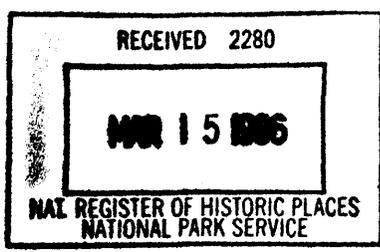


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

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. Use letter quality printer in 12 pitch, using an 85 space line and a 10 space left margin. Use only archival paper (20 pound, acid free paper with a 2% alkaline reserve).

1. Name of Property

historic name Nieman, Edwin J. Sr., House

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 13030 North Cedarburg Road N/A not for publication

city, town Town of Mequon N/A vicinity

state Wisconsin code WI county Ozaukee code 089 zip code 53097

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	No. of Resources within Property	
		contributing	noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)		
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
		<u>3</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

No. of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register None

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this x 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 x meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria. ___ See continuation sheet.

[Signature] _____ Date 3/12/96
Signature of certifying official
State Historic Preservation Officer-WI
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria. ___ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
___ See continuation sheet

Edson H. Beall _____ 4-12-96

___ determined eligible for the National Register. ___ See continuation sheet

Entered in the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register.

___ removed from the National Register.

___ other, (explain:)

[Signature] _____
Signature of the Keeper Date

6. Functions or Use

Historic Functions
(enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling
DOMESTIC/secondary structure

DOMESTIC/single dwelling
DOMESTIC/secondary structure

<u>1. Description</u>	
Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)	Materials (enter categories from instructions)
Tudor Revival	foundation <u>Concrete</u>
	walls <u>Brick</u>
	roof <u>Slate</u>
	other <u>Copper</u>
	<u>Iron</u>

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Description

The Nieman house is a superb, elaborately detailed, large scale Tudor Revival style free-standing mansion that was built in the rural countryside north of the village of Thiensville in Ozaukee County between 1928 and 1929 at a cost of more than \$60,000 to a design by noted Milwaukee architect Herman H. Bruns. Bruns' client, Edwin J. Nieman, Sr., was a partner in the Wisconsin-based Fromm Bros.- Nieman Co., which in 1928 was the nation's largest breeder of silver foxes for furs. Nieman's new house and its 26-acre grounds were originally surrounded on all sides by the much larger land holdings that were then associated with the company's main Thiensville fox farm. The house, which is located near the center of this parcel, was occupied by Nieman and his family until his death in 1985, after which it was purchased by the present owners, Dr. and Mrs. N. Timothy Lynch. Fortunately, the house was in very good and almost totally original condition when the Lynchs' purchased it and they have done nothing to change it since that time except for upgrading the utilities and repairing or renewing the historic fabric of the house where necessary.

The two-and-a-half story main block of the Nieman house has a modified L-plan configuration. Seventeen principal living rooms are spread over the two main stories and the attic story, while three additional rooms related to family functions are located in the basement story. This full basement story has walls that are constructed out of reinforced concrete and the exterior walls that rest on it and the floors of the house are also constructed out of reinforced concrete and are supported by a steel frame. The exterior surfaces of these walls are clad for the most part in a mixture of tan, greyish-tan, and light brown wire-cut brick laid in stretcher bond and they rise up to the steeply pitched slate-clad multi-gable roof that shelters the main block. This portion of the house measures 65.5-feet in length by 40.4-feet in total width and its length and width are further extended by a rectilinear plan 16.75-foot x 14.75-foot one-story conservatory wing that is attached to the southeast corner of the main block. In addition, a nearly square plan 24.33-foot-deep by 26.3-foot-wide detached two-car garage of matching design and construction is located immediately to the northeast of the house. Both the exterior and the interior of the house and garage are elaborately detailed with materials of the highest quality, custom-made features abound, and all are in a highly intact state of preservation and reflect the fullest flowering of the period revival designs that were being created in the late 1920s.

The Nieman house is located in the Town of Mequon and is sited on a 26-acre parcel of land that is located approximately one-half-mile north of the village of Thiensville and approximately two-miles south of the city of Cedarburg, both of which are located in Ozaukee County. + These two historic communities are linked by

+ The 1990 population of Thiensville was 3301 and of Cedarburg, was 9895.

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the north-south running STH 57, which highway (also known as Cedarburg Road in this vicinity) forms the west boundary of the nominated property. The land between these two communities is gently rolling and is largely rural, farming is still practiced in the area. Because this area is located only about eight miles north of the city of Milwaukee's fast-growing northern suburbs, however, the rural landscape in this vicinity is being converted to other, more urban uses and the land bordering on STH 57, especially that area just south of Cedarburg, is now being rapidly developed.

The western edge of the parcel of land that is now associated with the Nieman house is, as previously noted, bordered by STH 57 and the portion that faces this thoroughfare is densely wooded, effectively screening the house from the view of passersby. The house itself is located approximately 1000 feet east of the highway and is situated near the top of a modest, densely wooded rise. Surrounding the house is a beautifully landscaped two-acre clearing that contains large areas of lawn ornamented with trees, shrubs, flower beds, and a large, naturalistically planted pond. From the highway one ascends a curving blacktopped driveway that winds through the woods until it reaches a pair of five-foot-tall stucco-clad classically designed entrance gate piers, each of which has a base, a shaft, and a capital that is surmounted by a stone sphere. The driveway then passes between the piers, curves to the right towards the house, then continues past the garage on a broad circular route that gradually brings it back to the entrance piers.²

North-Facing Rear Elevation

This L-plan house consists of two main wings, the west wing and the east wing. The north-facing rear elevation of the house faces onto the circular entrance drive and it is composed of two principal elements; the north end of the east wing to the left (east), and the north elevation of the west wing to the right (west).

The 26.75-foot-wide north end of the east wing projects two-feet further north than the remainder of the elevation and it is clad entirely in brick, is asymmetrical in design, is three-bays-wide and two-and-a-half stories tall, and it is surmounted by the north-facing gable end of the east wing. The cornices of the steeply pitched roof slopes of the gable end do not overhang the wall below but these slopes do overhang the side elevations of the wing. These overhangs are located at the base of the gable end and they are carried on heavy cut stone impost blocks that are set flush with the wall surface of the north end of the east wing.

The principal feature on the north end of the east wing is a two-story open wooden entrance porch that occupies the first two-stories of the right-hand bay. This

² A second gravel driveway curves to the right shortly before one reaches the entrance gate posts and it parallels the main south-facing facade of the house, which is where the main entrance is located. It is not clear, however, whether this driveway was ever used as the principal approach to the house and it is now treated as a secondary entrance.

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porch has a rectangular plan that measures eleven-feet-wide by five-feet-deep and its first story shelters the rear entrance to the house (this is now used as the principal entrance). The porch is constructed entirely of stained wood and utilizes braced timber framing that is at least partially held together with wooden pegs. The principal supports of the porch consist of two pairs of superimposed, rather elaborately notched and chamfered vertical posts. The first pair of these posts rest on a concrete pad placed at ground level that forms the floor of the first story of the porch and they support the porch's second story. The second pair of posts are identical in length and design and they support the copper-covered hip roof that shelters the porch's second story. The two side walls of the porch's first story are partially enclosed. Solid walls made out of vertical wooden matchboarding enclose the lower halves while the upper halves are open and are each decorated with four shaped and notched wooden balusters. The second story floor of the porch is encircled with a wooden balustrade whose notched balusters repeat the design of the larger notched first story boards and whose posts repeat the chamfered and notched design of the main posts that support the entire porch.

The flat-arched rear entrance door opening and its oak entrance door are sheltered by the floor of the porch's second story and it is centered between two identical flat-arched window openings that are also so sheltered. These window openings admit light into the rear entrance hall and they each contain a four-over-four light double hung wood sash window whose lights are held in place by lead comes.³ Identical door and window openings are also located in the story above, where the openings are sheltered by the porch roof, and these windows admit light to the second story landing of the rear stair hall. Each of these window openings has a dressed cut limestone sill and a head that consists of a course of soldier bricks.

