Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

## PH0509434

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Frankfort

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Kentucky

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#### CONDITION

**CHECK ONE** 

**CHECK ONE** 

\_\_EXCELLENT \_GOOD

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\_\_DETERIORATED

\_\_UNEXPOSED

\_\_RUINS

\_\_UNALTERED \_\_ALTERED

\_\_ORIGINAL SITE

\_\_MOVED

DATE\_

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Murray State University Historic District, located in Murray, the county seat of Calloway County, consists of seven buildings at the southernmost section of the campus. This area is where the institution had its beginnings. The buildings included are: Oakhurst, the President's House (1917); Wrather Hall (1924, /Tisted on the National Register June 11, 1975/); Wilson Hall and Wells Hall (1925), the Murray State University Library (1930), the Administration Building (late 1950s) and the Education-Business Building (early 1960s).

Oakhurst, built in 1917, has been the home of Murray State University presidents since 1936. This two-story brick Colonial Revival residence with a hipped roof is situated at the southernmost area of the campus and is surrounded by a broad expanse of lawn.

The main facade has three bays and faces south towards Main Street. At the ends of both floors are coupled sash windows with stone lintels at their heads and sills. Enveloping the central bay is a pedimented portico supported by four Tuscan Doric columns and two engaged columns. This is approached by a broad flight of steps flanked by scrolled antepodia.

Above the sidelighted entrance with an elliptical fan window is a suspended balcony whose balustrade is of turned spindles. All the flared eaves are treated with simple brackets and the corners of the structure are given moderate emphasis by the application of brick quoins.

The east side is interrupted by a bay window in the center. On the west is a porte-cochere whose two square brick columns resting on a connecting wall support an enclosed, gable roofed porch above. A second enclosed porch spans the width of the rear wall's second level. This section of wood is covered by a pent roof and is set flush with a brick section beneath.

A parking area and a brick garage have been erected to the west of the residence. Another exterior addition is a large concrete patio approximately 60 feet behind the The interior features flooring of local yellow poplar and simple plaster cornices in the principle rooms. In the core is a dog-leg staircase with oak railing and a spiral newel at its base (for room arrangement see accompanying floor plan).

PERIOD	AF	REAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CH	IECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW	
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1500-1599	AGRICULTURE	ECONOMICS	LITERATURE	SCULPTURE
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1700-1799	ART	ENGINEERING	MUSIC	THEATER
1800-1899	COMMERCE	EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	PHILOSOPHY	TRANSPORTATION
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SPECIFIC DATES (see continuation sheet) BUILDER/ARCHITECT				

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

For its impact on education in the eight counties in far western Kentucky composing what is known as the Jackson Purchase, Murray State University is undoubtedly the most significant institution in that region. Founded in 1922, the school is the only state university west of Bowling Green. The Murray State University Historic District incorporates the oldest, most historic section of the campus, including Wrather Hall (placed on the National Register June 11, 1975); Oakhurst, the home of the founder of the university; Wells Hall and Wilson Hall constructed in 1925; the library building; and two modern buildings that lie with the district boundary and are architecturally harmonius with the older structures.

This district can also be said to include some of the finest architectural designs in western Kentucky. They range in date from 1917 to the early 1960s and represent an assortment of styles: Colonial Revival, Collegiate Gothic, Renaissance Revival, eclecticism, and modern fuctionalism. Despite Murray State University's relatively distant location from any major metropolitan center, the structures involved are nevertheless a reflection of distinctive building trends; and because of the late date of the college's establishment (1922), this campus is totally void of the Greek Revival that permeated an untold number of other campuses in this general southern region.

An appropriate scale is maintained among the structures concerned, and due to the repeated use of like construction materials, an admirable harmony exists. In the case of more recent building, efforts were taken to respect the integrity of the preexisting ones—the only exception being the Administration Building.

Prominent native architects were involved in the design of several of this district's components. The firm of Joseph and Joseph of Louisville, responsible for Wrather Hall, was a noted team for almost half a century, earning distinction for designs throughout the southeast as well as in Kentucky. Lee Potter Smith of Paducah was for many years among the leading architects of western Kentucky, receiving several

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRA	APHICAL REFEI	RENCES		
Woods, Ralph H. Murray	y State University	First Years	of Progress.	Murray: Murray
State University, 1973.				/ <b>P</b>
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# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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Murray State University Historic District

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PHOTO #2; BLOG. #3

Wrather Hall, dedicated in 1924, is the oldest school building in the historic district. This modified Collegiate Gothic structure has three floors and is constructed of brick with limestone components, and its shape is that of a rectangular block with a large projection extending from the central rear. The design was by the firm of Joseph and Joseph of Louisville. (For detailed information see National Register listing June 11, 1975.)

