

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

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NOV 30 1987

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name John James Audubon State Park other names/site number

2. Location

street & number U. S. 41 not for publication city, town Henderson vicinity state KY code 021 county Henderson code 101 zip code 42420

3. Classification

Table with 3 columns: Ownership of Property, Category of Property, and Number of Resources within Property. Includes checkboxes for private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal, building(s), district, site, structure, object, and resource counts for contributing and noncontributing.

Name of related multiple property listing:

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of David L. Morgan, State Historic Preservation Officer, Date 11-24-87.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of commenting or other official, Date.

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.
determined eligible for the National Register.
determined not eligible for the National Register.
removed from the National Register.
other, (explain:)

Patrick Andrews 3/10/88
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Public Park

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Public Park

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals

Other: Norman Revival

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Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation limestone

walls limestone

brick

roof Other: slate

other wood and stucco-half timbering

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**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**

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The John James Audubon State Park is a 692 acre public park, 575 acres of which are historic. The historic area includes a park, museum, and nature preserve located in Henderson, Henderson County, Kentucky. It is located adjacent to U.S. 41, a busy four-lane highway which connects Henderson, a city of 27,500, with Evansville, Indiana, a city of 200,000, ten miles to the north. The Park is located one mile south of the Ohio River adjacent to a swamp on the north and suburban developments on the east and south. Its western boundary is U.S. 41 which is a heavily developed commercial strip with two shopping centers, numerous motels, and fast food stores within one mile of the Park. Audubon Park is truly an island of nature in the midst of a modern metropolitan area.

Henderson is a prosperous regional commercial and agricultural center located on the Ohio River in the Pennyrile cultural landscape area of western Kentucky. Evansville, Indiana, is located ten miles to the north while Owensboro, Kentucky, a city of 53,000, is located thirty miles to its east. A major population and commercial center from the period of initial settlement, Henderson has maintained a standard of living and a commitment to public culture unmatched in the surrounding area. Three large historic districts within the city have been approved for nomination to the National Register and a survey report has been published for the area. No other properties comparable in character to the nominated property exist in the county or region.

Audubon Park contains three distinct but integrated areas. The nature preserve has experienced the least impact by man, limited to trails, abandoned roads, and small trail shelters. Wildlife abounds in this heavily forested area. The public recreation area is an area of approximately 150 acres containing curvilinear roads, landscaped parking areas, public recreation facilities and a man-made lake. This designed landscape utilizes existing terrain features while retaining natural areas in the Olmsted tradition. The third area is that of the museum, tea house and immediately surrounding parking areas. This is the focal point of the Park in concept and design. Altogether, the three areas contain 19 contributing resources and one non-contributing resource, as depicted on the accompanying site plan/photo key map.

The museum and tea house buildings were designed in the Norman Revival style in order to evoke the Norman chateaux milieu in which John James Audubon reputedly grew up. The museum building is a unique two and a-half story stone building with a three-story conical roofed tower, and three asymmetrical one and a-half story wings (see plan and photo 6). Laid in an uncoursed, rough limestone, the museum's roof is of varied pitch covered in slate.

The main block of the museum measures thirty feet by sixty feet. It is entered from doors at either end of a seven-bay stone arcade. The steeply pitched bellcast hipped roof contains two dormers with casement windows (see photo 7). On the first level light enters through the two casement windows in the primary facade. To the left at a 45° angle is a small display room in a one and a-half story wing. Now used as souvenir and ticket sales shop, it originally provided display space. A two-story chimney is located on the rear wall of this wing (see photo 9).

 See continuation sheet

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
Conservation  
Landscape Architecture  
Public Recreation  
Public Works

Period of Significance

1934 - 1941

Significant Dates

1934 - 1941

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Corley, Donald  
Alves, Bernard

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

John James Audubon State Park is a historic property with national significance in the areas of architecture, landscape architecture, conservation, public recreation and public works during the period 1934-1941. It is significant under Criterion C for the outstanding quality of its Norman Revival architecture and high quality of the craftsmanship found in the buildings and the landscape design. Under Criterion A, Audubon State Park is significant in the history of conservation because it contains one of the first designated nature preserves in Kentucky. It is also significant in relation to the history of the Works Progress Administration, the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Commonwealth of Kentucky as they dealt with the economic crisis of the 1930s.

