

**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 Grassmere

and/or common same

**2. Location**

street & number (3700 block) Nolensville Road N/A not for publication

city, town Nashville N/A vicinity of ~~KODORIKSINACRISTOK~~

state Tennessee code 047 county Davidson code 037

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Cumberland Museum Trustees

street & number 800 Ridley Boulevard

city, town Nashville N/A vicinity of state Tennessee 37203

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Davidson County Courthouse

street & number Public Square

city, town Nashville state Tennessee 37201

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title N/A has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date N/A N/A  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town N/A state N/A

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input 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

Grassmere is an imposing two-story, five-bay brick house with a metal gable roof, gable-end chimneys, and stone foundation. It was built ca. 1815 in the Federal style and remodeled from 1875-1881 into the Italianate style with the addition of an ornate veranda and tiered central portico, a bracketed and denticulated frieze, and segmental-arched windows (altered from rectangular). Located five miles southwest of downtown Nashville in the 3700 block of Nolensville Road, Grassmere stands on 200 acres of rolling land with scattered woods and fields. Entrance to the property is from the commercial Nolensville Road on the east; a dirt road leads 0.6 miles to the house. On Grassmere's southern border is Elysian Fields Road, the south side of which is fully developed with single-family residences. A railroad is on the north. On the west, about 90 acres of Grassmere's original 300 acres of land has recently been sold; it is bordered on the west by Trousdale Drive, railroad yards, and Interstate 65 and has been set aside for development into light industrial, warehouse, and office uses. The remaining nominated 200 acres include Grassmere and its brick kitchen, smokehouse, double-pen log house, frame barn, gazebos, carriage house, cemetery, and fenced garden which are separated from view at the boundaries by natural tree lines. Grassmere and its outbuildings are all in fairly unaltered form and retain integrity. The house has not been changed from the 1870s remodeling and is in excellent condition. The outbuildings remain fairly unaltered from their construction dates and range from excellent to poor condition.

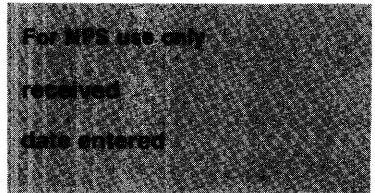
Grassmere faces east and has brick walls laid in the Flemish bond pattern on all four elevations. The facade is five bays wide with 4/4 light segmental-arched windows, arched louvered shutters, and a central bay glazed single-leaf door with transom. The 1870s veranda has a two-story central portico. Turned posts, brackets, dentils, and a balustrade decorate the veranda. Paired brackets and dentils are repeated on the frieze and the return gables of the side elevations. On the north and south side elevations of the house, small, attic-story 4/4 light rectangular windows flank the chimneys in addition to segmental-arched windows like those of the facade. A two-story veranda with plain square posts, an enclosed staircase and a balustrade on the second story extends across the rear or west elevation of the house. The five bays of the rear contain windows like those of the facade; windows on the first story are floor-length on both the facade and rear elevation. Single-leaf doors are located in the central and fifth bays. The fifth bay door has a flat lintel with radiating voussoirs. At the south end of the veranda is a small one-story, one-room gable-roofed brick addition.

Grassmere's interior plan follows the I-house placement of two-over-two rooms on either side of a central hallway. Major alterations were done during the 1875 overall renovation. The downstairs west room was partitioned into two parlors and coal-burning fireplaces were installed. The doors of walnut burl and Victorian woodwork remain from this period. Two bathrooms, gas lines, and electricity have been added since 1930.

A metal-covered, gable-roofed breezeway with square posts connects the fifth bay of the rear veranda to the one-story, one-room brick kitchen. The kitchen has a metal gable roof, a flush gable chimney, a wide single-leaf door with stone lintel on the east side, and one rectangular 4/4 light window with stone lintel on the north and west elevation. A brick smokehouse is located a few yards south of the kitchen. Its gable roof is covered with wood shingles and a single-leaf door with stone lintel is located on the east elevation. According to information contained in family correspondence dated 1877, the kitchen and smokehouse were built during the 1875-81 remodeling.