A single pair of windows is placed well to the left of the porch towards the left-hand side of this elevation on both the first and second stories, although each pair is placed slightly higher than the windows to the right that are sheltered by the porch because the latter windows light landings that are lower in height than the floor levels of the first and second stories. The first story windows light the kitchen and have six-over-one-lights while the second story windows are slightly taller, have six-over-six lights, and admit light to a bedroom. A single six-over-one-light window is centered in the gable end where it lights the attic story, and an identical window is positioned lower and to the right and lights the attic story landing of the rear stair hall.

The remainder of the north-facing elevation of the house is comprised of the 27.75-foot-long north elevation of the west wing of the house. At first glance, this

³ All the house's windows have wood sash and use lead comes to hold in the lights. In addition, unless otherwise noted, all window openings are flat-arched and have cut stone plain slip sills and brick lintels made out of a course of soldier brick.

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elevation has the appearance of being one-and-a-half stories in height and it is two-bays-wide and asymmetrical in design. The left-hand bay of the first story has a single small flat-arched window opening that lights the first story bathroom and it contains a six-over-six-light double hung window. Located further to the right is a large triple window group that admits light to the den. This group consists of three identical tall, narrow, flat-arched openings that are separated from one another by thin brick mullions. Each opening contains a twelve-light side-hinged casement window surmounted by a fixed six-light transom.

The second story of this elevation is outlined in raise half-timber work that also uses vertical members to divide its wall surface into nine panels of even width. Each of these panels is filled with brick laid in basket weave bond. The main slope of the roof above extends downward to partially cover the first panel from the left and also the seventh, eighth, and ninth panels. The panels in between, however, rise to the full height of the story. The second panel from the left contains a single flat-arched window opening that contains a six-over-six-light double hung window that lights a second story bathroom. Two identical windows are paired in the fifth and sixth panels from the left and these windows light one of the second story bedrooms. The main slope of the slate-clad gable roof above overhangs this elevation and it is notable for its half-round copper gutters and downspouts, which are ornamented with beautifully crafted embossed circular end caps and Tudor Revival style downspout heads. In addition, these gutters are protected from ice accumulation by elaborate copper ice dams that run the length of the roof just above the gutters.

The north-facing rear elevation is further extended to the west by the 12.75-foot-wide side wall of a one-story, flat-roofed sun room ell. This ell is constructed out of the same materials as the main block of the house and its north-facing wall features two large, identical window openings. Each of these flat-arched openings has a cut stone sill and a heavy wood lintel that has splayed ends and a decoratively shaped and notched bottom edge. These openings each contain a pair of twelve-light casement windows, and each window in each pair is surmounted by its own multi-light transom window. The brick mullion that separates these two window groups is bisected vertically by a copper downspout, the head of which is placed at the base of a square opening that is set into the base of the brick parapet wall that crowns the ell. A thin wood beltcourse that is protected by a carefully wrought overhanging strip of copper flashing encircles the ell at the base of the parapet wall and the parapet is crowned by a minor masterpiece of the metal smith's art, a continuous copper parapet cap that is decorated with raised square blocks that resemble crenelation.

West-facing Side Elevation

This elevation consists primarily of the west-facing end elevation of the west wing, the principal feature of which is the sun room ell that is mentioned above. The

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elevation is two-and-a-half stories tall, 30.5-foot-wide, is clad in brick, is asymmetrical in design, and terminates in the west-facing gable end. The first story has a single large paired window group placed to the left (north) that is identical to the paired windows that are used in the sun room ell adjacent to it, which were described previously. The remainder of the first story is taken up by the attached sun room ell, which is faced in the same brick as the main block of the house. The west-facing elevation of this ell is 22.6-feet-long, symmetrical in design, and three-bays-wide. Each of these bays contains another of the paired window groups that were described above, every pair being complete with a transom and a snapped wood lintel. In addition, each of the windows in the sun room and each of the transoms above them is decorated with at least one stained or painted glass light, which will be described in more detail later in the nomination along with other interior features. The parapet wall above is crowned by the same copper cap mentioned earlier.

The second story of this elevation contains a pair of flat-arched six-over-six light double hung windows that are placed slightly to left of center and a single window of the same size and type that is placed far to the right. The left-hand window of the pair lights a nook that adjoins the northwest corner bedroom while the right-hand one of the pair and the one at the far right both light the bedroom in the southwest corner. Running in between the two windows that light the southwest bedroom is a chimney stack that is only visible on the exterior when it pierces the south-facing slope of the main roof. This chimney services fireplaces in the first story living room and in the southwest bedroom above it and its visible portion is built out of brick and it is crowned with a limestone chimney cap and two tall chimney pots. A single narrow six-over-six light double hung window centered in the gable end of the elevation is its crowning feature. In addition, while the cornices of the steeply pitched roof slopes of the gable end do not overhang the wall below, they do overhang the side elevations of the wing. These overhangs are located at the base of the gable end and they too are carried on heavy cut stone impost blocks that are set flush with the wall surface of the west end of the west wing.

South-Facing Main Facade

The main facade of the Nieman house faces south onto a curved, level lawn. This lawn is edged by a shallow fieldstone retaining wall that curves around from the conservatory ell on the east elevation of the house to the north side of the sun room ell. Two short flights of fieldstone steps are inset into the wall at opposite ends and fieldstone paths extend across the lawn from these steps to a slate terrace at the foot of what was intended to be the main entrance to the house.

Like the rear elevation, the main facade is composed of two principal elements, in this case, the south end of the east wing to the right (east), and the south elevation of the wing to the left (west). The main facade, however, is more complex in its conception and is much more elaborately detailed than its north-facing

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counterpart. Like the rear elevation, the main facade is extended to the west by the sun room ell, whose south-facing elevation is identical to its north-facing elevation. On this side of the house, however, the side elevation of the ell is placed in almost the exact same plane as the south-facing elevation of the west wing of the main block (it is inset to the depth of a single course of brick), which serves to extend the total length of the main facade in a more direct and impressive way.

The south-facing elevation of the west wing is identical in height and length to the corresponding north side, and it shares the same general concept of having a plain first story and a second story that is enframed and divided by raised half-timber work. Its reentration pattern and detailing, however, differs significantly. Here, the first story is symmetrical in design and is three-bays-wide. Each bay is identical and consists of a tall segmental-arch opening that contains a pair of fifteen-light flat-topped French doors, the lights of which are held in place by lead comes. Filling the remaining space above the doors is a segmental-arched transom that is divided by a vertically placed wood mullion into two equal sections, one above each door. These transoms are each filled with a grid or diamond pattern quarrels, in the center of which is a much larger light decorated with painted designs. All of these doors open into the main living room and they open out onto a slightly raised slate-flagged terrace that is edged by a wrought iron balustrade.

The second story of this elevation is outlined in raised half-timber work and it uses vertical members to divide its wall surface into eight panels. Each of these panels is completely or partially filled with brick laid in a herringbone pattern. The slope of the main roof extends downward to partially cover the second and third, the fifth and sixth, and the eighth panels from the right.* Small copper rain gutters placed at the base of each of these three extensions feed into three individual copper downspouts, each of which also has a decorative copper rainwater head. Each of the three remaining panels, however, is a wall dormer whose copper-clad hip roof projects upward beyond the main roof slope. These dormers are identical and each features a single flat-arched window opening that contains a pair of fifteen-light casement windows. The two left-hand dormers light the southwest corner bedroom (the master bedroom) while the right-hand dormer lights a dressing room that is part of the master bedroom suite.

* The distribution of these eight panels can be more precisely understood if one treats them as being five equal-width panels (reading from right to left) with the last (sixth) panel from the left being only half as wide. The first, third, and fifth of these panels (again reading from right to left) are wall dormers and the brick-filled spandrels beneath the windows in each of these dormers are undivided by any vertical framing member. The second and fourth panels from the right, however, are each subdivided into equal-width halves by a vertical framing member, thus creating two additional panels.

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The 26.75-foot-wide south end of the east wing projects nine-feet further south than the remainder of the facade and it is clad in brick, is asymmetrical in design, is three-bays-wide and two-and-a-half stories tall, and it is surmounted by the south-facing gable end of the east wing. The cornices of the steeply pitched roof slopes of the gable end do not overhang the wall surface below but the right-hand slope does overhang the east side elevation of the wing. This overhang is located at the right-hand or the base of the gable end and it is carried on a heavy cut stone impost block that is set flush with the main wall surface.

