

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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

Saunders, Clarence, ^{House}~~Home~~

and/or common

Memphis Pink Palace Museum

2. Location

street & number

3050 Central Avenue

___ not for publication

city, town

Memphis

___ vicinity of

congressional district

Eighth

state

Tennessee

code

047

county

Shelby

code

157

3. Classification

Category

___ district

building(s)

___ structure

___ site

___ object

Ownership

public

___ private

___ both

Public Acquisition

___ in process

___ being considered

Status

occupied

___ unoccupied

___ work in progress

Accessible

yes: restricted

___ yes: unrestricted

___ no

Present Use

___ agriculture

___ commercial

___ educational

___ entertainment

___ government

___ industrial

___ military

museum

___ park

___ private residence

___ religious

___ scientific

___ transportation

___ other:

4. Owner of Property

name

City of Memphis Park Commission; Gordon Sprague, Director

street & number

2599 Avery Avenue/Mayor of Memphis, 125 N. Mid-America Mall 38103

city, town

Memphis

___ vicinity of

state

Tennessee

38112

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.

Shelby County Registrar

street & number

160 N. Main Street

city, town

Memphis

state

Tennessee

38103

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Memphis Landmarks Commission Survey

has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes ___ no

date January, 1978

___ federal

___ state

___ county

local

depository for survey records

Memphis Landmarks Commission

city, town

Memphis

state

Tennessee

38103

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

Located in Memphis on a twelve-acre site bounded by Central Avenue on the south, Tilton Road and Lafayette Street on the west and east respectively, Lafayette Place on the northeast and East Goodwyn Street on the northwest, the Pink Palace was designed as a mansion for Clarence Saunders, originator of the concept of the self-service grocery; however, it has been in use as a regional cultural museum since being donated to the City of Memphis in 1926. Although the house was named Cla-Le-Clare by Mr. Saunders after the combined names of his three children, Memphians have always called it the Pink Palace due to the building's veneer of pink Georgia marble.

Referred to by its architect, Hubert T. McGee, as "Romanesque American Rambling Design," the building, which is two stories in height with attic and basement, was constructed of concrete, brick, steel and timber and faced with random coursed ashlar marble. Two rectangular wings extend forward at a slight angle from a central pavillion on the main (south) elevation connecting it with end pavillions. A balustrated stone terrace with marble steps extends across the center of the facade. At each end of the rear elevation of the main structure and perpendicular to it is a rectangular wing composed of a two-story southern section and a one-story norther section. Except for the one-story extensions of the rear wings, which have gable roofs, the various sections of the mansion have hipped roofs covered with green tiles.

The focal point of the main (south) elevation is the central pavillion, distinguished from the rest of the facade by its symmetry and use of arched fenestration. Romanesque arches span the one-story flat-roofed porch while three semi-circular arched openings occur in the second story. The two side openings contain casement windows with fanlights, while the center opening contains a double leaf door, also with fanlight. All arched openings are emphasized with ashlar voussoirs and keystones. The porch roof is surrounded by a stone balustrade with marble piers. Directly above the central bay and flush with the wall plane is a Dutch gable containing an arched six-over-one double hung sash window.

In contrast to the central pavillion, the wings and end pavillions employ assymmetrical, lintelled fenestration. Casement windows with multi-light transoms are located on either side of a double leaf door, also with transom, in a curved one-story flat-roofed bay at the outer end of each wing. All other windows are nine-over-one double hung sash with wood architraves and polished stone lintels and sills. They are generally grouped in threes although these groupings alternate with single windows in the second story. A blind ellipitical arch is used to accent the first-story bay on either side of the porch. A hip roof dormer with paired windows is centrally located on each wing, while a Dutch gable with arched window is located on each end pavillion. Above each hip dormer is a stone chimney with arched cap; tall interior end stone chimneys with arched caps are found on the end pavillions.

In the remaining elevations of the building, window and door openings are treated similarly to those on the main elevation, although paired windows are used extensively. Other distinctive features of the rear elevations include a two-story bay with stone parapet at the rear of the central pavillion and, on the west rear wing, a small porch with flared gable roof supported by Tuscan columns of polished marble with carved stone consoles above the capitals.

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

FOR HCRS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JUN 11 1980
DATE ENTERED	11 '80

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 2

The original plans for the building's interior were never completed because construction was suspended when Mr. Saunders declared bankruptcy. Since 1926, when the mansion was donated to the City of Memphis for a cultural center, the building's interior, which contains 35,223 square feet of space, has undergone two renovations for conversion to museum use. The only area which remains relatively intact from the first remodeling is the two-story central lobby. The lobby's walls, floor and stairway were finished in marble; the ceiling is decorated with vaulted plaster arches supported by marble columns. The mansion today contains educational facilities, the museum library and administrative offices. An irregular-shaped two-story annex with 67,000 square feet of space was constructed in 1976 and officially opened in February, 1977. This new facility now contains all museum exhibits. The annex is positioned on the east end of the original building and extends southward towards Central Avenue. Its windowless facade is covered with buff brown tile brick.