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Southeast of the smokehouse is a double-pen, half-dovetail log house. It has a wood shingle gable roof, central chimney, shed porch, and two single-leaf entrances. The log building appears to have been built as two separate buildings; the logs of each pen are different. One of the pens is traditionally known as the Dunn's original house and is said to have been moved to this location and combined with another log pen prior to the turn of the century.

The Dunn family cemetery, in a somewhat deteriorated and neglected state, is located behind the log building and is surrounded by a low, dry-stacked stone wall. North of the cemetery is the location of the original garden which is now nearly completely overgrown. Other outbuildings include a small, octagonal gazebo which has a metal roof and latticework, a small gable-roofed carriage house with Gothic bargeboard, located northwest of the house which appears to remain from the mid nineteenth century, and a deteriorated frame barn from the nineteenth century in a fenced field north of the house. All outbuildings contribute to the significance of Grassmere.

## 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** ca. 1815 **Builder/Architect** Michael C. Dunn/builder

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Grassmere, a large two-story brick house built around 1815 on a 300 acre farm is nominated under National Register criteria B and C for local significance. The house is one of Nashville's oldest and is an unusual example of a Federal period house updated with Italianate-style architectural embellishments. It is rare in the city as a house with most of its original farm acreage, outbuildings, and rural setting intact. Further, it is associated with an early settlement family, and has remained in the same family for five generations, virtually unaltered since the early 1880s.

Architecturally Grassmere is unusual. It was built as an austere two-story, five bay Federal style house. During an 1875–81 renovation Italianate-style features were added and the rectangular windows were made segmental-arched. An ornate one-story veranda with a two-story central section, arched shutters, and a frieze with paired brackets and dentils were added to the facade. A two-story veranda was added to the rear. The massing, Flemish-bond brick walls, and gable-end chimneys of the Federal style house remained intact. The house with its outbuildings and land provide a complete picture of Grassmere as it existed in the early 1880s.

The land on which Grassmere is located was part of a 640-acre land grant from the State of North Carolina to William Simpson in 1786. Michael C. Dunn, the builder of Grassmere, purchased 272 acres of the land from Simpson's son, Alexander, in 1810. Dunn had come to Middle Tennessee from Wythe County, Virginia. In 1801 he had purchased 101 acres of land on Mill Creek nearby and married Elizabeth Rains, daughter of John Rains who accompanied James Robertson in the founding of Nashville, arriving Christmas day 1779.

It is believed that until Grassmere was built, Dunn and his wife lived in a log house he built during this time, and that this log building is half of the double-pen log building located close behind Grassmere; the log building is said to have been adjoined to the other log pen and moved to the current site long before the turn of the century.

The exact date of Grassmere's construction is not known. Architectural and historical evidence indicates that the house was built prior to 1830, probably around 1815. All four elevations of the house are laid in Flemish bond brick; the Dunn's family grew in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, eventually to eight children, suggesting a need for more space.

The children of Michael and Elizabeth Dunn, with the exception of William who moved to Alabama, married and raised families near Grassmere. The daughter Margaret and her husband, Lee Shute, obtained Grassmere and 300 acres of land from Michael Dunn in 1846. Shute was a grandson of William Shute, who settled in eastern Davidson County on land received from North Carolina as a grant for Revolutionary War service. Their son, William D. Shute, and his wife, Lavinnia Lafayette Hillard from Mobile, Alabama, were given Grassmere and several tracts of land in 1859. Four of their children survived to adulthood: Maggie, Kate, Lavinnia, and Lelia.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 200 acres

Quadrangle name Antioch, TN

Quadrangle scale 1: 24000

### UMT References

A 

1	6
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5	2	3	8	8	0
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3	9	9	3	8	3	0
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B 

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5	2	4	1	4	0
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3	9	9	3	5	4	0
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C 

1	6
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5	2	3	7	6	0
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3	9	9	3	1	2	0
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D 

1	6
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5	2	2	7	4	0
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3	9	9	3	1	6	0
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E 

1	6
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5	2	2	7	2	0
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3	9	9	3	9	4	0
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F 