The Norman Revival architecture found in the museum and tea house are unique to Kentucky. A small number of modest-sized houses in Louisville's Highlands Historic District and the Ashland Park District of Lexington have been described as Norman but most of these are contractor built subdivision houses of modest scale and ambition. Clearly, the scale, quality of design, and execution of the museum and tea house make them the best of their kind in Kentucky and probably in the Ohio River Valley.

The quality of the landscape design and stone masonry found throughout the buildings, structures, and roadways of the park are regionally significant. Kentucky contains numerous Works Progress Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps stone buildings and three or four comparable parks such as Cumberland Falls and Pine Mountain; however, Audubon Park is the best found in the Pennyrile Region of West Kentucky.

Audubon Park is particularly significant in the history of conservation and public recreation. It is one of the earliest parks in Kentucky dedicated to the conservation of a natural area. The nature preserve section of the park was clearly an innovative concept in Kentucky; furthermore, the development of an extensive public active and passive recreation park was innovative in this region. Parks would be built by the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Kentucky Department of Parks and the National Park Service at Mammoth Cave in the 1940s and 1950s, but Audubon Park preceded and established the design concept for all the others.

The Park is also highly significant in relation to Federal, state, and local efforts to revitalize the American economy in the 1930s. A multi-governmental public/private partnership which utilized local workers as well as ones imported from another state, construction of the Park had a significant impact on the regional economy. When completed, the Park would also provide many permanent

See continuation sheet

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Audubon Park, Naturalist Office, Vertical Files.  
The Evansville Press, July 3, 1938.  
Henderson Gleaner, Various Issues.  
Kentucky Department of Parks, brochures, various dates and undated.

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

### Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

### Specify repository:

Kentucky Department of Parks

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property approximately 575 acres

### UTM References

A 

1	6	4	5	0	3	4	0	4	1	9	2	5	0	0
Zone	Easting							Northing						

C 

1	6	4	5	1	0	2	0	4	1	9	3	4	6	0
Zone	Easting							Northing						

B 

1	6	4	5	0	4	6	0	4	1	9	2	7	8	0
Zone	Easting							Northing						

D 

1	6	4	5	1	5	0	0	4	1	9	3	8	2	0
Zone	Easting							Northing						

See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the John James Audubon State Park historic property follows the park boundary line printed on the U.S.G.S. map from UTM Reference Point A to UTM Reference Point H. Beginning at UTM Reference Point H, the boundary of the historic resource proceeds approximately 600 feet west southwest following the course of a small stream until it reaches the bank

See continuation sheet

### Boundary Justification

The original park boundary has been used as the boundary for the National Register nomination on three sides of the park because the area remains unchanged from the time the park was established. Because the campground and golf course areas represent later developments in the Park which have a different physical character from the original landscaping, these two areas have been omitted.

See continuation sheet

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Robert M. Polsgrove, Historic Sites Program Manager

organization Kentucky Heritage Council date September 4, 1987

street & number 12th Floor, Capital Plaza Tower telephone 502/564-7005

city or town Frankfort state Kentucky zip code 40601

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To the rear of the main block, another one and a-half story wing is attached at right angles to the main block (see plan) containing the Elephant Folio Room. It has one window on the first level and one dormer on each of the three elevations. A low one-room display area known as the family room is built at right angles to this room on the right side. It is of the same smaller scale and proportion as the souvenir shop wing.

A three-story tower, 18.5 feet in diameter at the base, with a winding circular concrete stair, is located to the right of the main block and is laid in stone for the first two levels (see photo 8). Evocative of a battlement, the third level is laid in brick and features a short blind arcade above the stone cap and four rows in a diamond pattern of small recessed squares. A bellcast conical roof of two pitches caps the tower. Narrow one-pane wide windows are located periodically above the stair as it rises through the tower.