The Saunders estate originally covered 160 acres and contained a blend of tree-covered lawn, flower gardens and fountains as well as a large curving lake suitable for fishing and boating and an 18-hole golf course 7,700 yards long, said to be the world's largest at the time. The mansion is today surrounded by twelve acres of land, most of the original estate having been absorbed by the Chickasaw Gardens subdivision.

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 type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input checked="" 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 1922 **Builder/Architect** Hubert T. McGee

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Pink Palace is significant architecturally for its scale and uniqueness of design; the building is also significant for its relationship to Clarence Saunders, founder of the Piggly Wiggly grocery store chain and originator of the concept of self-service grocery stores.

Mr. Saunders instructed Memphis architect Hubert T. McGee to draw up plans for the mansion and supervise construction; Mr. McGee was further instructed to spare no expense. Because of Mr. Sanders' requirements, the building was of unusually large scale to accommodate the inclusion of an indoor swimming pool, ballroom, stage, bowling alley, and indoor shooting gallery as well as a full complement of rooms for living space. While these interior plans were never completed, the exterior was finished and--except for the construction of the museum annex on the east end--has been altered very little. Large expanses of marble veneer and the use of Romanesque arches convey a feeling of massiveness to the exterior elevations. Unique in style and impressive in scale, the Pink Palace is one of Memphis' most distinctive landmark buildings.

Clarence Saunders was born in Amherst County, Virginia, August 9, 1881, into a poor tobacco-farming family. In 1896 he began his lifelong association with the grocery business when he went to Palmyra, Tennessee, to work in a general store. After extensive travel as a salesman for grocers, he began to learn why stores failed. The original idea for a systematically arranged self-service cash and carry store came to him in 1915. The first such store, named Piggly Wiggly, was opened at 79 Jefferson Avenue in Memphis in 1916. The Piggly Wiggly Stores, Inc. grew to a seven million dollar chain throughout the United States before Saunders went bankrupt in a one man battle with Wall Street in 1922. In August, 1923, the Piggly Wiggly empire and all other assets, including the unfinished mansion, which Saunders had begun constructing in 1922, passed to his creditors. During desperate attempts to sell Piggly Wiggly stock so that he could repay bankers, Saunders made the whole affair a matter of regional honor. Despite support from the Memphis Chamber of Commerce, the American Legion, Civic clubs, and other groups, the mansion was bought by the Garden Communities Corp., of Louisville, Kentucky.

In August, 1926, the mansion and twelve acres of surrounding land were donated to the City of Memphis by that corporation to be completed and developed as a cultural center for the public. The rest of the spacious grounds became today's exclusive Chickasaw Gardens residential section. The museum was opened in 1930 with several displays and exhibits of cultural and regional significance.

The boundaries of this nomination were drawn to the dimensions of the lot on which the mansion now sits since the site is significant as part of Clarence Saunders' original estate.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Newspaper articles from the Commercial Appeal and The Press Scimitar, dating from 1929 to 1977.
 Chumney, James R., Tennessee Historical Quarterly, Vol. 32, Nashville, Tennessee, Spring, 1973, pp. 3-21.

10. Geographical Data

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED
UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property 12
 Quadrangle name Northeast and Southeast Memphis, TN Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A	1 6	2 3 0 3 7 0	3 8 9 0 8 7 0	B	1 6	2 3 0 3 6 0	3 8 9 0 5 3 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	1 6	2 3 0 1 2 0	3 8 9 0 5 4 0	D	1 6	2 3 0 1 3 0	3 8 9 0 8 9 0
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

3050 Central Avenue, being lot 463 of the Chickasaw Gardens Subdivision, Shelby County Records, Tennessee. See area outlined in red on attached Sanborn Map.