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G 

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H 

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**Verbal boundary description and justification** The boundaries are shown on the accompanying Davidson County Property Map #133. The boundaries were chosen to include the 200 acres surrounding the house and outbuildings deeded the museum for a nature study center because the acreage is part of the original 300 acres and is important as the historical farm setting of Grassmere

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

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Shain Dennison

organization Metro Historical Commission

date April 1984

street & number 701 Broadway, Customs House

telephone 615/259-5027

city or town Nashville

state Tennessee

# 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.

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer signature Herbert L. Hayer

title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission

date 6/8/84

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Alvin Byrum Entered in the National Register date 7/17/84

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

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Grassmere

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Kate married William Croft of South Carolina and they acquired the property from her parents. Their two children, Margaret (b. 1889) and Elise (b. 1894) were born in the house and lived there through early childhood. In 1902 William Croft, an engineer, moved the family to Cuba. Kate returned to Nashville where she died. The daughters remained in Cuba with their father, returning to Grassmere for summers in their youth. After their father's death, they returned to Grassmere permanently in 1931.

In 1964 the Croft sisters deeded Grassmere to the Cumberland Museum, retaining life tenancy and with two stipulations: that the major part, about 200 acres, including the house, be developed and operated as the "Grassmere Nature Study Center," and that the lesser part, less than 100 acres, be subject to the Museum's decision as to how it could produce income for the Museum. According to the deed, the property including the house can be used for "an educational program in nature study" and "such other purposes as in the judgement of the Board of Directors or Trustees are reasonably related to such operations."

Margaret died a few years ago. Elise, now 89, is confined to her bed in an upstairs room of the house. The Museum recently sold eighty-four acres fronting on Elysian Fields Road for development as a business park to provide funds to preserve Grassmere and operate the remaining 200 acres as a nature study center. Natural tree line barriers isolate Grassmere from the development and other surrounding densely developed areas, hiding it from view from any public streets.

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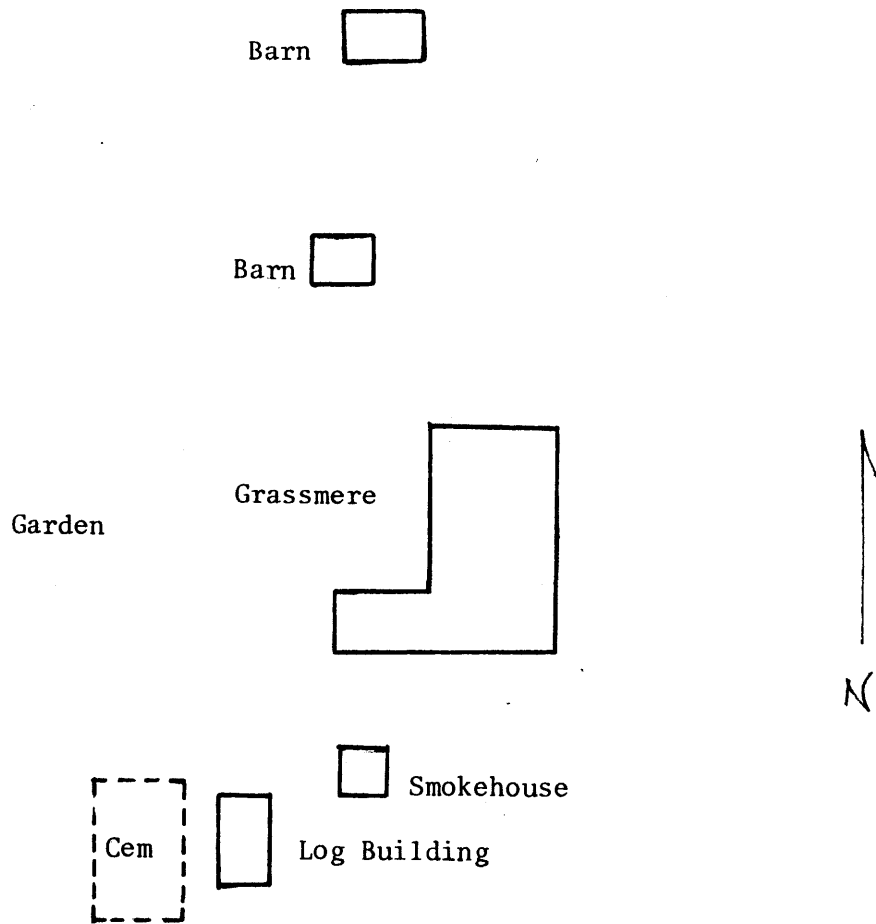
Major Bibliographical References:

Davidson County Deed Book Research by Linda Mason, April, 1984.