The south end's principal feature is the main entrance to the house. This entrance is located in the first story of a very shallow gable-roofed entrance pavilion that forms the left-hand bay and that measures one-foot-deep by 14-feet-wide. The entrance door is centered on the first story of this pavilion and it is reached by ascending a flight of two 10-foot-wide cut stone steps that lead from the lawn up to a small slate-flagged terrace that is a continuation of the living room terrace to its left. The semielliptical-arch shaped entrance door opening is entrained by a beautifully wrought cut-stone surround that has a flat head and straight sides whose outside edges are decorated by small cut stone blocks that have the appearance of quoin stones. The stone sides of the door opening are splayed, and recessed compound arches have been carved into these sides. In addition, the two spandrels that flank the apex of the arched door opening each contain a curved inset panel onto which has been carved a leaf and a five-petal Tudor rose, a design motif that was frequently employed in genuine Tudor style architecture. The door itself is inset and is reached by ascending a single cut stone tread. Constructed out of bronze sheeting over oak, the door features a single large light whose shape echoes that of the arched opening. This light is protected by an elegantly wrought bronze grill that has as its centerpiece a circular opening within which is displayed a bronze rosette, a design motif that is reproduced elsewhere, in different guises, both inside and outside the house.

Flanking the top of the entrance door opening are two elaborate metal and glass electric wall sconces and on either side of these are two tall, narrow rectangular sidelights. These sidelights have cut stone sills and heads and they are both protected by elaborate bronze grills that are similar in design and that appear to be by the same hand as the larger grill that protects the main door.²

The second story of this pavilion is treated as a gable-roofed oriel that overhangs the first story by about a foot. This oriel (which is about two-feet-deep) is supported by seven exposed wooden beam ends beneath it, each of which is protected by a copper cap, and it is outlined in raised half timber work and has a surface that is divided into six equal-width panels by vertical framing members. These panels are entirely filled with basketweave bond brick except for the center portions of

² The left-hand sidelight is a dummy, it being filled with the same brick as the main wall of the house. The right-hand (east) sidelight, however, is genuine.

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the two middle panels. A pair of flat-arched window openings that are outlined with false half-timber work are centered on these panels and they each contain an eight-light casement window that together light a small second story room that was originally intended to be used as a sewing room. The gable roof that shelters the oriel has a left slope that is actually an extension of the western slope of the main roof of the east wing and a balancing right slope that is only as deep as the oriel itself.

The remainder of the south-facing end of the east wing is clad in stretcher bond brick. The first and second bays from the right in the first story each contain identical large flat-arched window openings, each of which contains a pair of eight-light casement windows that originally lit the dining room of the house. Above each of these windows is a transom light that contains four panels filled with diamond pattern quarrels flanking a larger centered light that features a painted design. Each opening is then surmounted by a soldier course brick lintel. Centered above these two window openings is a large flat-arched window opening in the second story. This opening contains a triple window group consisting of three fifteen-light casement windows. These windows admit light into a bedroom that is placed in the southeast corner of the second story. A pair of identical windows is placed in a flat-arched window opening that is centered in the gable end above that terminates this elevation and, as on the other ends of the two wings of the main block, cut stone impost blocks are placed at the base of the gable end to carry the overhang of the eaves on the east and west sides of the wing.

Conservatory

The total length of the main facade is further extended to the east by a small but beautifully detailed one-story 16.75-foot square glass conservatory ell. This ell is attached to the southeast corner of the main block and one enters it from the inside of the house through a door that is placed in what would otherwise be the first opening from the left of the first story of the east elevation. The south, east, and north sides of the conservatory are completely exposed (the south half of its west side is exposed as well, but its north half is attached to the east elevation of the main block). The conservatory has a tall continuous brick-clad foundation wall that is crowned by a beveled cut stone cap. Resting on top of this cap is a continuous band of 2-foot-wide x 3-foot-tall metal-framed rectilinear windows, each of which has nine-lights.

The rather steeply pitched four-centered or Tudor-arched glass roof of the conservatory rests on top of a copper gutter that crowns the lower window band and it has a ridge that runs east-west. Each of its two slopes consists of three parallel bands that are each eight-lights-wide, and the lights were originally made of wired plate glass. The lower band is curved while the top band consists of

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lights that open for ventilation.^o The east and west ends of the roof are vertical and are also fashioned out of glass. The east end contains twelve large lights which radiate out from a smaller centered semi-circular leaded glass window that itself consists of twelve lights. Decorating many of these lights are still smaller glass lights that are held in place by lead comes and that are painted so as to depict a tall vase filled with flowers.

East-Facing Side Elevation

The 40.6-foot-long two-and-a-half story east-facing side elevation of the main block of the house is asymmetrical in design and its dominant feature is a very large wall dormer that is positioned just to the right of the center of the elevation. The conservatory ell covers the first bay from the left of the first story. Placed to its right is a large triple window group that consists of a large flat-arched window opening flanked by two equally tall but less wide flat-arched window openings that are separated by brick mullions. The middle window contains twenty lights while the flanking ones each contain twelve lights. Each window is then surmounted by a leaded glass transom that contains a grid of diamond-shaped quarrels that flank a centered light that displays a painted design. These windows admit light to the original dining room of the house.

To the right of this window group is a sizeable one-story polygonal bay that contains a breakfast room. This bay is clad in brick, has a mansard roof clad in copper, and measures ten-feet-deep x twelve-feet-wide. The outer corners of the bay are both canted. The north and south sides of the bay both feature a single flat-arched window opening positioned towards their east ends. The canted corners of the bay each contain an identical window opening and the east-facing side contains two more, which are separated by a brick mullion. All of these openings contain a twelve-light casement window. Placed to the right of the bay on the main wall surface of the east elevation is a single flat-arched window opening that lights the kitchen. This window contains six-over-one-lights and has double hung sash.

The main roof of the east wing extends down below the heads of the second story window openings on both sides of the wall dormer. This dormer's second story is four-bays-wide and the first bay from the left (south) contains a flat-arched window opening that contains a pair of twelve-light casement windows that light the bedroom that occupies the southeast corner of the second story. The window openings in the second and third bays from the left are smaller and each of them contains a six-over-one light double hung window, both of which light a bathroom. The remaining bay contains a pair of six-over-nine double hung windows and these windows admit light to the bedroom in the northeast corner of the second story.

^o The only change that the current owners have made to the exterior of the house has been to replace some of the original lights in the conservatory roof that had been damaged with new ones made out of translucent plastic.

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The attic story of the dormer contains a single flat-arched window opening that is filled by a pair of six-over-six light double hung windows. The dormer is sheltered by a jerkinhead roof and a short but substantial brick chimney mass is placed at the point where the east-west running ridge of the dormer intersects with the east slope of the taller main roof of the wing. This chimney has a limestone cap and features two twisted clay chimney pots.

All the ridges of the main roof of this wing and the main roof of the west wing are protected by copper cresting. In addition, all the flashing and even the vent pipes and ventilators are copper as well.

Interior

The interior of the Nieman house is unusually elaborate for a country house built in Wisconsin in the 1920s, its wealth of interior detail and the high quality of its many custom-made interior fittings being much more typical of urban mansions of the period. Each story and every room contains plentiful evidence of Herman Brun's special affinity for interior decoration.

The first story contains the principal rooms of the house and it is the most elaborately decorated. The plan of this story centers around a centrally located main stair hall, which has an associated entrance vestibule placed to its south and rear stair hall placed to its north. These three elements form a continuous series of rooms that make up the west half of the east wing and that span the entire depth of the house. The east half of the east wing contains the kitchen and its associated breakfast room ell to the north next to the rear stair hall, and what was originally the main dining room and its associated conservatory ell to the south. To the left (west) of the main stair hall is the living room, which occupies the south 60% of the west wing. The north 40% of this wing is occupied by a bath room and a walk-in closet to the right and by a den placed to the left. The sun room ell is then attached to the west end of the wing.