The interior display rooms of the main and subsidiary rooms all feature vaulted ceilings supported by exposed timbers (see photo 10). The main gallery is sixty feet by thirty feet with a ceiling eighteen feet in height. It features a large firebox and mantel and has plastered walls and flagstone floors. The subsidiary display rooms use the same materials. The gift shop measures 32 feet by 18.5 feet and the family room is 32 feet by 17.5 feet. The Elephant Folio Room is 28 feet by 18.5 feet (see attached plan).

The museum is set in the edge of a forest with minimal yard and landscaping on the rear and sides. It is approached through a formal garden measuring approximately 200 feet by 100 feet which is surrounded by a low brick wall with a smooth-cut limestone cap. The garden has a ten-foot wide band of shrubbery separating the wall from a brick sidewalk. A central grassy plaza area provides a grand approach from the parking lot (see photo 5). A second approach to the museum and its formal garden leads up a small hill of approximately thirty feet elevation changes from the tea house, the second major building in the complex. The brick sidewalk makes two right-angle turns and contains five separate stairs with the final divided stair ascending around a semi-circular tower. (The tea house itself is surrounded by rough-cut limestone walls and flagstone sidewalks in contrast to the more formal brick walls and sidewalks at the museum.

In the overall design of the park, the tea house functions as the main entry point (see photo 3). A three-story building in the Norman Revival style, it provided an orientation center and ticket office, a dining area, and offices in the original plan. The main access road from U.S. 41 leads to the tea house which has extensive parking in front. Visitors approach it along a flagstone walk and arrive at an arched entryway which provides access to the office on the left and the naturalist's office and stairs to the nature center on the right (see photo #4). The large room on the first floor left, currently used as the main office for the Park, was originally a dining room with a kitchen at the rear. A dumb waiter connecting the first and second floors made it possible for food to be served on the second level as well. This second-floor room features half-timbered ceilings and a small stage in the projecting bay but proved too small for profitability. The third floor of the building was designed and built as a dormitory for young women who would reside there while learning to be waitresses in the tea room. The restaurant operation was closed after a few years of operation and the space converted to new uses. The first floor serving area became the operational office for the park and second floor area became a nature museum.

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The exterior of the tea house building features rough uncoursed limestone on the first level. The second level and gables utilize half-timbered construction with coursed mortared brickwork in the interstices except for the wall around the overhanging bay which uses plaster in the interstices. The roof is slate and all windows are steel casement windows. The tea house is surrounded by a flagstone courtyard and varied-level stone walls which articulate the passageways and/or retain the hillside against which the tea house is set (see photo 4). The area surrounding the museum and tea house is mown and features numerous plantings, stone walls, and culverts from the original design (see photo 10).

The nature preserve section of the Park is strikingly different from the museum focal area. A heavily forested area with elevation changes of more than 200 feet, it features narrow steep ridges separated by narrow ravines. Most of the trails laid out by the Civilian Conservation Corps workers in the 1930s continue in use. The trails are dirt and gravel with wooden footbridges. A lake created in the 1930s by damming the largest stream provides a habitat for birds and other animals. Along the trails are features such as a stone-based, wooden-roofed shelter for hikers, a stone-based water fountain and an incinerator. In addition to these structures which are original features, some original restrooms have been abandoned and one shelter no longer has a roof. In the early years, a paved road beginning at the tea house provided vehicular access to the central area of the preserve. It is now closed to automobiles, thereby better protecting the environment of the nature preserve.

To the south of the tea house is the public recreation area of the park. This designed landscape features paved roads and parking areas delineated by stone walls and abutments, a lake and bath house, a restroom building, a concession stand, and four picnic areas with shelters. The twenty-acre lake built in 1941 provides boating and swimming opportunities. A stone based bath house was built along the shore of the lake in the 1940s. The picnic shelters are low-hipped roof pavilions supported by six-by-six beams with stone chimneys (see photo 13). A stone restroom facility built in the 1930s is located near the bath house (see photo 14). Trails along the lake connect these areas to each other and to the parking areas built on the ridge crest. In general, this day recreation area has experienced little change except for plumbing improvements and lighting. The paved areas, walls, walks, parking lot parapets, etc., all retain their basic original character.