Grassmere Historic Structures Report. Graduate Student Project, History Department,  
Middle Tennessee State University, 1984.

McGaw, Robert A. "Grassmere" (unpublished paper in possession of Metro Historical  
Commission, Nashville), 15 November 1983.

Measures, Lenard. "Grassmere", The Historic Register, Nashville: Historic Nashville,  
Inc., Vol. 2, Jan.-Feb. 1983.

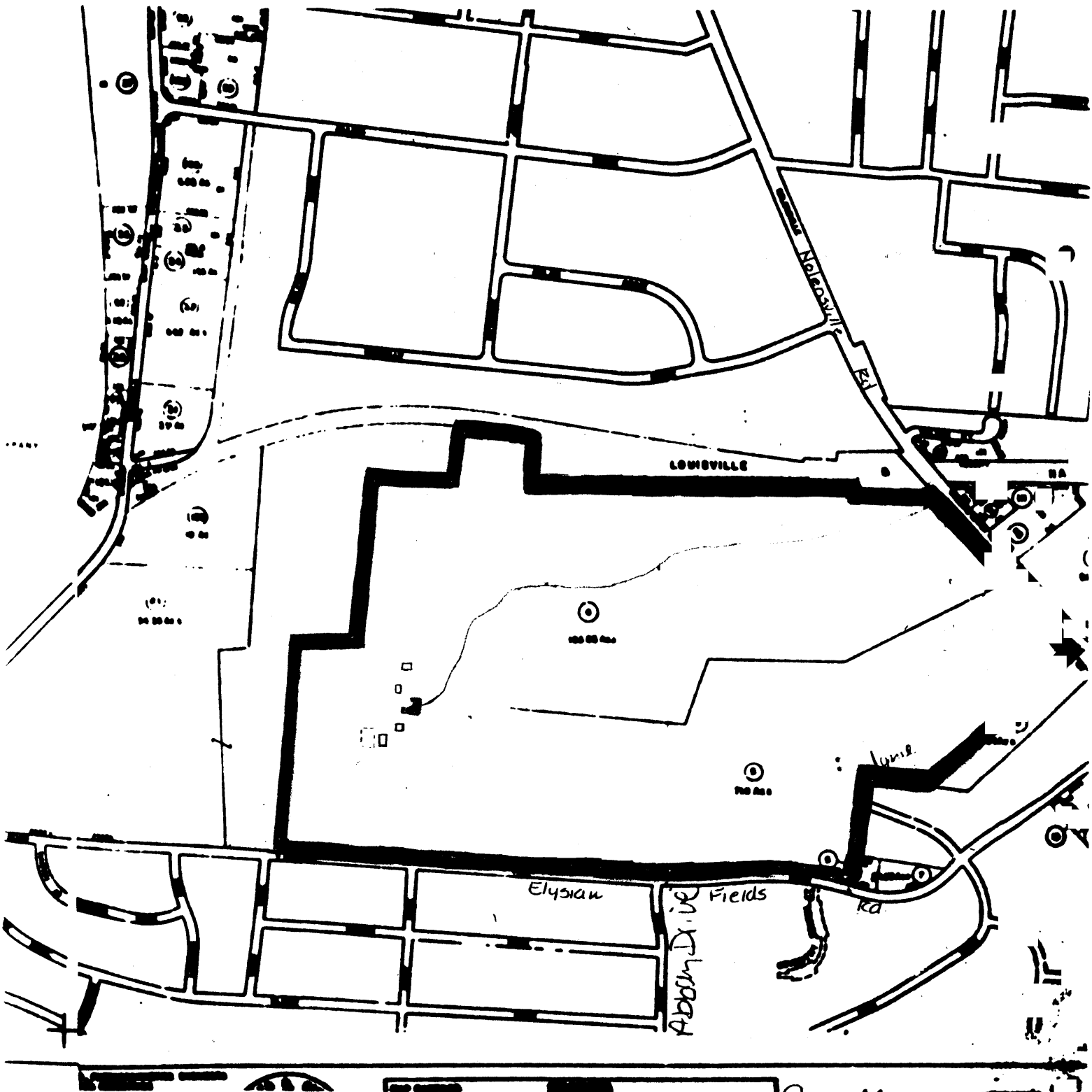


SITE PLAN

Grassmere  
3700 Nolensville Road  
Nashville, Davidson County, Tennessee

Not to scale





Prop. Map 133 - G70

GRASSMERE  
 3700 Nolensville Road  
 Nashville, Davidson County, TN



Approximate Scale: 1" = 750'