The rear stair hall is now (and may have always been) the usual entrance to the house. The exterior entrance door is made of oak and features a leaded glass light on which is centered a stained glass heraldic shield. The stair hall inside measures eleven-feet-wide by thirteen-feet-deep and it has a tile floor edged with tile baseboards and plaster walls and ceiling. To the right as one enters is a flight of stairs that descends to the basement story. To the left is a flight of five stairs that ascend to the rear hall, which connects the kitchen to the left (east) with the bathroom to the right (west). The floor of this hall is covered in linoleum, a door in its south wall opens into the center stair hall, and another flight of steps ascends to the second story.

⁷ The dining room is now used as a family room and the original sun room is now used as the principal dining room.

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The kitchen occupies the northeast corner of the east wing and measures fourteen-foot-wide by 16-foot-deep. This room has a linoleum floor, a tall baseboard made of beige tiles, plaster walls whose bottom halves are clad in golden-brown tiles, and a plaster ceiling. Beige tiles are also used in place of wood moldings to enframe the kitchen door openings. The north and west walls of the kitchen are largely covered by original floor-to-ceiling wood cupboards that have a soft golden brown patina. Stainless steel countertops are featured throughout the kitchen as are stainless steel sinks, but the dominant feature of the kitchen is a seven-foot-wide x three-foot-deep stove alcove that occupies the west half of the south wall of the kitchen. This alcove has a segmental-arched opening and both its walls and ceiling are clad in tile. Placed on the east side of the stove alcove is a servant's calling system which is still operable and a door in the south wall of the kitchen to the left of the alcove opens into the dining room.

A segmental arch opening in the east wall of the kitchen opens into the breakfast room ell. This nine-foot-deep x eleven-foot-wide room has an octagonal plan thanks to two built-in wooden china cupboards that are placed in its southwest and northwest corners (where they flank the entrance opening) and the canted southeast and northeast corners of the ell. Here too, the floor is covered in linoleum, the baseboard is made of beige tiles, and the walls and ceiling are plastered. There is no joint where the walls and ceiling meet, however, since in this room the juncture of the walls and ceiling consists of a continuous smooth plaster cove. The china cabinets too are noteworthy. Both have two drawers placed below a pair of tall side-hinged leaded glass doors that each have fifteen clear lights and a sixteenth that consists of a stained glass light with a floral pattern on it.

The main dining room occupies the southeast corner of the east wing and it is rectangular in plan and is fourteen-foot-wide by twenty-two-feet in length. The floor of this room is oak as is the panelled wainscot that encircles the lower portion of the walls. The remaining portions are painted and plastered. A repeated floral pattern representing a vertical stalk topped with a bursting seed pod was incised into the plaster when the walls were still wet. In addition, the plastered portion of each wall is bordered by a continuous pattern of thin, striated lines that were also incised into the plaster when wet, and which form a band or frame around the outer edges of each of these wall surfaces. The walls are crowned by a thin plaster cornice ornamented with a continuous leaf and tendril pattern. This pattern is raised and is covered in silver leaf while the deeply inset ground is painted a dark blue. Wood valences of identical design, size, and finish are placed over each of the window openings and complete the decoration of the walls.

The ceiling of the dining room is one of the most impressive features of the house. It is organized into seven equal-width panels by parallel concrete and steel beams that have been exceptionally well painted and grained to resemble wood and then varnished. These beams are connected to wall beams that encircle the room where the walls meet the ceiling. Each of the panels outlined by these beams is edged by a

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gilded molding and the field of each panel consists of gilded toil on which has been printed a border of copper-colored leaves, five-petaled flowers, and fruit. This border outlines a nearly full-length center panel on which have been printed a similar but more detailed and vari-colored floral pattern that has green leaves and clusters of five-petaled flowers that resemble simplified Tudor roses and ripe-to-bursting fruit. Hanging from the center of the ceiling is a six-branch bronze chandelier of medieval Gothic design.

The north wall of the dining room features the entrance door to the kitchen to the right (east) and a flanking inset china cabinet to the left whose paired side-hinged doors have clear lights held in place by elaborate wooden tracery. Centered between these two features is an equally tall two-foot-deep x six-foot-wide alcove whose sides, rear wall and ceiling are all panelled in varnished oak and which was originally occupied by a large serving table.

The south and east walls of the dining room are taken up almost entirely by window openings and by the entrance to the conservatory ell. The leaded glass windows in these openings have been described elsewhere in the nomination and their most significant features are the beautifully painted glass lights centered on each of the transoms (there are seven altogether), which each depict a ship under sail. Collectively, these snips range in age from a Greek galley to a full-rigged eighteenth century sailing vessel, a theme sometimes known as the "Age of Sail."

The flat-arched entrance opening to the conservatory in the east wall of the dining room is filled with two panelled and glazed wood doors. Each of these doors has thirteen leaded lights, and one of these is filled with stained glass. The square plan conservatory that lies beyond these doors has a floor that consists of a large rectangular panel that is paved with irregular random flags of brown and green slate. This panel is entramed by a border made out of sea-green terrazzo, which material is also used to form continuous poured-in-place cabinets that rim the room to a height of about three-feet and which contain the radiators that heat the room (there are two per side). Each radiator has an opening that is protected by an elegant wrought bronze grill and the flat tops of the cabinets also have bronze grates set into them above each radiator to facilitate air circulation.

Just above the radiator cabinets is the band of windows that encircles the conservatory. These windows each have nine lights, many of which are clear plate glass, and all of which are supported by lead cames. Woven throughout these lights, however, are other ones of the same size that carry a continuous, very naturalistic running vine design around the perimeter of the conservatory. This vine has a stem that is fashioned out of lead and leaves that are fashioned out of stained glass executed in several shades of green and held in place by lead cames. The overall design concept is highly appropriate for a conservatory setting and its execution is quite stunning in its naturalness.

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The focal point of the conservatory is a fountain that is centered on the east wall of the room. This fountain takes the shape of a tall tile-covered stele that is surmounted by a shallow-pitched triangular lintel and that has at its base a semi-circular tile-clad basin. Water first flows from the mouth of a fully modeled terra cotta fish mounted at the center of the stele into a small wall-mounted basin below and from this it overflows into the main basin. Ornamenting this basin is a suite of beautifully crafted life-size copper herons, frogs, reeds, cattails, and other fixtures, which were meant to be placed in a tableau around and in the basin. Placed high on the stele are a pair of electric bronze wall sconces that have two branches and the stele is visually crowned by the leaded, stained glass lantern described earlier.

A pair of leaded glass doors that are identical to those that open into the conservatory are placed in the west wall of the dining room and these open into the main stair hall. At the south end of the stair hall is the enclosed main entrance vestibule. This vestibule is six-feet-deep by seven-feet-wide and has a tile floor, tile baseboards, and plaster walls that blend into the arched ceiling. A coat closet that is accessed by a pair of solid oak arched doors occupies the east wall of the vestibule and the woodwork is of stained white oak. The inner entrance door opening is flanked by two ten-light leaded glass sidelights and the door itself is of oak with leaded glass lights and a single large stained glass light.

The main stair hall is rectilinear in plan, is twelve-feet-wide by nineteen-feet-long, and it has polished oak floors, tall oak baseboards, and plaster walls. The ceiling is divided into three panels by two large painted and grained reinforced concrete beams. The center panel has a sponged surface but the north and south panels have gold and silver foil ceilings with stenciled leaf designs that are similar to those in the dining room. The main flight of stairs runs up along the east side of the hall from the landing, which is at the north end of the hall. These stairs are laid out in a quarter flight plan and they have treads and risers made of oak, wrought iron balusters, and a polished wrought iron handrail. A statuary niche is inset into the curved wall surface at the turn of the stair, which rises up to the second story stairhall where a continuation of the wrought iron balustrade encircles the wellhole.*

The main entrance to the living room is via a double-width shouldered arch opening in the west wall of the stair hall. This opening is centered on the east wall of the living room, where it is flanked by shouldered niches set into the wall surface

* The principal flight of stairs that descends to the basement story of the house is located beneath the main flight and access to this stairs is through a paneled fifteen-light leaded glass door with a single stained glass light that is located immediately to the right (north) as one enters the stair hall from the dining room. A second door of identical design is placed in the north wall of the stair hall and provides access to the rear stair hall.