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

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ellen Limberg, Christian Brothers College and Kay Benton
 organization Memphis Landmarks Commission date February 15, 1980
 street & number 22 N. Front Street, Suite 901 telephone (901) 528-2834
 city or town Memphis state Tennessee 38103

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

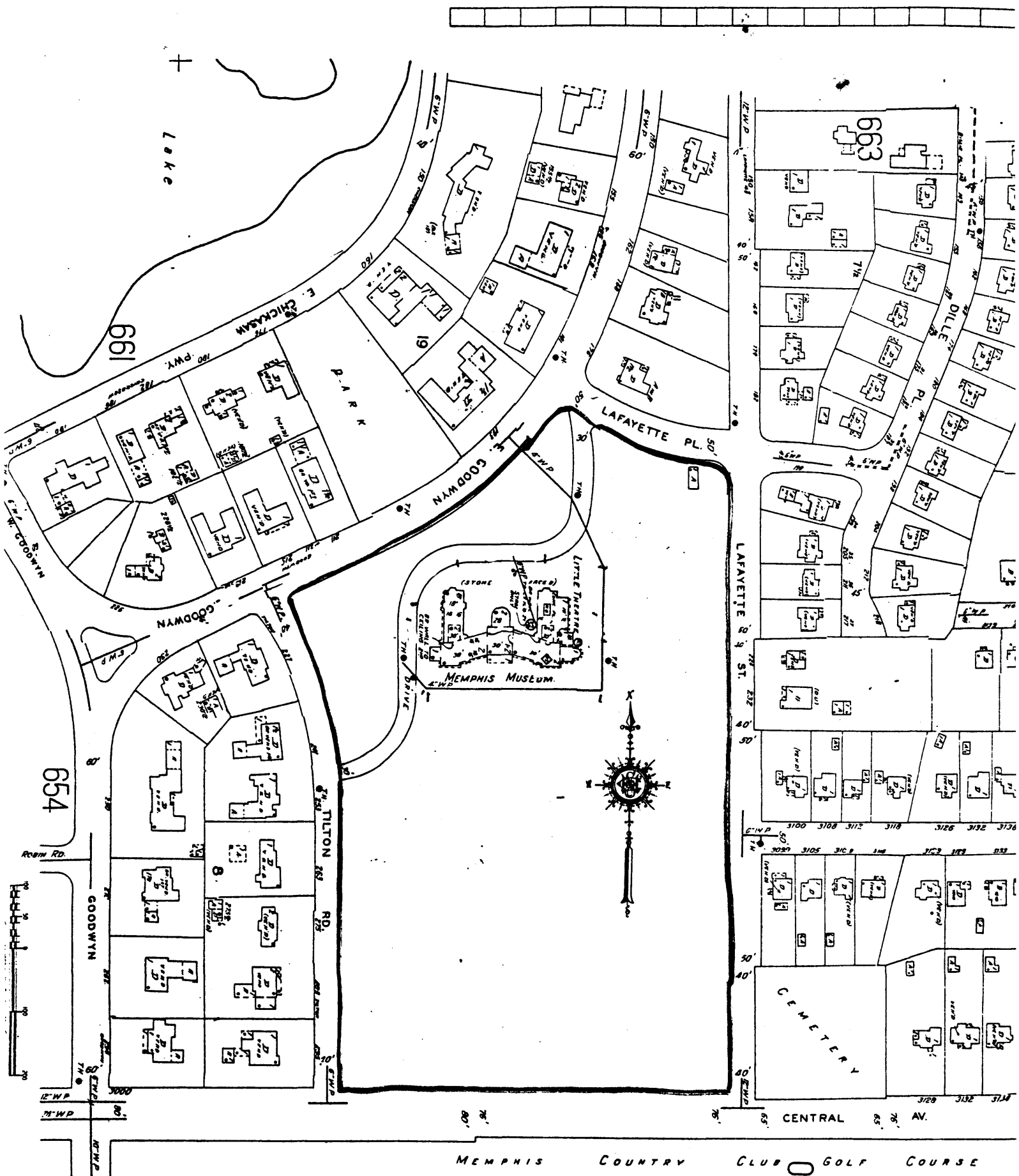
national state local

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Herbert E. Haysen
 title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission date 6/2/80

For HCERS use only
 I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register
 Keeper of the National Register Ray Luce date 7/9/80
 Attest: Kristin O'Connell date 7/9/80
 Chief of Registration

CLARENCE SAUNDERS HOME
3050 Central Avenue
Sanborn Map
1" = 200'



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

Saunders, Clarence, House

Shelby County, TENNESSEE

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION APPROVAL
(Name change to Memphis Pink
Palace Museum)

Keeper Amy Federman 9/14/89

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

JUL 31 1989

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

The Clarence Saunders House was listed in the National Register on July 9, 1980. The nomination states that Saunders began construction of the house, but never lived there. Started in 1922, the building has been known since 1930 as the Memphis Pink Palace Museum. This name not only reflects the public identity of the building, but it is its historic name. The nomination form should use Memphis Pink Palace Museum as the historic name and the Clarence Saunders House as the other or common name.

Herbert L. Hays