Closely related to the public recreation area in use and design is the gatehouse and road leading into the park (see photo 1). The gatehouse located at the entrance to the park is a one-story slate-roofed cubicle of stone construction measuring approximately 12 feet x 12 feet (see photo 2). It serves as the ranger control point for access to the park as it has since 1938. A two-lane paved road with grass berms leads from the gatehouse through a forested ravine to the tea house/museum area. It is a carefully designed approach which transports the visitor from the hustle of U.S. 41 into the woods where the genius of Audubon can best be appreciated.

The area of the park utilized for camping, golf, and overnight cabins has been excluded from the nomination. The camping area was substantially changed in the 1950s and 1960s and features recent buildings. The golf course is not an original part of the Park and the overnight cabins lost their historic character when they were expanded and re-sited in 1985. Within the boundaries of the nominated area, only one building--the park maintenance director's house--is considered noncontributing (see photo 19).

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jobs as well as an apprenticeship program for restaurant workers. Few historic properties in Kentucky are significant in as many areas at the National, state and regional levels.

The idea of a park and museum in Henderson dedicated to John James Audubon, the American naturalist who resided in the community for ten years, was first discussed in the early 1900s. Initially it was proposed for the riverfront mill built and operated by Audubon during his residence in Henderson. A Henderson committee led by Susan S. Towles asked for Federal funding for the proposed museum/nature preserve in 1929 and achieved approval in one House of Congress only to come up short as projects were dropped in response to the developing national financial crisis. The Kentucky Department of Parks Director Mrs. Emma G. Cromwell took an interest in the project in the early 1930s and began working with a committee of Henderson citizens to develop a site and to generate public funding. After the destruction of Audubon's mill on the riverfront in Henderson, the current site was chosen for the park because of its proximity to the Ohio River, its retention of undeveloped forest areas and its location on U.S. 41 between Henderson and Evansville.

The first parcels of land were obtained in 1934 as a result of the donation of 100 acres of land for a bird sanctuary by David Clark. Later that year, Henry P. Barrett and Mrs. Susan Barrett Grant donated 75 additional adjoining acres and Col. Alex Majors gave 100 acres. A descendant of Audubon's committed the donation of a large collection of original Audubon prints and other Audubon materials and artifacts. As a result, planning for the park and museum became more intense. The basic concept for the Park was a combined museum of "Audubonia" and a nature conservancy where animals could be protected and studied in a habitat comparable to that experienced by Audubon himself.

Work on the nature preserve was initiated in the Winter of 1934-35 by local employees. In 1936, workers began to be supplied by the Civilian Conservation Corps. Trails were developed and land was surveyed and prepared for roads and buildings. The committee contacted national authorities such as Major William Welch of New York State's Palisades Park for advice and counsel. Finally in 1937, funding and assistance from the Works Progress Administration and the Commonwealth of Kentucky and John Duncan of Denver was secured. These matching funds would underwrite the construction of the museum, the tea room, and the surrounding park and nature preserve.

For the two main buildings, the Works Progress Administration provided the design services of Donald Corley, a Washington architect who had worked for the New York firm of McKin, Mead, and White. Working with him was the Henderson native, a Princeton-educated architect Bernard Alves who had recently retired and returned to Henderson. Alves Clore, former mayor of Henderson supervised the construction. Little is known about the careers and other works of Corley and Alves, neither of whom were registered in Kentucky. They were able to design and build two buildings and a park which are among the very best buildings and landscapes constructed in Kentucky and among Works Progress Administration projects nationwide during the depression era.

2/1/88

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Work on the museum, tea house, and park pavilion was started in the Summer of 1937. The museum and tea house were completed in 1938 and dedicated at a ceremony on July 15, 1938. The Civilian Conservation Corps employed 210 men, mainly from West Virginia, in building the park. Limestone from a nearby Henderson site was used. The lake, landscaping, bathhouse, and picnic pavilions were completed by 1941.

In subsequent years, a camping area and golf course have been added along with a few minor picnic area buildings. The park manager's house, the five overnight lodging cabins and the maintenance manager's house have all been extensively remodeled in recent years and no longer contribute to the sense of time and place found in the Park. In spite of these minor alterations, the primary buildings, designed landscape, and nature preserve area retain a remarkable level of integrity and stand as a monument to the public architecture of the 1930s. Current planning processes in place in the Department of Parks promise to preserve the basic character of this historic property in the future.