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on either side of it. The living room is also rectilinear in plan and measures 16-foot-wide x twenty-eight-foot-long. The floor of this room is of oak as are the tall baseboards, the walls are plastered and so is the ceiling. In this room too, the ceiling treatment is noteworthy. Here, the encircling coved plaster cornice is decorated with a raised pattern of vine leaves, grapes, and tendrils, all of which are gilded. In addition, a second, smaller molding is placed close to the cornice on the ceiling surface itself and it too has a raised, repeated vine pattern that is gilded as well.

Evenly spaced on the south wall of the room are three pairs of fifteen-light leaded glass French doors that are reached by ascending a single step and which open out onto the terrace. Each pair of doors is surmounted by a segmental-arched leaded glass transom, each of which is divided vertically into two equal halves by a wide wood mullion. Centered on each half is a larger painted glass light on which is depicted a musical instrument. Above each door opening is a heavy, curved wrought iron curtain rod that is supported on a pair of rather elaborate wrought iron brackets. Two original metal wall sconces are placed on the wall between each of the windows and two more are placed opposite them on the north wall of the room.

Centered on the west wall of the room and flanked on either side by a shouldered door opening that leads to the sun room ell is a large, beautifully crated fireplace. This fireplace has a tile outer hearth and a shouldered opening that is entrained with a polished and carved stone surround. Fire protection takes the form of a superb bronze fire screen that is permanently fitted into the jambs of the surround and which consists of two side-hinged doors that are decorated with rollate designs. The Tudor Revival style mantelpiece is made entirely out of elaborately carved wood and has spandrels decorated with linenfold carving, a frieze decorated with carved strapwork, and an overhanging mantleshell that is supported by two carved brackets and that has a deeply carved curved underside.

The sun room ell is rectilinear in plan and measures 12-foot-wide by sixteen-foot-long. The floor of this room is tiled and has an elaborate border pattern worked into it. The baseboards are also tile, the walls are plastered, and they are crowned by an elaborate plaster cornice molding. The ceiling is plastered as well. Seven pairs of twelve-light leaded glass casement windows are placed in the north, south, and west walls of this room and each pair has a transom above it. Each of the windows has one light that has a shield with heraldic devices painted on it while each of the transoms has a centered light that features a painted symbol of learning or of the arts such as a book or a globe.

A rectilinear plan room known as the den occupies the northwest corner of the west wing. This room measures seventeen-foot-long by twelve-foot-wide and the principal entrance is through a flat-arched entrance door opening that is positioned at the far left (west) end of the north wall of the living room. The leaded glass door that fills this space contains fifteen lights, some of which are clear, some of

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which are rippled, and five of which feature stained glass gnomes. The interior of the den has an oak floor and baseboards, plaster walls topped by plaster crown moldings painted and grained to resemble wood, and a plaster ceiling.

Descending the quarter-flight plan main stairs to the basement story brings one to a second stair hall. The floor of this hall has a rectilinear field that is filled with rubber tile laid in a diamond pattern grid. The border of this field and the baseboards are made of terrazzo, which was all molded as a continuous piece. The walls and the ceiling of the hall are plastered, but its most important feature is a triple-arched arcade that forms its west wall and which opens into the billiard room; the basement story's most important room. Flat boards with a cut-out design form the balusters that fill the two outside arches of this arcade, but the center arch is open and a single step down brings one to the floor of the billiard room.

The billiard room is rectilinear in plan, measures fourteen-feet-wide x twenty-eight-feet-long and it occupies roughly the same position and is roughly the same size as the living room in the story above. Like the stair hall, this room also has a tile and terrazzo floor and molded-in-place baseboards. The lower portion of the walls are covered in wide vertically positioned tongue-and-groove board wainscot. The upper portion of the walls is plastered, as is the ceiling, which features deep coves on the north and south sides of the room, giving the ceiling an arched appearance. The most important feature of the room is the fireplace, which is centered on its west wall. This fireplace, which is directly below the one in the living room, has an arched opening that is encircled by a stepped concrete surround. Dominating the wall surface of the chimney breast above the opening, however, is a large arched panel that is recessed into the main wall surface. This panel is completely filled with a large mural painted in oil on canvas that is signed by Herman Bruns and that depicts a silver fox in a woodland scene.

The chimney piece is flanked on either side by an arched door opening that leads up one step to a rectilinear plan room known as the "play room". This eleven-feet-wide x seventeen-feet-long room is directly below the first story sun room and it too has a tile and terrazzo floor and plaster walls. Here, however, the ceiling is flat as it is in another quite similar room known as the "ladies room" that opens off of the billiard room to the north, a position that corresponds to the den in the story above. This second room is reached through a large arched opening in the north wall of the billiard room and its floor is one step higher than that of the larger room and its floors and walls are treated in the same manner as the play room.

The remaining rooms of the basement story are all strictly functional in nature and include a storage room, vegetable room, laundry room, clothes drying room, boiler room, and a tank room for water storage. In addition, the rear stairs has a small hall of its own located just behind (north) the main stair hall.

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The interior of the second story of the house is less elaborately finished than the first. This story contains four bedrooms, two bath rooms, related walk-in clothes closets, storage rooms, and a small room over the main entrance vestibule called the "sewing room." Oak flooring and plaster walls and ceilings are standard throughout this story and a notable feature is the fireplace that is located on the west wall of the southwest corner bedroom (this is the master bedroom).

The attic story contains rooms of its own over the east wing. The rear stair ascends to an attic story stair hall and two more spaces meant for bedrooms are located here as well.

Garage

The free-standing two-car building is located twenty-two-feet east of the northeast corner of the house. This building was constructed at the same time as the house and out of the same materials and it was designed to compliment the large building. The nearly square plan garage measures 24.33-foot-deep by 26.3-foot-wide and it has a concrete slab foundation that is expressed on the outside as a beveled plinth. Brick walls rest on this plinth and they rise up to the slate-covered gable-on-hip roof that is the building's dominant feature. The main facade faces west towards the driveway and it is symmetrical in design and two-bays-wide. Each bay consists of a large full-height flat-arched garage door opening that contains a set of one swinging and two folding wood garage doors. Each of these doors has a tall vertical panel topped by a four-light window that has wood muntins and lights that are further subdivided by a grid of lead comes. The walls are sheltered by the overhanging open eave of the roof, which is supported by exposed rafter tails with rounded ends and whose lower edge is lined with a copper gutter. Placed on the roof peak is a copper-clad octagonal plan ventilator/lantern that features a thin eight-sided drum whose sides contains copper louvres and an elongated and stepped tent roof that is surmounted by a bronze weather vane. The weathervane arrow features a fox running along its spine.

The south-facing side elevation of the garage is two-bays-wide and each bay consists of a single flat-arched window opening that contains a double hung two-over-two light wood sash. The most striking feature of this elevation, and of the north-facing elevation, too, is the south-facing gable end, which is clad in raised half-timber work that divides this triangular plane into five panels that are covered with stucco. As originally designed, the gable end was to be further decorated with seven small stilted arch openings that were intended to house doves, the overall design being that of a dovecot incorporated into the gable end. These openings (and seven others on the north elevation's gable end) were actually built, but today a large mechanical clock has been placed high on gable end of this elevation covering the two center openings. This clock is sheltered by an elaborate wooden canopy and the other openings now contain small carved and painted wooden figurines that are suggestive of the elaborate mechanical clocks of German/Swiss provenance.

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The east-facing rear elevation of the garage has only a single window opening centered on it, which is identical to the ones just described, while the north-facing side elevation also has just a single identical window opening placed near its east end.

Both the house and garage are in excellent, almost completely original condition, the only change to the exterior of the house being the replacement of portions of the conservatory's original roof because of damage to some of its original panes. Likewise, the historic interiors of both house and garage have also survived in an almost total state of preservation, a situation that is especially fortunate when one considers the elaborate nature of the houses's interior. Fortunately, the house stayed in the hands of its original owner until his death in 1985, and the current owners, who are only the second owners, have since treated the house with immense respect.

In addition, it is believed that Herman Bruns was also responsible for the general landscaping plan of the Nieman house and grounds, which includes a beautifully designed naturalistic pond that is located approximately 200-feet northeast of the garage, where it is positioned at the foot of a gently sloping hill. Both the hillside and the land surrounding the pond is covered with manicured lawn and water-loving plants border the edge of the pond. Because it is believed that this pond was designed by Bruns and is part of the original landscape design of the estate it is included here as a contributing structure.

