

PH0143880

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	MAY 30 1975
DATE ENTERED	JUN 30 1975

**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

The Little Loomhouses

AND/OR COMMON

Little Loomhouse; Wistaria Cabin; Tophouse

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

328 Kenwood Hill Road

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Louisville

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Third

STATE

Kentucky

VICINITY OF

CODE
021

COUNTY

Jefferson

CODE

111

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
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

Crafts & Folk Arts

NAME

Louisa Tate Bousman

STREET & NUMBER

328 Kenwood Hill Road

CITY, TOWN

Louisville

VICINITY OF

STATE

Kentucky

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Jefferson County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Fifth and Jefferson Streets

CITY, TOWN

Louisville

STATE

Kentucky

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky (Supplement)

DATE

1974

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Kentucky Heritage Commission

CITY, TOWN

Frankfort

STATE

Kentucky

7 DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Little Loomhouses are three frame cabins set on the north side of Kenwood Hill, a small steep eminence that rises out of the relatively flat bottomland on which Louisville is laid out south of the Ohio River. There are several other similar isolated hills including the one Frederick Law Olmsted utilized about 1890 as the site of what is now Iroquois Park. These hills form the southern visual boundary of the city and share striking views across Louisville to the river bending on the north and west.

The Loomhouse cabins are strung out, one above the other, on a narrow slice of land on the slope of the hill. Kenwood Hill Road, from which the cabins are usually approached, is at the bottom and Possum Path at the upper end. On the north western side of the property, the remains of an old quarry road runs parallel to the walkway that links the cabins. This roadway is said to follow an Indian Trail that once led to the top of the hill from the old Buffalo Trail. The road is unpaved and the walkway consists of bits of flagstone and concrete stepped walks.

The natural surroundings of the cabins remain essentially as they have always been since they were constructed before the turn of the century. Some older trees (200-year-old oaks) have been lost to storms and time, but major trees remain among the underbrush and wild flowers. No attempt has been made to change the character of the site.

Recent residential development (1964-1974) around and above the site has created serious drainage problems which have contributed to the deteriorated state of the structures and caused the loss of some trees and topsoil (correction of this problem is now being investigated by city departments).

The three structures that make up the Little Loomhouses teaching center are now in a deteriorated state of repair although they are in continuous use. The outward appearance of the Little Loomhouse (the bottom structure and residence of Lou Tate) has changed to some extent from the original of 1870 (the date is inscribed in one of the 4" x 8" rafters); a leanto was added at the rear in the 1890s but not enclosed until 1920 (it is now the kitchen). The roofing has been changed because of needed repair done on a low budget. Board-and-batten siding was installed in the late 1930s to cover the "vertical log" exterior walls of the original for better year-round use. The interior of the structure contained two large rooms, one up and one down. Around 1910 the interior was remodeled to make three rooms on the lower level, but the large fireplace and rustic materials were retained. The Little Loomhouse contains approximately 1800 square feet.

The center structure, "Wistaria Cabin," was named for the large Wistaria vine at the entrance door. It was built in 1895 of natural oak cut at a saw mill on the hill. Although roof repairs have been made, the three-room one-story building is the least changed of all the structures and is in the best state of repair. Wistaria Cabin contains approximately 900 square feet.

(continued)

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES Little Loomhouse c. 1870 BUILDER/ARCHITECT
Wistaria Cabin & Tophouse c. 1895

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Little Loomhouses consists of three board-and-batten cabins set, as Frank Lloyd Wright put it, "in the dignity of nature," on a hillside within view of Louisville, Kentucky, and the Ohio River. The oldest cabin, erected over a century ago, has served many purposes: first as a rock quarry office and caretaker's dwelling; fashionable summer house; since before the turn of the century, as the center of an artistic circle; and its present use as the residence of Lou Tate (Louisa Tate Bousman), a central figure in Kentucky's revival of the craft arts since the late 1930s. The two other cabins, both built before the turn of the century, serve as workshop, studio, classroom, and museum for the dying, spinning, weaving, preserving, and collecting of cloth which has been the devoted occupation of Lou Tate and the thousands inspired by her work.

The Little Loomhouses site has served for at least 75 years as a cultural core, not only for the people of Louisville and Kentucky, but since before the Second World War for people throughout the United States and in many countries of Western Europe.

The known history of the site dates back to treasury warrants issued in 1784. Before that, according to tradition, the Cherokee Indians called the site "Sunshine Hill" because of the exposed rocky top of the hill (above the cabins) where they cured meats and dried buffalo skins from hunts held along the base of the hill.

The Little Loomhouse (the lowest of the three structures that make up the complex) was first used as the office and caretaker's quarters for a rock quarry on what was then known as Coxe's Knob. Ox teams carried the rock downhill (to build nearby roadways in south Louisville) on the road that links the three cabins.

The first cabin was built for Benoni Fig, who had bought the hill in 1864 from members of the Phillips family. Fig had intended to timber the woods for use in his charcoal business, but found quarrying of the rocky site more lucrative.

The cabin came into possession of the prominent Louisville Gheens family, who made several changes and used it as a summer house. About 1891 a land company purchased the property, which soon passed into the hands of real estate developer Sam Stone Bush and his family. He made further changes in the original structure (now the Little Loomhouse) and built the two upper cabins, now called Wistaria Cabin and the Tophouse.

(continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Jefferson County Court Records.

Files of the University of Louisville Art Library and Louisa Tate Bousman.

