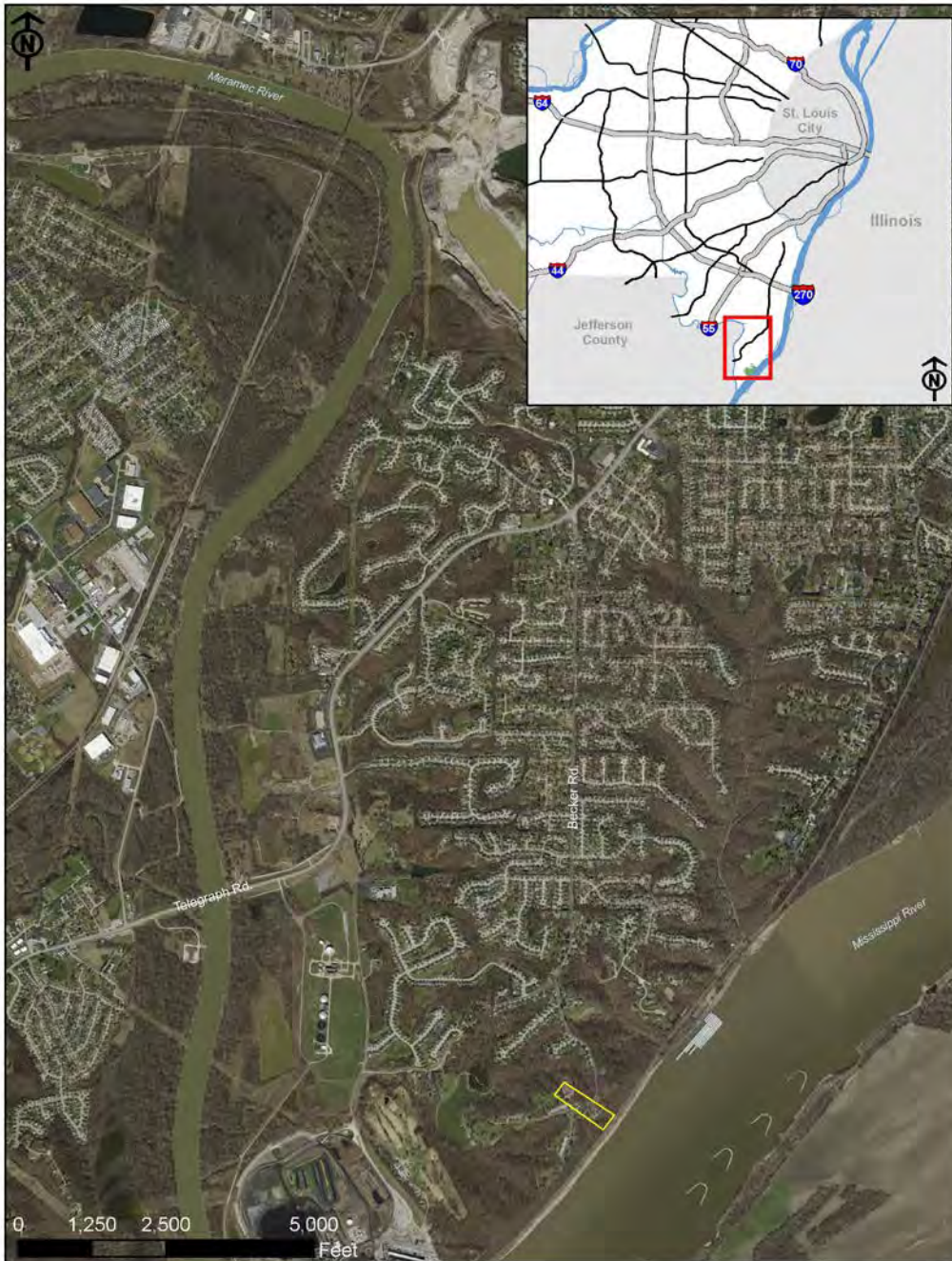


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Fig. 39 of 43: Contextual Map  
Source: ArcGIS Map



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Fig. 40 of 43: "AN ESTATE OVERLOOKING THE ROLLING MISSISSIPPI"  
Source: St. Louis Post-Dispatch May 10, 1936

# AN ESTATE OVERLOOKING the ROLLING MISSISSIPPI

*The Terrace... where luncheon may be served with the Illinois palisades in view.*

*A corner of the living room, lighted by tall windows.*

*Mr. and Mrs. Eugene D. Nims' Country Place Is in Modified French Provincial Style.*

*See Tree Farm, the Nims' country home, photographed from the path along the river bluff.*

### Flowering Plants For the Windows

WINDOW dressing this spring is a happy one. Even if you have given a thought to new plants, you will be able to select a few that are just what you need. Here are some suggestions for the window boxes and shelves that are used as an integral part of the scheme.