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company. These pelts sold for \$1,021,071.24, the largest amount that had ever been paid to a single breeder up to that time, making the Fromm Bros., Nieman Co. the unchallenged national leader of the fox breeding industry. Edwin Nieman's house was one of the first fruits of this unprecedented sale and as such it is emblematic, both of the decades of effort that led up to the sale and of the even more successful decade that was to follow. Although it is a sizable building in terms of its square footage, the Nieman house is not overwhelmingly large; it is not, in fact, that much larger than many other Tudor Revival style houses being built at the time in the wealthier suburbs of Wisconsin's largest cities. What sets the house apart from most of its contemporaries, however, is the large number of materials that Brunson incorporated into his design, their very high quality, and the unusually high degree of craftsmanship that went into their fabrication. In addition to carved wood and to brick laid in three different bonds, a list of the building materials used on just the exterior of the house alone includes cut stone, copper, bronze, wrought bronze, wrought iron, slate, plate glass, leaded glass, stained glass, and oak. That Brunson could successfully integrate so many materials into a coherent, pleasing design says a great deal about his skill as a designer. Likewise, the fact that the house has survived with both its interior and exterior intact into the present day says a great deal about the inherent quality of the craftsmanship that went into its construction and it also speaks highly for the maintenance that its two owners have lavished on it over the years.

History

The Nieman house owes its existence to a passion for silver foxes that members of the Nieman and Fromm families both shared. Ultimately, this passion enriched both families and, in the process, it also brought the state of Wisconsin positions of national leadership in two very different areas of agriculture; ginseng farming, and fox breeding. Overviews of both areas are contained in the Specialty Agriculture Production section of the Agriculture Study Unit of the CRMP.⁴⁻⁵ Consequently, the history that follows will not dwell on these larger statewide contexts except insofar as they pertain to the property that is being nominated.

The Nieman and Fromm families both came to Wisconsin from Germany in 1852, the Niemans settling in the vicinity of Cedarburg in Ozaukee County while the Fromms settled not far away in the vicinity of West Bend in adjoining Washington County. It is not known whether these families knew each other before coming to America, but by the end of the next decade members of the second generation of both families had intermarried twice, Frederick Fromm and Alwina Nieman forming one couple and John Nieman and Sophia Fromm the second.

Frederick and Alwina Fromm settled on an uncleared quarter-section of land in Hamburg Township in Marathon County that had been a wedding gift from Alwina's

⁴⁻⁵ Wyatt, Barbara (Ed.). Op. Cit., Vol. 11, pgs. 7-8 - 7-9, and 7-11 - 7-12 (Agriculture).

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rather and for many years afterwards their story was one of unrelenting labor as they struggled to clear the land and make it productive. In the process the couple raised eleven children, of whom nine lived to maturity, but it was their four youngest sons, Edward, Henry, John, and Walter, who were destined to make the family name famous. Like so many other northern Wisconsin boys of the time, all four of the Fromm brothers engaged in trapping as a way of acquiring spending money and for them the difficult to trap red fox was the fur of choice. Thus, in 1901, when these four teenage boys chanced upon a picture of a rare silver fox pelt that had been sold for \$1200 at a London auction, their imagination was fired by the possibilities. They were shrewd enough to realize, however, that nature by itself did not create enough foxes of this type, so, with the naivete of youth, they decided to raise them instead. This was a daring decision since raising animals for fur on a large scale was still in its infancy in those days. In addition, the Fromm brothers also decided that the then fashionable darker silver pelts that were only lightly flecked with silver did not appeal to them. Instead they decided to breed for foxes whose pelts had a much higher degree of silver coloration, a fateful decision that would eventually result in a radical change in the preference of the fashion industry in favor of the new, lighter colored Fromm furs.

In order to begin their new enterprise the Fromm brothers needed money with which to buy breeding foxes, but money was always in short supply on the farm and their father was not sympathetic with their goals. Instead, they chanced to hear that other farmers in the area were gathering wild ginseng plants to sell to the lucrative Chinese market. Since these plants could be had for the digging in the surrounding forests, the brothers hoped that they might provide the answer to their money problems. So, in 1904, they made the equally fateful decision to gather up plants and seeds with the intention of cultivating ginseng as a cash crop.

Fortunately for the brothers they were very young, very patient, and possessed an enormous capacity for hard work, so the fact that they were embarking on not just one but two extremely difficult paths to fame and fortune did not daunt them. Even so, success was extremely slow in coming. The decade that followed was a period of intense labor that achieved little in the way of monetary reward but which provided the four boys with an enormous amount of practical experience in the raising of both ginseng and foxes. The brothers got their first real break in 1915, when Alwina Fromm placed a mortgage on her farm in order to allow her sons to buy their first high quality breeding foxes. Even with quality stock, however, fox farming would not begin to make money for a number of years since the color that the brothers were breeding for was still unfashionable with buyers. Ginseng, on the other hand, finally began to be a genuine money maker for the brothers. In 1920, the year's crop realized \$40,000, which was the first large amount they had ever realized for all their years of effort. Now, suddenly, there was money to finance the acquisition of expanded acreage in Hamburg, money to build more fox pens, and money to buy still more breeding stock as well. And this expansion activity soon brought the brothers their first real success in the fox farming business.

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Part of this success was due to the expansion of the fox farming operations beyond the borders of Marathon County into Ozaukee County just to the northwest of Milwaukee County. In 1920, the Fromm brother's sister, Erna, married a cousin, Edwin J. Nieman, who was the eldest son of John F. and Martha Nieman of Cedarburg. John F. Nieman was the eldest son of John and Sophia (Fromm) Nieman and he had grown up on the family farm in Cedarburg, the same farm that his grandparents had established in 1852.

After graduating from Oshkosh Normal School (Nieman) spent seven years in the educational field, teaching in schools in the towns of Cedarburg and Mequon and in Marathon County. In 1894 he went to the upper peninsula of Michigan locating at Hermansville where he conducted a general store for twelve years. Returning to Wisconsin in 1906 he took up his residence in Cedarburg where he helped organize the Cedarburg State Bank. That same year, with J. Henry Wittenberg and sons he organized the Cedarburg Canning Co. and erected plants at Cedarburg and Mequon, and served as president and general manager. In a reorganization in 1910 the two plants were separated and the Wittenberg interests acquired the Cedarburg plant and he and other stockholders acquired the Mequon plant and formed the Milwaukee River Canning Co. which he headed as president and general manager.¹⁴

Entering the financial field in 1910, Nieman and D. M. Rosenheimer founded the Thiensville State Bank, Nieman becoming its president. In 1923 he organized the Cedarburg Finance Co., serving as a director, and in 1931 Nieman organized the Ozaukee County Finance Co., of which he was also the president. Nieman's interest in fox farming occurred because of his eldest son Edwin's interest in the silver foxes being raised by his Fromm cousins in Marathon County. Edwin J. Nieman (1900-1985) was known and well liked by the four Fromm brothers and by their sister Erna.

Edwin, while wild about Erna, also was wild about foxes. Their union created a business merger. Edwin's father, John F. Nieman, reluctantly bought his son 15 pairs of silver breeding foxes (these were Fromm Bros. foxes) to add to a wedding present of other breeding stock that the Fromms gave the couple. John F. Nieman eventually came to believe that the lighter silver foxes could be a gold mine. He backed a Fromm-Nieman partnership by providing land in Mequon and financing building of the pens. The Fromm brothers supplied the foxes. Meanwhile, the Hamburg operation to the north, which remained the sole property of the Fromm brothers, had both fox and ginseng farms.

The ginseng crop bought the family time, earning \$45,000 in 1923 and \$115,000 in 1924. In that time, the revolutionary move of letting foxes roam on rangeland began to pay off in thicker pelts with better luster. Even the foxes

¹⁴ Cedarburg News. "John F. Nieman, Prominent in Business, Dies." April 12, 1944. Obituary of John F. Nieman.