Wilson Hall, erected in 1925 and designed by W. Earl Gore, is located directly east of Wrather Hall and immediately south of the library. The construction is of brick laid in Flemish bond with limestone trim, and its style may be said to be "Collegiate Gothic" even though elements characteristic of this revival are not numerous.

The building is symmetrically arranged and has three floors. The ground level is sunk in a half basement that has six evenly spaced courses of projecting masonry and a string-course and water table at the heads and sills of its windows respectively. The main facade of Wilson Hall faces south and is dominated by a centered pavilion that provides its strongest vertical expression. This contains a stilted arch entrance at the second level whose access is a flight of steps bordered by stone-coped walls. This entrance is embellished with pilasters on the sides and with an entablature and broken pediment featuring a shield with the Murray crest above. Stonework continues above to frame and give accent to the pavilion's center window on the third floor. A stringcourse separates the topmost floor from a stone-coped blocking course that envelopes all four walls.

Rising above the blocking course within the pavilion is a semi-circular gable topped with stone finials at its apex and to the sides. The balance of the facade is pierced by windows having alternated 18 or 27 lights with metal mullions and stone sills. The bays next to those on the ends project from the walls, and like other projections are emphasized by smooth stone blocks and widely spaced quoins at their corners.

The east and west facades are identical with each featuring an arched entrance at the ground level trimmed with stone and a fenestration of 18 and 27 light windows like

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those on the main facade. The southern portions of these walls are windowless and are detailed with a pattern of stone blocks forming an inner frame.

The north facade features two sections on east and west that are like the end facades including two identical arched ground level entrances and identical stone detailing. The remainder or central portion is like that of the south facade excepting the entrance bay.

The ground level contains eight classrooms, four offices, two restrooms and the former school gymnasium. A corridor twelve feet wide spans the length of the building to connect the east and west entrances. Two additional corridors flank the east and west ends of the former gymnasium connecting the main corridor with the two entrances on the north.

The first floor or second level is essentially identical in room and corridor arrangement with that of the first level.

The second floor or third level contains twelve classrooms, four seminar rooms and a library space. The latter two are placed above the former gymnasium and locker rooms of the first level.

In the northwest corner of this district is Wells Hall, a U-shaped women's dormitory of four floors erected in 1925. The structure is of brick with limestone trim and faces North 16th Street to the west. The approach from this direction is a semi-circular drive.

A wide flight of steps provides access to a portico on the west facade that establishes the second floor as the main entrance. This portico envelopes the central five bays of the second and third floors and is composed of six Egyptian columns whose shafts have a slight entasis. These support an unadorned entablature that is surmounted by a deck with piers centered over the columns. A stone cornice separates the third floor from a blocking course that extends around all sides of the building. Above the portico, the blocking course is interrupted by four sections of blind balustrades and in the center of these is a stone panel treated with a circular wreath and swags in relief. Atop this is a scrolled pediment—an element also appearing

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over the double doors with sidelights and transom of the second floor. This entrance is flanked on either side by two windows having semicircular fanlights. All other windows are rectangular; those of the second and third floors are topped with flat arches whose keystones and outer voussoirs are of limestone. Stone stringcourses are at the heads and sills of the fourth floor's windows. These and all other trim of the same material contrast sharply with the brickwork laid in Flemish bond.

Four entrances at the ground level also serve the main facade. Those flanking the portico's base have transom lights and are framed by engaged columns and an entablature of stone. Those serving the projecting sections are sheltered by semicircular porticos of wood. A stone stringcourse is at the heads of the ground level's openings, and two feet above the building's base is a stone water table.

The east facade faces a spacious quadrangle lawn and provides an important closure to this formal exterior space. This side's fenestration is symmetrically arranged and has three entrances located on the axis of the building's center and wings. The north and south facades are identical and contain no entrances.