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**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

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E. 16:451900/4193680  
F. 16:452660/4192500  
G. 16:452420/4192180  
H. 16:457240/4192380  
I. 16:450860/4192040  
J. 16:450650/4192120  
K. 16:450520/4192210  
L. 16:450500/4192500

Verbal Boundary Description (Continued)

of the scenic lake. The boundary then follows the southern shore of the lake for approximately 2700 feet to Reference Point J. From UTM Reference Point J, the historic property boundary follows the park boundary shown on the U.S.G.S. map for 600 feet to U.S.G.S. Reference Point K. From Reference Point K, the historic property boundary proceeds north 1200 feet in a straight line to U.S.G.S. Reference Point L, thereby including the dam for the scenic lake while omitting the modern campground. From Reference Point L, the historic property boundary proceeds 370 feet in a westerly direction to the point of origin, U.S.G.S. Reference Point A.

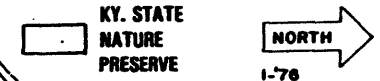


LEGEND

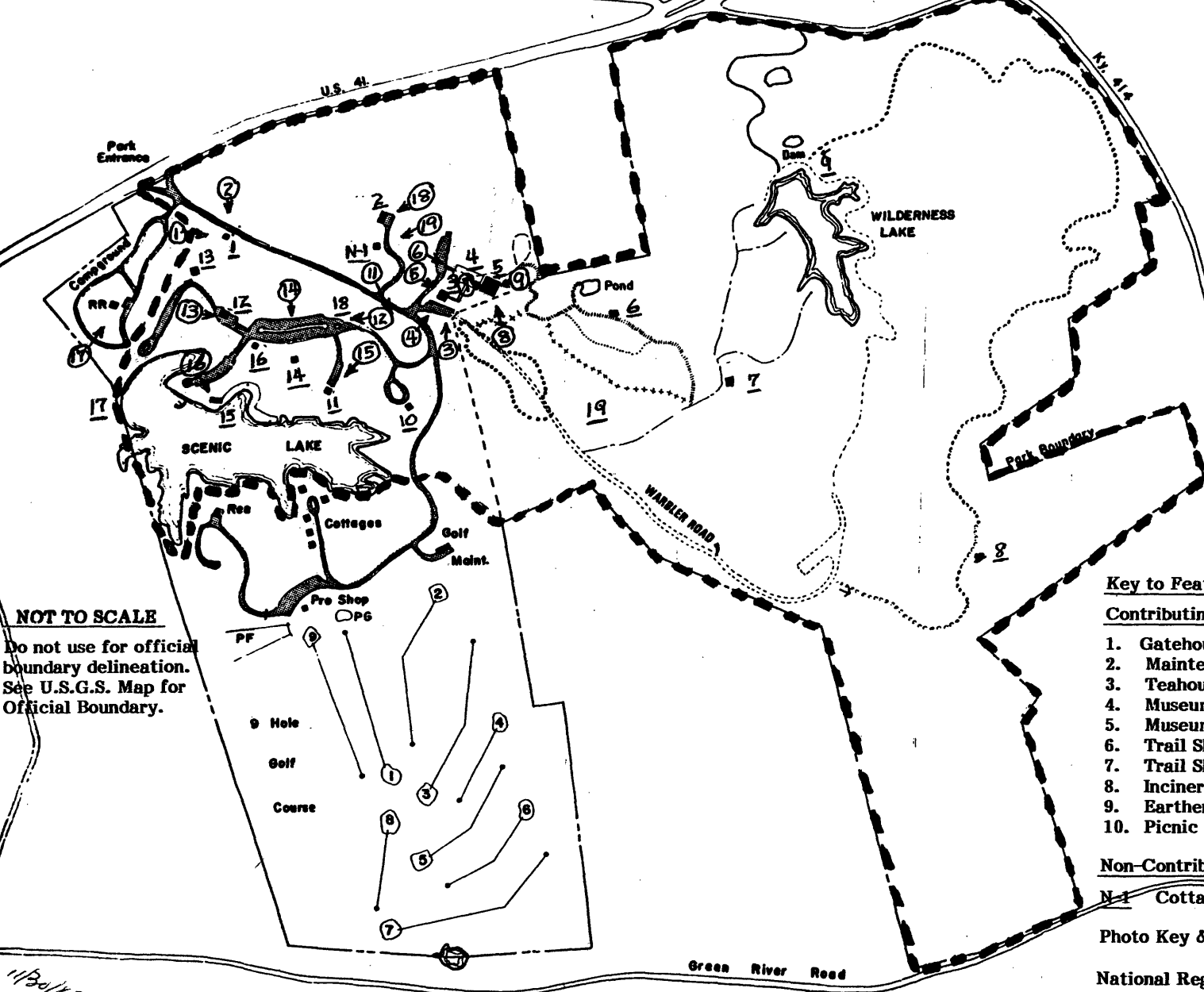
MAP

- S PICNIC SHELTER
- RR REST ROOM
- RES PARK RESIDENCE
- C CONCESSION
- PG PRACTICE GREEN
- PF PRACTICE FAIRWAY