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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Grassmere

Davidson County, TN

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Keeper

Amy Schaefer 1/23/89

12/19/88

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National Park Service**

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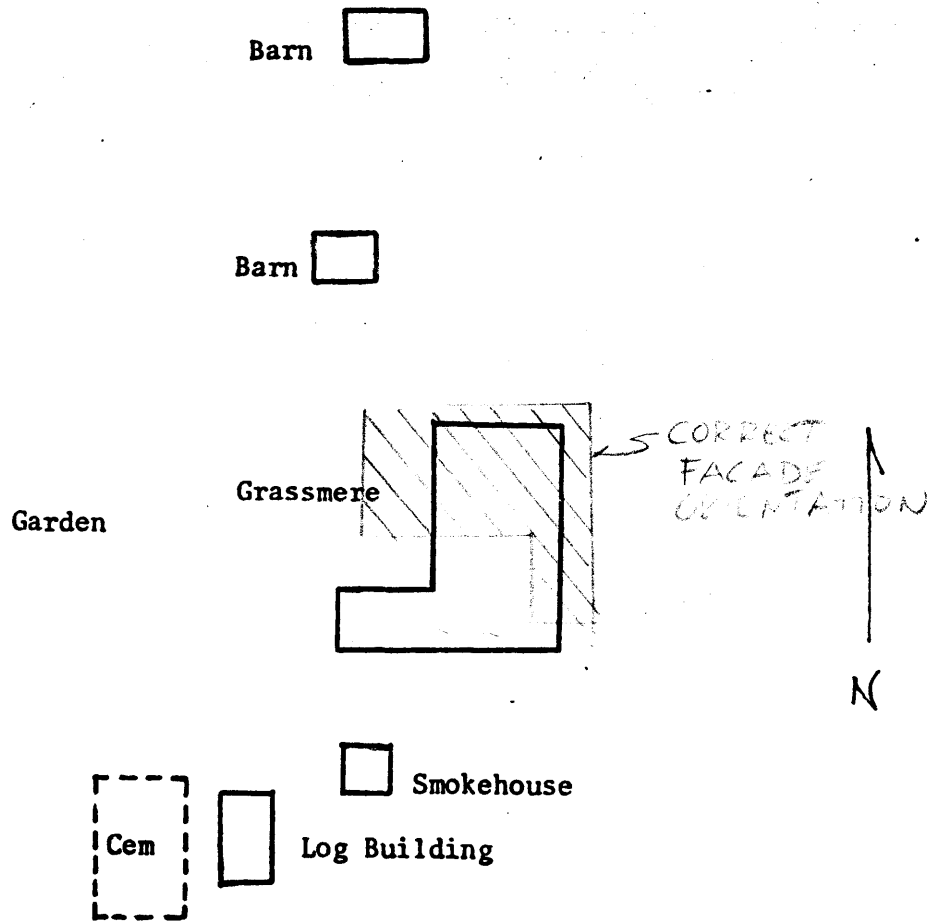
Grassmere

Section number   N/A   Page   1  

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The nomination states that the house faces east. Grassmere actually faces north.  
The directions in the nomination and on the photographs labels are incorrect.