The first floor (ground level) contains mechanical rooms, student health services and offices. Originally this level served as the school cafeteria. The second floor contains a large lobby, a formal lounge, offices and dormitory rooms. The third and fourth floors are similar in plan excepting a lounge and sun room in the top level. Primarily, these contain dormitory rooms.

Facing east towards North 16th Street is the Murray State University Library, a Renaissance Revival structure designed by G. Tandy Smith. Constructed in 1930, it is situated north of Wilson Hall and southeast of Wells Hall—structures that preceded its erection. The west facade looks out over the quadrangle lawn and commands an impressive view. However, with only minor exceptions, east and west facades are identical.

Dominating each is a centered pavilion served by a portico with six columns that have Egyptian capitals. Four of these support an entablature having modillions beneath the corona. This entablature continues around all sides and its frieze is inscribed with the structure's purpose and date over the porticos. In other sections are the incised names of renowned literary figures which are separated by

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panels decorated with mythological figures in relief. The other two columns are below extruded corners and rest on pedestals of the same nature.

The double doors of the entrance of each are contained in a colossal stilted arch opening that is highly enriched with bronze components which appear to be of Art Nouveau inspiration. The edges of the arch are splayed and the opening is framed by smoothly finished stone blocks and quoins that also appear on the pavilion's corners and in the parapet atop the entablature. In the brick sections of the latter are tablets with scrolled pediments and its summit is treated with paterae and a band of running vine.

Flanking the entrance are one-story stilted arch windows trimmed with limestone. Above each is a rectangular window which has a screen of latticework. To the north and south of the portico are three colossal stilted arch windows that achieve the same height as the entrance. These are enriched with decorative work in bronze, trimmed with limestone, and surrounded on three sides by a soldier course.

The north and south ends are fenestrated in the same manner as the sections flanking the pavilions on east and west. The former have four windows each, whereas the latter have three. The entablature and the parapet coped with stone continue on these ends.

In 1966 an annex to the south designed by Lee Potter Smith was constructed. This three-story addition with a half sunk basement of brick, is essentially a rectangular volume with a flat roof, and is set twenty-five feet away from the Main Library but is connected with it by a glass enclosed walkway. Efforts were taken in the design to harmonize this with the original structure through the use of same materials. In addition, the Main Library retains a maximum of visual attraction since the newer section is treated with minimal embellishment.

In addition to the Main Library's annex, two other constructions of recent date are included in the Murray State University Historic District, and like the library annex these were designed by Lee Potter Smith of Paducah.

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In the shape of an angular "S" is the <u>Business and Education Building</u>, an early 1960s structure of brick with block-like geometrical shapes having crisp lines. Originally, the building's two sections housing separate departments were of four floors each, the three floors were later added to the eastern (Education) portion. Among the most significant features is that it was designed in respect to the older buildings between which it is placed, i.e., Wells Hall to the north and Wrather Hall to the southwest.

The Administration Building faces Main Street and is located directly east of Oakhurst, the President's home, and south of Wilson Hall. Constructed in the late 1950s, its plan is rectangular in shape and the building has five floors with a basement level. The materials employed include white concrete and exposed granite. Main entrances are on the east and west and windows extend from floor to ceiling. At the topmost level is a continuous balustrade and surrounding the building is a covered walk employing flat arches.

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awards at the state level for his constructions. In addition to his designs for the Education-Business and Administration Buildings, he was also responsible for the annex to the Main Library which his father, G. Tandy Smith, had created over thirty years earlier.

The college is a product of a report issued by the Education Commission, created in 1920 to survey and study the public school system in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. They found the condition of the schools unsatisfactory and one of their recommendations to remedy the problem was to establish "more and better teacher-training schools"—one in eastern Kentucky and one in the western part of the state (Woods, pp. xix, l).

Several towns in western Kentucky were interested in having the normal school located in their communities, including Murray in Calloway County. Murray, the county seat, was a small town in the region with no good roads and no means of crossing rivers except by ferry. Settlers came late to Murray and Calloway County, as to most of the Jackson Purchase, which forms the western tip of the State. The area was made safe for the European settlers only by treaty in 1818. Murray was incorporated in 1844, twenty-two years after Calloway County was established.