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from the Mequon operation were trucked north to Hamburg in the fall, so they could roam. By 1925, the public was warming up to the lighter Fromm furs, not so much for the brighter colors as for the better-quality pelts. The 3700 pelts raised in 1924 brought back \$489,967 at market in January, 1925.¹⁵

Many of these pelts were now coming from the Ozaukee County operations of the combined families. John F. Nieman, his brother, Charles J. Nieman, and his son Edwin J. Nieman, began their operations on a farm in the town of Mequon under the name of Fromm Bros., Nieman & Co. with the twenty-four pairs of foxes that had been raised by the Fromm brothers and given to Edwin and Erna for their wedding.

As their herd grew new companies were formed in succeeding years as follows: Federal Silver Fox Farms, Inc. (1921), Ozaukee Fur Farms Co. (1923), Herbert A. Nieman & Co. and Cedarburg Fox Farms, Inc. (1924), all of them operating in Ozaukee County, with John F. Nieman acting as president and general manager, the entire group being managed and directed from one office, that of Fromm Bros., Nieman & Co.¹⁶

The combined operations in both Marathon and Ozaukee counties were not without their problems, however.

Serious losses through disease failed to stop the Niemans and the Fromms. They spent thousands of dollars studying the cause of the disease that was invading their stock. Internationally known for their modern methods of fur farming, the Niemans, like the Fromms, led in the investigation of animal pathology, scientific feeding and mechanical improvements. By 1927 the enterprise had become so successful that the partnership was offered--and rejected--a purchase price of \$7,000,000.¹⁷

By January of 1928, the tide of fashion had changed and the new furs proved to be so popular that "Of the 8841 pelts sold that year by the New York Auction Co., 6600 came from the combined operations of the Fromm Brothers in Hamburg and the Fromm Brothers-Nieman and Co. in Mequon."¹⁸ The auction check that year was \$1,021,000 and members of both families finally decided that the time had come to spend some of their profits on themselves and on their long-suffering spouses and children. In May of 1928 the Cedarburg paper carried the following notice.

¹⁵ Nero, Phil and Sharon Thatcher. "Remnants of a Dynasty." The Milwaukee Journal, Wisconsin Magazine, February 3, 1991, pg. 11.

¹⁶ Gregory, John G. (Ed.). Southeastern Wisconsin: A History of Old Milwaukee County. Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1932, Vol. III, pg. 50. (John F. Nieman).

¹⁷ The Milwaukee Journal. "J. F. Nieman Is Dead at 76." April 12, 1944, pg. 15. Obituary of John F. Nieman.

¹⁸ Nero, Phil and Sharon Thatcher. Op. Cit.

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Mr. Edwin Nieman, manager of the Fromm Bros. & Nieman Co. fox farms will build one of the most beautiful homes in the county on the hill of the company property near Thiensville. The residence when completed will cost around \$60,000. Vollmar & Gruenwald have been awarded the masonry contract and Fred Liesenberg & Son the carpenter contract.¹⁹

In August, the same paper noted that "Work on Ed. Nieman's new residence is progressing rapidly."²⁰ Houses of similar size also began to appear on the Fromm brothers Marathon County farm property about this time too, which are almost equal to the Nieman house in their elaborateness and in the richness of their ornament. Such attention to detail took time to achieve, however, and work on the Nieman house continued throughout the winter. A later announcement in the Cedarburg paper noted that:

Work on the Edwin Nieman residence is also going forward. A large sign listing the architects, engineers and subcontractors on this project has been erected at the Fox farm entrance.²¹

By spring, though, Nieman's house had been completed and was ready for occupancy. It is doubtful that Nieman missed the money that his new house cost him, however, since the January, 1929 New York auction of the 7500 pelts the company sent to sell was even more successful than the one of the year before, reaching a record level of \$1,331,679 in sales.²² The year 1929 also brought a major change to the Ozaukee County portion of the organization that had raised these pelts, when in April the principals decided to split up this portion into two separate organizations.

Where formerly the fox ranches (the Thiensville ranches) operated more or less as one unit under the management of the Fromm Bros. & Nieman Co., there will now be two separate individual companies. In the parent farm of the Fromm Bros. & Nieman Co., Mr. Edwin Nieman has purchased the interests of his father Mr. John F. Nieman and Mr. Charles J. Nieman, and this farm is now owned solely by Mr. Ed. Nieman and the Fromm Bros. of Hamburg. This fox ranch will be greatly enlarged. Two adjoining farms, the Richard and Carl Roeglin farms, have been purchased by this company, and will be converted into fox ranches. 1100 new pens will be added and 200 men are now at work on this ranch.

¹⁹ The Cedarburg News. May 30, 1928, pg. 5.

²⁰ ibid. August 8, 1928, pg. 8.

²¹ ibid. January 9, 1929, pg. 10.

²² Pinkerton, Kathrene. Bright With Silver. New York: William Sloane Assoc., 1947, pg. 191. This book, a condensed version of which appeared in the June, 1953 issue of Reader's Digest Magazine, was written in cooperation with the Fromm brothers and is the best source of information about their Marathon County operations.

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The Federal, Ozaukee, and Herbert A. Nieman Co. farms, it is reported, will be merged, and Messrs. John F. and Charles J. Nieman have gone to Michigan (U. P.) to purchase land and start another farm there for this group where foxes raised here will be shipped to get their final fur priming. The cold of the north gives the fur a greater value. The Fromm Bros. Nieman Co. farms have their wintering ranch at Hamburg.²³

This reorganization was achieved without rancor, however, and both the Niemans and the Fromms continued to hold stock in each others organizations.

Even after the great stock-market crash of 1929, money continued to flow to all the fox farms. Many people in the Hamburg area still speak with gratitude about the jobs the Fromms provided during the depression. The Fromms were so flush with cash during the '30s that they sponsored semi-pro football and baseball teams, and took on such charitable projects as establishing the Walter and Mabel Fromm Scholarship fund, which still (1991) distributes \$100,000 annually to graduates of Merrill High School, which is near the Fromm's old Hamburg property.

In 1936 the brothers took a gamble. They shunned the New York auctions and formed their own auction company, asking urban buyers to take a 1000-mile trek in February from New York to Wisconsin's snowy North. The Fromm-Nieman pelts were so popular that buyers came by rented trains to snap up 7500 pelts at prices 15% higher than the average pelt had cost the previous month in New York. By 1937, the Fromm auction company was selling 30,000 pelts annually according to a company promotional film. The majority were Fromm furs, the balance from 300 other ranches.²⁴

By this time, Edwin J. Nieman, (now known as Edwin J. Nieman Sr. to distinguish himself from his son of the same name) had become a rich man thanks to his associations with his Fromm cousins and he remained with the company throughout its history. The company managed to survive the fur industry's lessening interest in fox fur after world war II by branching out into the raising of mink instead, becoming for a time one of America's biggest producers of this fur. Eventually, though, changes in fashion and diminished interest in furs coupled with dissension among the various branches of the Fromm family brought an end to the organization. Ironically, the last of the Fromm-Nieman mink was sold in 1985, the year that Edwin J. Nieman, Sr. died and just a year after the early death of Edwin J. Nieman, Jr.²⁵

²³ The Cedarburg News. "Fox Farms in Split-up." April 24, 1929, pg. 1.

²⁴ Nero, Phil and Sharon Thatcher. Op. Cit., pgs. 11-12.

²⁵ The Milwaukee Journal. April 16, 1985. Death notice of Edwin J. Nieman Sr. October 16, 1984. Death notice of Edwin J. Nieman Jr.

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The legacy of the Fromm and Nieman families in Wisconsin is a considerable one. While the raising of animals for fur has never regained its former importance in Wisconsin, the legacy of the medical research financed by the Fromms and Edward J. Nieman into the causes and treatment of distemper and encephalitis now benefits the family pets of millions of families. Likewise, fully 95% of the ginseng that is grown in the United States today is grown in Wisconsin, a statistic that owes a great deal to the Fromm brother's activities.

