

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: New York	
COUNTY: Columbia	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
"Steepletop"

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Edna St. Vincent Millay House

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Austerlitz

STATE: New York      CODE:      COUNTY: Columbia      CODE:

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	_____	_____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Ellis

STREET AND NUMBER:  
"Steepletop"

CITY OR TOWN: Austerlitz      STATE: New York      CODE:

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Columbia County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Hudson      STATE: New York      CODE:

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY:       Federal       State       County       Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:      STATE:      CODE:

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DATE

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## 7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

"Steepletop" is an estate comprising between 700 and 800 acres. Edna St. Vincent Millay moved here with her husband, Eugen Boissevain, in 1925, and lived here until her death in 1950. It then became the home of the poet's sister Norma, and her husband, Charles Ellis, who are the present occupants.

The main house at "Steepletop" is a two-story white clapboard house with a steep gable roof and a central chimney. It is said to have been built around 1870. Its front, or south, elevation faces a terrace beyond which the ground falls off sharply toward East Hill Road. This elevation has four bays, and a door protected by a shed roof set between the two central bays.

The main entrance of the house is in the west elevation, which faces a circular driveway. The doorway has sidelights and a semi-circular transome. It is protected by an arched, single-story entrance porch with a gable roof. To the north of the doorway is a single-bay, single-story projection with a shed roof. North of this is a one-and-a-half story ell with a gable roof, and an interior chimney. On this elevation, the ell has three shed dormers and a single small window on the first floor. The north end of the ell has a double door (recently fixed in place) with two windows, and a single window above in the gable end. On the east elevation, a new screen porch is attached to the ell near its northern end. There is a single shed dormer above the porch.

The main doorway leads into a small stair hall with a stone floor. To the south of this hall is the parlor, which extends the whole length of the south elevation. This room contains several photographs of Edna St. Vincent Millay and many objects which belonged to her and her husband. These include a bust of Sapho, two pianos, and a desk made for the poet by Peter Myer. The curtains, made of linen with a flowered pattern, belonged to the Boissevains. The parlor has a wide brick mantle with a wooden top. On the walls are several paintings by the present occupant, Charles Ellis, including a portrait of Boissevain. On the east wall is a portrait of Mrs. Ellis by Henry V. Poer.

Directly east of the hall is the dining room, which has a brick fireplace. North of the hall is the kitchen, which was remodelled by the Ladies Home Journal in 1948, and featured in that magazine. To the west of the kitchen is a small pantry, and to the north is another small room containing a wood stove. North of this is a large storage room, which has a newly installed concrete floor, a lavatory, and new closet. This room contains a file cabinet in which are tapes of readings of Millay's poetry.

Upstairs to the south of the stairway is the library, on all four walls of which are shelves containing books which belonged to Millay. At the northeast corner of the main section is the poet's bedroom, which contains furniture used by her as well as many other objects which she owned, including many dresses which she wore while giving readings of her poetry. The room has a brick mantle with a semi-circular hearth. At the southeast corner of the main section is a bathroom, and west of it is a small bedroom containing shelves installed by the present owners, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Ellis,

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Edna St. Vincent Millay made herself one of the leaders of the Bohemian cultural movement which centered in Greenwich Village in the 1920's. A feminist, agnostic, and political radical, she became the ideal of the emancipated young woman of the period, and was almost as much a personality as a literary figure. Most commentators agreed that her earlier poetry was her best, and many have expressed grave reservations about her later work. But with such poems as "Renescence" she earned a wide and continuing audience, and she remains in the opinion of at least one critic a "truly great lyric poet."<sup>1</sup>

Millay lived at "Steepletop" from 1925 until her death in 1950, except for periods of travel and visits to New York, and during this period she composed many volumes of verse. The house and its outbuildings reflect the personality of the poet in countless ways, and form a striking memorial to her life.

Biography

Born in 1892 in Rockland, Maine, to Henry and Cora Millay, Edna St. Vincent Millay first entered the public eye when she was only twenty years old with the publication of what is still her best known poem, "Renescence" in the The Lyric Year. She attended Barnard and Vassar, graduating from the later in 1917. It was also in 1917 that she published her first volume of poetry.

Millay lived in Greenwich Village from 1918 to 1921, immersing herself in the bohemian life of the neighborhood during the period usually considered its golden age. She wrote plays and performed as an unpaid actress with the Provincetown Players, and innovative theater group. Her small income was derived from sales of her poetry and short stories. She gathered a circle of friends and admirers, including Arthur Fricke, with whom she fell in love. They were never married, but her sonnets to him represent some of her best work.