The people of the county responded enthusiastically to the drive to raise funds for the proposed school. Under the provisions of the Act of the General Assembly of 1922, it was necessary for \$100,000 to be provided as a gift to the State from the area where the normal school was to be located. In only one month's time, pledges of approximately \$100,000 were secured in Calloway County for the construction of the college. A total of 1,352 citizens contributed money. The average donation was \$82.10, the largest, \$2,500. 'It is not what the people of Murray have promised to do but what they have already done that counts' (Woods, p. 5). On the strength of the donation Murray was chosen as the site of the new 'Normal School' on September 1, 1922. As the new building was being planned and constructed, the Murray Normal School opened its doors in temporary quarters in the Murray High School Building on September 23, 1923, with Dr. John Wesley Carr as its first president. There were 202 students and five faculty members on the first day.

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Morehead was selected as the location for the Eastern Normal School.

Much of the credit for securing the location of the school in Murray must be given to Judge Rainey T. Wells, founder of Murray State University and its second president. Judge Wells, a former attorney and member of the General Assembly, was a dominant force in influencing the Assembly to create a state normal school commission and in securing the legislation establishing the two additional normal schools.

Included within the district is "Edgewood," the home in which Dr. and Mrs. Wells were living when the school was founded. The college, in fact, was constructed around the house, which was built in 1917. It remained the private property of Dr. and Mrs. Wells until 1936 when it was acquired by the University during the presidency of Dr. James H. Richmond. At that time, it was renamed "Oakhurst," the name it bears today. All presidents have lived in this house except for Dr. John W. Carr, the first president, who resided in his private home on Sixteenth Street.

Other buildings encompassed in the district include: the old "Normal School Building," or Wrather Hall, the charter building of the school. It was for the construction of this building that the initial funds were raised. Wells Hall, constructed in 1925 for use as a dormitory, was named for Dr. Wells. Wilson Hall (1925), known variously as "Classroom Building," Liberal Arts Building," "Administration Building," and "Library Building," secured its present designation from James F. Wilson, of Mayfield, Kentucky, member of the first Board of Regents of Murray State. This historic classroom building was the first on campus to be constructed with state-appropriated funds. It is located near the front of the original campus a few yards northeast of "Edgewood." It is about 100 feet east of Wrather Hall. Almost all departments have, at some time, held classes in Wilson Hall. Originally this building included the college gymnasium on the first floor and the library on the third floor. Today it houses the headquarters for the Journalism Department, the Murray State News (campus newspaper), and the Shield (yearbook).

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Specific Dates:

Oakhurst, 1917

Wrather Hall, 1924

Wilson, Wells Hall, 1925

Library, 1930

Administration Building, 1950s Education-Business Building, 1960s

Builder/Architect:

Wrather Hall, Joseph and Joseph

Wilson Hall, W. Earl Gore Library, G. Tandy Smith

Education and Administration Buildings, Lee Potter Smith

Form No. 10-300a (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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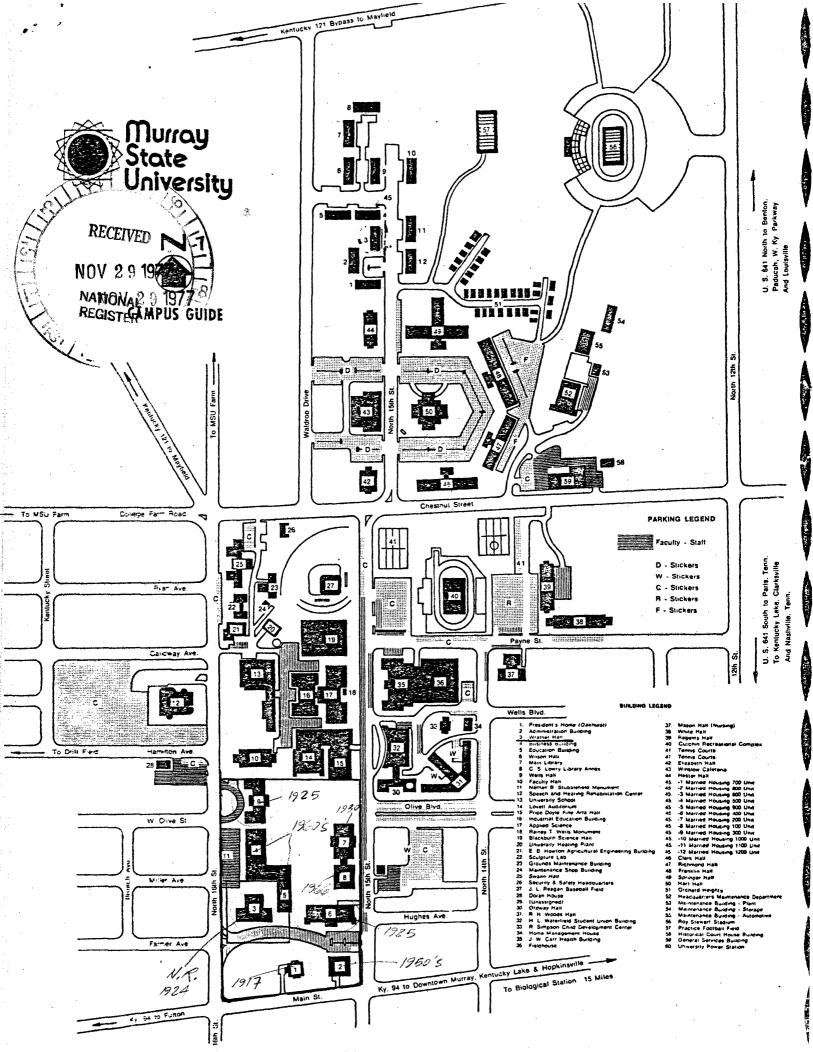
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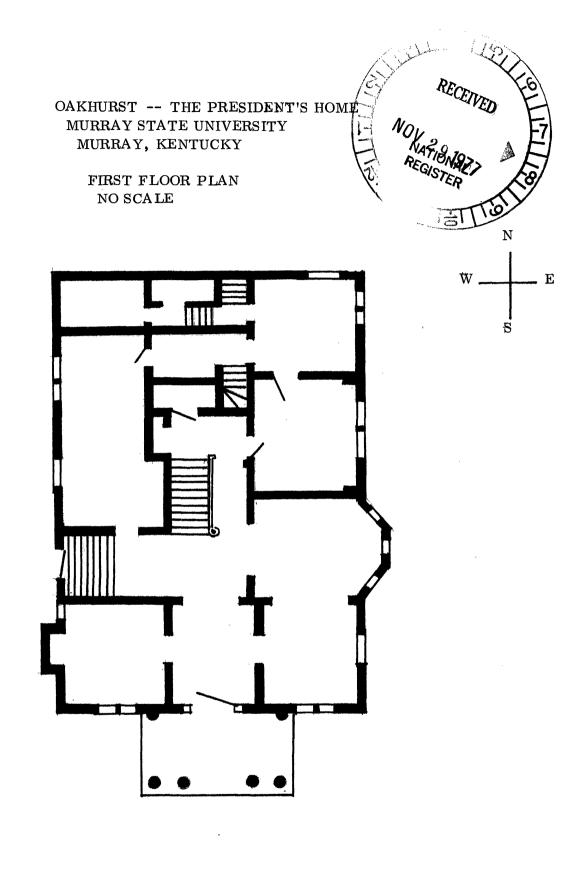
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The district boundary at the southwestern extent is marked by the northeast corner of Main and North 16th Streets and continues north, on the east side of North 16th Street to Wells Hall. The boundary then turns eastward to the rear of Wells Hall to the west side of North 15th Street; turns southward to the northwest corner of North 15th and Main Streets, turning westward along the north side of main Street to the northeast corner of Main and 16th Streets.



Murray State University Historic
District
Calloway County
Kentucky

Murray State University
''Campus Guide''
Map 3. District outlined in red.



Murray State University Murray Calloway County Kentucky

Sketch plan by Anthony James/DK May 1977 No scale. Map 2. First floor plan of Oakhurst.

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#### ADDENDUM:

### Item No. 1:

The Kentucky Heritage Commission requests that the National Register momination for the Murray State University Historic District be changed to the Murray State University Historic Buildings. These properties would include the following:

Oakhurst Wilson Hall Wells Hall

Wrather Hall (listed on the National Register June 11, 1975)

#### Item No. 10:

Acreage: Approximately 3 acres

Verbal Boundary Description: The nominated acreage with regard to the three institutional buildings includes each site and the surrounding twenty feet. The nominated area for Oakhurst includes the house site, frontage to Main Street and 20 feet surrounding the remaining three sides.

UTM Reference Points: UTM references are sufficient as originally stated. The buildings are concentrated within a small geographic area and it would not be feasable to calculate each site individually.