12/19/88

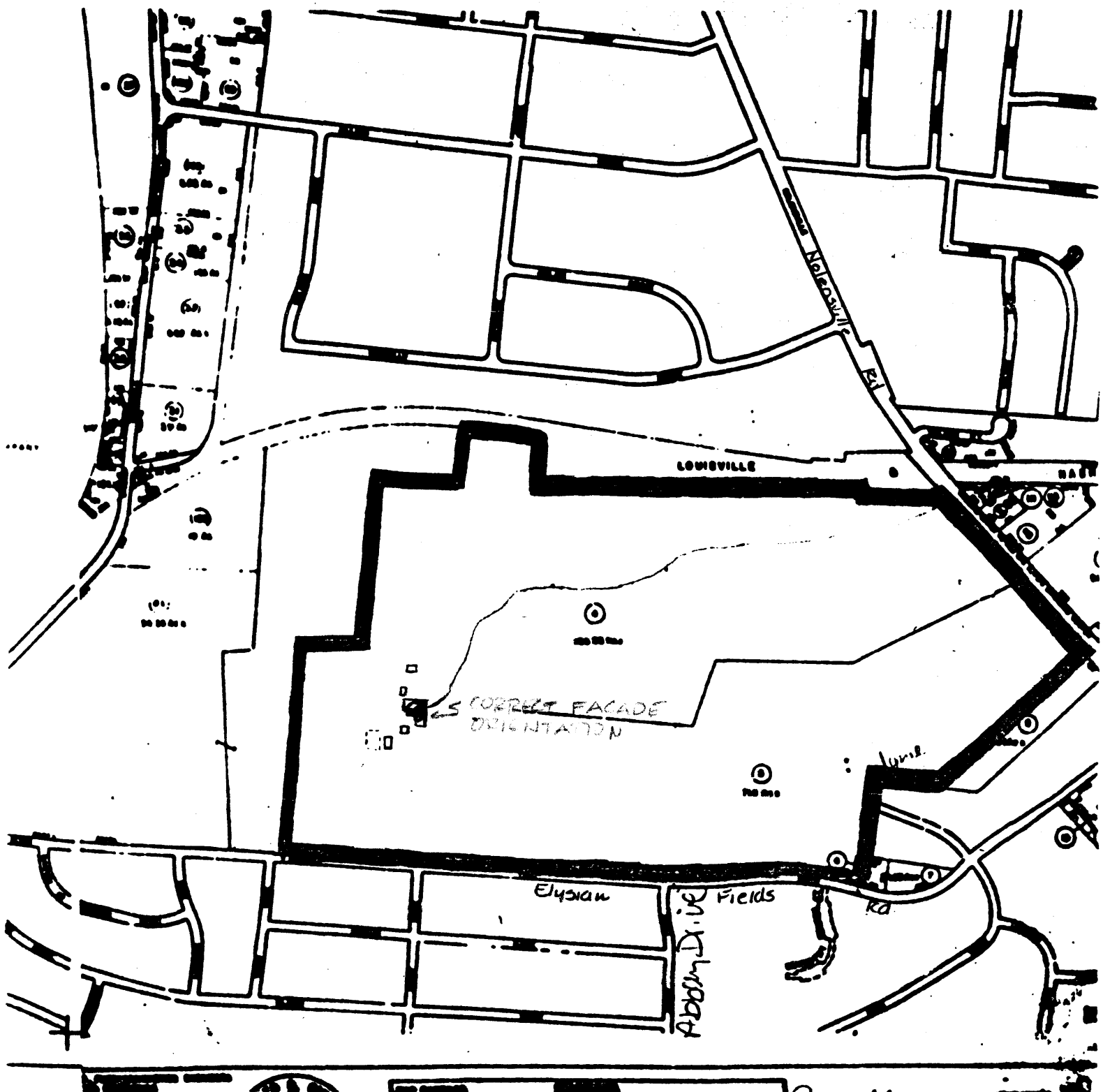


SITE PLAN

Grassmere  
3700 Nolensville Road  
Nashville, Davidson County, Tennessee

Not to scale

12/19/88



Prop. Map 133 - C70

GRASSMERE  
 3700 Nolensville Road  
 Nashville, Davidson County, TN



Approximate Scale: 1" = 750'