- MUSEUM TRAIL . . . . . 2 MILE
- KING BENSON TRAIL . . . . . 3 MILE
- KY. COFFEE TREE TRAIL . . . . . 8 MILE
- LAKE OVERLOOKS TRAIL . . . . . 7 MILE
- WILDERNESS LAKE TRAIL . . . . . 7 MILE
- WOODPECKER TRAIL . . . . . 2 MILE
- CARDINAL TRAIL . . . . . 1 MILE
- BACK COUNTRY TRAIL . . . . . 2.7 MILE
- TOTAL MILES - 5.5 MILES



KY. STATE  
NATURE  
PRESERVE



Key to Features

Contributing

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. Gatehouse            | 11. Picnic Shelter                        |
| 2. Maintenance Building | 12. Picnic Shelter                        |
| 3. Teahouse             | 13. Picnic Shelter                        |
| 4. Museum Terrace       | 14. Restroom                              |
| 5. Museum               | 15. Bath House                            |
| 6. Trail Shelter Ruin   | 16. Concession Building                   |
| 7. Trail Shelter        | 17. Earthen Dam                           |
| 8. Incinerator          | 18. Road System and<br>Designed Landscape |
| 9. Earthen Dam          | 19. Trail System                          |
| 10. Picnic Shelter      |   |

Non-Contributing

- N-1 Cottage

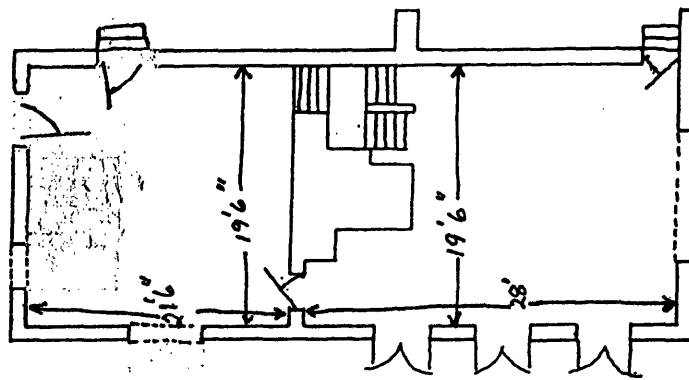
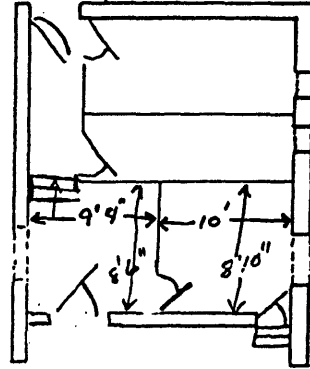
Photo Key & Direction