The life of the Village strained her physically and mentally, and in 1921 she retreated to Europe to find peace and quiet for some sustained writing. The trip was unproductive, however, and in 1923 she returned to New York where she met and married Eugen Jan Boissevain, a Dutch importer.

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Britten, Norman A., Edna St. Vincent Millay, N.Y.: Twayne Publishers, 1967.  
 Kunitz and Haycroft, eds., Twentieth Century American Authors, N.Y.: H.W. Wilson Co., 1942.  
 Nyren, Dorothy A., A Library of Literary Criticism, N.Y.: Frederick Ungar Co., 1964, pp. 334-337.  
 Spiller, Robert E., et. al., Literary History of the United States, N.Y.: The Macmillan Co., pp. 1349-1350

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	42 ° 19 ' 48 "	73 ° 26 ' 15 "		0 ' ' "	0 ' ' "	
NE	42 ° 19 ' 48 "	73 ° 27 ' 32 "				
SE	42 ° 18 ' 37 "	73 ° 26 ' 15 "				
SW	42 ° 18 ' 37 "	73 ° 27 ' 32 "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
Edmund Preston, Historian

ORGANIZATION: National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings DATE: June 23, 1971

STREET AND NUMBER:  
801-19th Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: D.C. CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

<p>As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Title _____</p> <p>Date _____</p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p>_____  <i>Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</i></p> <p>Date _____</p> <p>ATTEST:</p> <p>_____  <i>Keeper of The National Register</i></p> <p>Date _____</p>
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
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(Number all entries)

7. Description continued (first sheet)

for their own books.

A hall, in which are shelves added since Millay's time, leads through the ell, which contains a bathroom and two guest bedrooms, in one of which is a newly added closet.

Beyond the driveway to the west of the house are a roofed terrace known as "the bar", a swimming pool, and a lawn referred to by Millay as "the dingle". Several hundred feet northwest of the house is a small, single story cabin constructed of unpainted boards, with a gable roof. This structure has a door at the west end, one window to the north, and two windows to the south. It contains a stove, chaise longue, arm chair, bureau, plain wooden desk and chair, and a small table, on which are magazines dated 1949. Millay used this cabin for her work, and it appears unchanged since her death.

North of the main house is an ice house with a gable roof, which has been converted by Mrs. Ellis into a workroom and storage area. Northeast of the main house, and across East Hill Road from it, is a large barn with a curved roof. South of the barn is a two story, shingled guest house with a gable roof and two exterior chimnies. This house is said to date from the late eighteenth century. The most conspicuous feature of its five bay front is the shape of the small second-story windows, which are wider than they are tall. Southeast of the guest house, and also across East Hill Road from the main house, is a stable, now used for a garage. A large window set in its gable roof provides light for the studio on the second floor, which is used by Mr. Ellis. This studio has a new fireplace and screened porch.

Approximately one thousand feet north of the main house on East Hill Road is a dirt road which leads west. Edna St. Vincent Millay is buried near this road.

"Steepletop" is set in a scenic area formed by the slopes of the surrounding hills on either side of East Hill Road. The historic area is inclosed in a five-sided figure which runs from the peak of Pinnacle Point (73° 26' 38" Long; 42° 18' 37" Lat.); northeast to the peak of its shoulder (73° 26' 15" Long; 42° 19' 11" Lat.); northwest to a point on Route 22 approximately 2000 feet west of its more norther intersection with East Hill Road (73° 26' 37" Long; 42° 19' 48" Lat.); southwest to the peak of the hill located at 73° 27' 14" Long, 42° 19' 25" Lat; southwest to the peak of the hill located at 73° 27' 32" Long., 42° 19' 01" Lat; southeast to the peak of Pinnacle Point. The historic area contains approximately 500 acres.

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(Number all entries) "Steepletop"

8. Biography continued (first sheet)

He acted as her "secretary, buffer, and bodyguard" to protect her from the intrusions attendant upon her growing fame. They visited Europe frequently and in 1924 took a trip around the world. In 1923 she received the Pulitzer Prize for The Harp Weaver, a collection of sonnets.

In 1925 they purchased "Steepletop" near Austerlitz, New York, which became their home except for periods of travel. Here Millay was able to write, protected from the pressures of the outside world.

Her work after the early 1920's is considered by many critics to be of rather ambiguous quality, especially that written during World War II. She became a virtual recluse at Steepletop after 1945. She was grief stricken by Boussevain's death in 1949, and died a year later at "Steepletop," where she had been living alone. Mine the Harvest (1945), a volume of letters, and her collected poems have been published since her death.

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1. Sara Henderson quoted by Nyren, pp. 334-337.
  2. Kunitz and Haycroft, p. 957.