The Courier-Journal and The Louisville Times (Louisville, 1934 to the present).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .37 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A 16 | 607700 | 4223820
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C | |
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

Deg. Min. Sec.

Latitude: 85° 46' 13"

Longitude: 38° 09' 27"

B | |
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D | |
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Robert L. Douglas, Acting President

ORGANIZATION

Kentucky Weavers, Inc.

STREET & NUMBER

328 Kenwood Hill Road

CITY OR TOWN

Louisville,

(WEL)

DATE

12/31/74

TELEPHONE

STATE

Kentucky

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

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

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

Cedric W. Melton

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer 5/28/75

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

R. A. W. [Signature]

DATE

6/30/75

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST

[Signature]

DATE

6.30.75

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

[Signature]

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

Tophouse, at the top of the hill, was also built of native oak around 1896. This cabin is most affected by the drainage problem. In 1955 a two-story glass-enclosed porch was added to two sides to supplement the available space. Crowded conditions had occurred as the teaching program became too large to accommodate the children, looms, and storage spaces. A small area surfaced with dirt and sand was developed in front of Tophouse to allow outdoor activities, such as spinning, weaving, dying, fleece auctions, and open house events when weather permits. Tophouse contains approximately 1300 square feet.

All of the structures have a natural weathered wood color and rough-sawn texture. They reflect the type of structure they were intended to be: casual, relaxing summerhouses with no great attention to detail. Owing to the steep grade of the hillside, all cabins have some storage area under the first level. Group value is strong as well as the relationship to the site.

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ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

In 1898, the Kentucky artist Etta Hast purchased the three structures and soon afterward established an annual Arts Festival in Louisville where many local artists, writers, and teachers met. One noted kindergarten teacher, Miss Patty Hill, who frequented the cabins, published a children's songbook that included the well-known song "Good Morning Dear Teacher." It is said that the Little Loomhouse was the place where the song "Happy Birthday" was first sung.

In 1902, Mrs. Wulf, a writer and artist, purchased the property. She held Sunday school classes in the present Loomhouse. This led to the formation of St. Mark's Church (still in south Louisville). Mrs. Wulf also held special Wednesday gatherings to which she invited Kentucky poets, writers, and artists such as Anna Virginia Mitchell, Reuben Post Halleck, and Madison Cawein.

Lou Tate's mother purchased the cabins for a retirement home and for Lou Tate to use for her weaving. It was on the heels of the Depression years and many people felt the need for creative crafts. Since 1935 Miss Tate had been active as a weaving representative on the National Committee on Folk Arts. She designed and directed the show "Folk Arts in Kentucky," which was held in New York and Washington, D. C.

Mrs. Herbert Hoover, wife of the president of the United States, pursuing her desire to develop programs to educate mountain children, came to know Lou Tate as they worked out a crafts program which stimulated students to make things for themselves at home and enabled them to support themselves in the future. Later Mrs. Hoover called on Lou Tate to help her locate an inexpensive small weaving loom. A few months later a friend, Bob McKnight, sought help from Dr. S. W. Mather who had made a small loom after watching a weaving demonstration at the newly opened J. B. Speed Art Museum in Louisville. From scrap lumber they made the first Loomhouse loom, using a policeman's billy as the top roller. Blueprints were made and sent to Mrs. Hoover. (It was Mrs. Hoover who while introducing Mrs. Tate at an official White House reception stumbled twice over Louisa Tate Bousman, then determined: "I'll not struggle with that name another minute. From this moment forth you are just plain Lou Tate.")

In 1938, Lou Tate Bousman and the Little Loomhouse received another noted visitor, Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt. From the support of Mrs. Roosevelt and Mrs. Hoover and the building of the first loom the Little Loomhouse idea was born. It has been constantly attended since then by the woman sometimes known as "The First Lady of Kentucky Folk Arts."

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ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

While attending the American Institute of Architects Convention in Louisville in 1940, famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright paid an unexpected visit to the Loomhouse cabins. He went almost unnoticed as he strolled among the buildings and trees on the hillside. He became so enamoured with the environment that others attending the convention had to come to the Loomhouse to remind him of the afternoon convention session where he was to speak. Wright described the cabins as "board-and-batten summerhouses set in the dignity of nature." That same architectural and environmental condition has been maintained.

The Loomhouse is home for the most extensive collection of genuine weaving drafts in the United States. There are approximately 800 drafts dating back to the late 1700s, some having been written on the backs of wills. The Loomhouse also has copies of some 7,000 drafts from old coverlets as well as a continuing exhibition of antique coverlets.

Louisa Tate Bousman and the Loomhouse are one subject. To quote an article by Mary Phyllis Riedley, a writer for The Courier-Journal, "there is no unraveling the two." Born in Bowling Green, Kentucky, Lou Tate has for 36 years been the coordinator, teacher, artist, historian, and driving force behind the Little Loomhouses. She has received visitors from all over the world. Thousands come each year to learn the art of making cloth. The Little Loomhouse weaving cabins' purpose is to preserve early Kentucky weaving and to develop contemporary handweaving with emphasis on the community classroom program whereby children may come to learn how woven textiles were developed, in a congenial and appropriate setting.

kenwod hill road

100'

loomhouse

wisteria cabin

tophouse

north



SCALE 1" = 30'

CENTER OF SITE :
85° 46' 30" LATITUDE
38° 9' 24" LONGITUDE

209.9' N 39° E

N 47° E

207.5'

70'

possum path