National Register Boundary

**NOT TO SCALE**  
Do not use for official  
boundary delineation.  
See U.S.G.S. Map for  
Official Boundary.

1/30/74

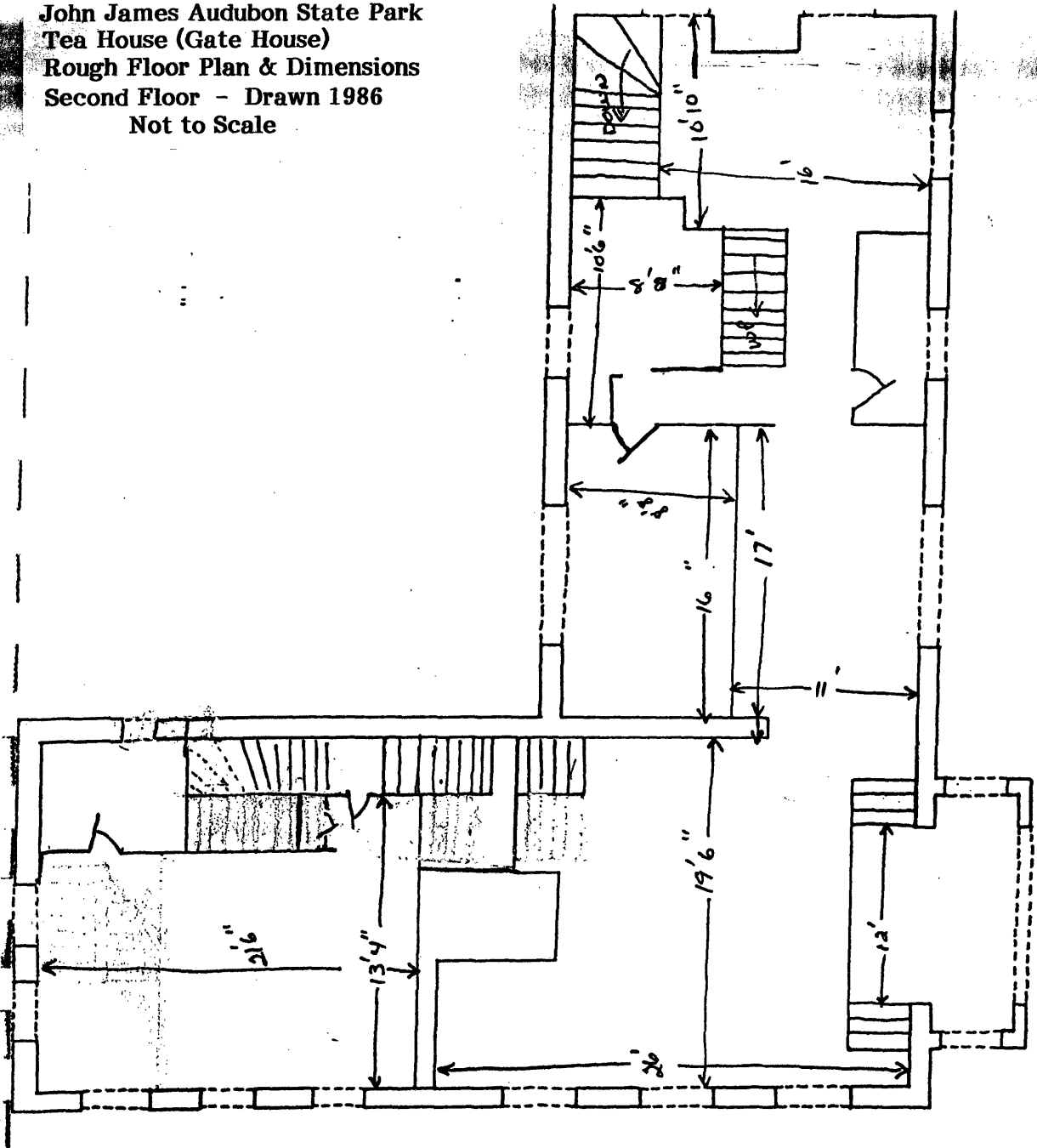
John James Audubon State Park  
Tea House (Gate House)  
Rough Floor Plan & Dimensions  
First Floor - Drawn 1986  
Not to Scale



GATE HOUSE  
1st FLOOR-EXISTING

11/20/87

John James Audubon State Park  
Tea House (Gate House)  
Rough Floor Plan & Dimensions  
Second Floor - Drawn 1986  
Not to Scale



GATE HOUSE  
9th FLOOR EXISTING

1/30/86