In many new window arrangements, window boxes and shelves with flowers and flowering plants are used as an integral part of the scheme. One common mistake is to use a window box that is too deep. A big window with draperies of yellow...

### Clean Pans

Burnt saucapans should never be cleaned with soda. Although it will remove the burnt portions, it will also make the saucapans liable to burn again. Instead, fill the pan with salt and water and leave for a few hours before bringing slowly to the boil. The burnt particles will come off without any trouble, and there will be no after-effects.

### Tailored Frocks

The device of the shirt waist mode has an opportunity to transform an old-fashioned theme into a...

not only are all the vegetables and most of the fruit for the table grown on the grounds (they are even sent up to the Nims' town house at 56 Portland place), but turkey, guinea, peafowl, chickens, pigeons must be tended. And someone must keep check on the flock of Hampshire sheep, and the milks and work horses, not to mention the pair of trained parrots, Polly Swift and Polly Nims, who do tricks and talk back. And the two boys, Fern and Jack, not so handsome.

Although, who came from the grape country near Baden-Baden, Germany, superintends the making of wine from grapes grown on the farm, and of brandy from cherries in the orchard; and of three delicate liqueurs, whose formulae he keeps in a secret. The wine is stored in an old cellar above which the service farm house once stood.

That's where the bulbs and roots are kept, too, before they are set out for "observation or cultivation" in the footpaths of the hill side, in plots which Mrs. Nims will dig down beyond a pergola in the terrace wall, and still later the use on the grounds. Boulders are chrysanthemums will bloom. Pansies also border the terrace now, and as butter tables, and on ledges out grow out of the heart of old stone of cress of the dogs the sweets are milled in the mill on Mr. Nims' birthplace in Fond du Lac, Mich. Mrs. Nims herself has transplanted hundreds of dogwood trees from thickets across the creek to the woods nearer the house. Red bud, forsythia that she can tell you about sheep-shears and the kind that grows tall in the seeking the light about in these woods, through which a path leads north to the vine-covered log cabin for guests.

Before Bee Tree Farm was built a shipboard farmhouse which Mr. Nims owned jointly with the late Melville L. Wilkinson stood on the property. It was set afire one day by a spark from a passing train and burned to the ground, taking with it eight of the largest oaks. The train still rumbles past under the bluff, but to quote Mrs. Nims: "We scarcely hear them and if we do, they only give us the time of day."

TO THE south the train runs down beyond a pergola in the terrace wall, and still later the use on the grounds. Boulders are chrysanthemums will bloom. Pansies also border the terrace now, and as butter tables, and on ledges out grow out of the heart of old stone of cress of the dogs the sweets are milled in the mill on Mr. Nims' birthplace in Fond du Lac, Mich. Mrs. Nims herself has transplanted hundreds of dogwood trees from thickets across the creek to the woods nearer the house. Red bud, forsythia that she can tell you about sheep-shears and the kind that grows tall in the seeking the light about in these woods, through which a path leads north to the vine-covered log cabin for guests.

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Fig. 41 of 43: Photograph of the main elevation of the Gene Bussen House located at 5501 Remington Villas Ct., Photograph taken by Daniel Gonzales, May 2017



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Fig. 42 of 43: Photograph of the main elevation of the Hillcrest Country Club located at 8100 Fine Road. Photograph taken by Daniel Gonzales, May 2017





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Fig. 43 of 43 Photo Key Map  
Source: ArcGIS Map

















































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: 8/18/2017      Date of Pending List: 9/19/2017      Date of 16th Day: 10/4/2017      Date of 45th Day: 10/2/2017      Date of Weekly List: 10/5/2017

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept       Return       Reject      10/2/2017 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.



Missouri Department of dnr.mo.gov

# NATURAL RESOURCES

Eric R. Greitens, Governor

Carol S. Comer, Director



## Memorandum

**Date:** August 9, 2017  
**To:** Paul Loether, National Register of Historic Places  
**From:** Toni M. Prawl, Ph.D., Deputy SHPO and Director, Missouri SHPO  
**Subject:** Nims Mansion, Oakville, St. Louis County, MO, National Register Nomination

Our state review board, the Missouri Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, approved the above nomination on **August 4, 2017**. All owners and appropriate elected public officials were notified and provided at least thirty (30) days to comment on the above proposed nomination in accordance with Section 36CFR60.6, interim regulations, using the exact notification format recommended by the National Register. **The enclosed disc contains the true and correct copy of the nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.**

Please find enclosed the following documentation:

- 1 CD with original National Register of Historic Places registration form
- Multiple Property Documentation Form
- Photographs
- 1 CD with electronic images
- Original USGS map(s)
- 2 Piece(s) of correspondence (cover letter and signature page)
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Comments:

- Please ensure that this nomination is reviewed
- The enclosed owner objection(s) do \_\_\_\_\_ do not \_\_\_\_\_ constitute a majority of property owners.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_