The Badger state owes its dominant position in the American ginseng trade to the industry of four brothers--Walter, John, Edward, and Henry Fromm. In 1904, these Hamburg, Wisconsin natives successfully transplanted their first one hundred American ginseng roots from forest to garden. By 1915, the Fromms were cultivating fifteen acres of the perennial herb, a large planting even by today's standards. Along the way, they improved techniques for cultivating the plant, which is enormously difficult to grow. Their most important contribution was the implementation of raised garden beds, a practice that helps prevent root rot.²⁶

Today, the land surrounding the home of Edwin J. Nieman, Sr. that was originally given over to the fox farm operations of the Fromm Bros. & Nieman Co. is now given over mostly to the grounds of a public golf course. The only remnant of the once huge fox farm operation itself here is a portion of the farm's elaborate food processing plant, which is now operated by Edwin J. Nieman's grandsons, Robert and Thomas Nieman, as Federal Foods, producers of Fromm Premium Pet Foods as well as food for mink on mink farms.²⁷ The only other remnant is the still splendid home and garage constructed for Edwin J. Nieman, Sr. in 1928-1929, which is the subject of this nomination.

Architecture

The architectural significance of the Edwin J. Nieman house lies in its being an unusually fine and exceptionally well-detailed example of the Tudor Revival style as applied to a sizeable late 1920s country house. In addition, the Nieman house is also one of the few known residential commissions of its designer, Herman H. Bruns, a Milwaukee architect and interior designer best known for his church designs and whose best works are as impressive for their elaborate and well thought out interiors as for their notable exteriors.

The CRMP's Tudor and Elizabethan Revival subsection states that:

The styles draw primarily upon English antecedents of the sixteenth century. Ornamental half-timbering applied over a conventional balloon frame structure

²⁶ "The Wisconsin Ginseng Connection." On Wisconsin Magazine. Madison: University of Wisconsin Alumni Association, September/October, 1993, pg. 19.

²⁷ Nero, Phil and Sharon Thatcher. Op. Cit., pg. 8.

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and in-filled with stucco or brick is a hallmark of the Tudor Revival. Elizabethan Revival buildings, much rarer in Wisconsin, are more commonly of brick with stone detailing. They also tend to be larger in scale and more formal. Both styles are characterized by elaborate decorative chimneys, multi-gabled rooflines, and large window expanses subdivided by a multitude of mullions. Tudor and Elizabethan Revival structures are irregular in plan.²⁸

Similar details are noted as characteristics of the Tudor Revival style and of what is called the "Brick Wall Cladding subtype" or the style as described by Virginia and Lee McAlester in their recent book; A Field Guide to American Houses. The McAlesters note that the Tudor Revival style features certain salient characteristics such as a "steeply pitched roof, usually side-gabled; a facade dominated by one or more prominent cross gables, usually steeply pitched; decorative (i.e., not structural) half-timbering; tall, narrow windows, usually in multiple groups and with multi-pane glazing; massive chimneys, commonly crowned by decorative chimney pots."²⁹ The authors also note that false half-timbering occurs on about half the examples of the Brick Wall Cladding subtype, "with intilling of stucco or brick between the timbers and, quite often, elaborate decorative patterns in the arrangement of timbers and bricks."³⁰ Still another feature noted by the McAlesters was that "Windows are typically casement of wood or metal, although more traditional double-hung sash are also common. Windows are frequently grouped into strings of three or more; small transoms are sometimes present above the main windows."³¹

All of the features noted above are also present in the Nieman house, which is an almost prototypical example of the Tudor Revival style. In addition, Bruns's design included still other features that are sometimes found in more elaborate examples of the style such as slate roofing, a carved stone main entrance door surround, four-centered (Tudor) arch entrance door openings, and he also made extensive use stained and painted glass in the windows, most notably those on the first story.

But if the design Bruns gave to Edwin J. Nieman was based on historic prototypes, its method of construction was not. Partly to address concerns about fire and partly for reasons having to do with constructing a building that would be both permanent and trouble-free, Bruns specified poured reinforced concrete one-foot-thick floors and walls throughout the house are supported by a steel frame. In 1928, the use of these materials in general home construction was still quite rare in Wisconsin due largely to their high cost. But for those like the Niemans who lived in rural areas and who had good reason to be concerned about the threat of fires, the advantages of concrete and steel more than offset the cost. In

²⁸ Wyatt, Barbara (Ed.). Op. Cit. Vol. 11, pg. 2-30, (Architecture).

²⁹ McAlester, Virginia and Lee. A Field Guide to American Houses. New York: Knopf, 1984, pg. 355.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid, pgs. 356-358.

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addition, using a steel frame made it easier to support the massive weight of the slate roof, which was another element that contributed to the overall fireproofing of the house. The method of construction is not apparent, however, and this is typical of the building practice of the day. In a recent article on the historic use of concrete in American home construction the authors noted:

When concrete construction was used for stylish residential buildings--and the emphasis on fireproof buildings made it inevitable that it would be used frequently, if reluctantly--it was likely to be concealed behind facades of more time-honored materials and designs. The Woodrow Wilson house in Washington, D.C., for instance, hides its blocklike concrete-and-steel skeleton beneath an eminently respectable Georgian-style cloak of face brick and ornamental stone.³²

Interestingly enough, the blueprints for the Nieman house show that the exterior cladding was originally to have been a veneer of random ashlar Lannon limestone. The reason for ultimately choosing brick is not known.

The architect of the Nieman house was Herman H. Bruns (1884-195?). Bruns was a native of Manistee, Michigan, where his father, Benedict N. Bruns, was a carpenter and cabinetmaker by trade. Three of Benedict N. Bruns's four sons went on to become architects: Herman H. Bruns, in Milwaukee; Benedict J. Bruns, in Chicago; and Otto C. Bruns, in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Herman Bruns went to the local and parochial schools of Manistee while he worked with his father to become a cabinetmaker. He went to Milwaukee, his mother, Dora Kuester Bruns's, home town and worked first as a millwright at the Mayo Manufacturing Co., a chair manufacturer. While thus employed he also continued his education through a correspondence course in architecture from the International Correspondence School in Scranton, Pennsylvania. Then, for three years afterwards Bruns apprenticed with the interior design firm of J. J. Joergenson, during which time he gained a practical knowledge of the interior design profession.

During that time (Bruns) also pursued the study of art with Julius Seegall and also under Charles Schrade. He likewise studied at the Milwaukee Art Institute and under the tutoring of F. W. Heine of this city. Afterwards Mr. Bruns was with Adolph Liebig, a church decorator, for two years and during nine months of that period worked in Chicago, also attending the Art Institute in that city. With his return to Milwaukee he went with A. C. Eschweiler, an architect, as an apprentice, and a year later became a designer for the firm of Niedecken, Walbridge & Company, interior architects. He remained with them for three years and in addition to his work as a designer taught in the architectural department of the University Extension division and also took a course in

³² Massey, James C. & Shirley Maxwell. "The Case for Concrete Houses." Old-House Journal, May-June, 1994, pg. 53.

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engineering and strength of materials. He was next a designer with the Charles Solomon Company, interior decorators, and while occupying that position studied portrait work under Charles Schrade, also taking Beaux Arts and design in Columbia University.

On severing his connection with the Solomon Company, Mr. Bruns reentered the services of A. C. Eschweiler, with whom he remained for a year, and then entered the field of architecture independently. His work was principally in his native city, northern Michigan and Milwaukee, where he designed several churches and residences. He also drew the plans for the Manistee Masonic Temple, supervised the construction of the building and did all of its interior decorating.³³

After the outbreak of World War I Bruns worked for the United States Shipbuilding Corporation and was sent to Manitowoc, Wisconsin to build 100 homes for workers at the corporation's plant in that city. He was subsequently employed by the American Appraisal Company of St. Louis and then by the Fidelity Appraisal Co., inspecting and appraising buildings of all types.

Following his return to Milwaukee, Mr. Bruns accepted a responsible position with the firm of Kirchnott & Rose, architects, an association that lasted nine months. He then entered the Milwaukee Vocational School as instructor in architecture, mathematics, interior decorating, and estimating, acting in that capacity for two and a half years, and at the same time acting as an architect under his own name.³⁴

Given the wide range of Bruns's associations and places of employment, surprisingly little is known about the full range of his architectural commissions, but what is known suggests that the design and decoration of churches was a speciality. Besides the Manistee Masonic Temple, Bruns is known to have designed the Bethany Church, the Jordan Lutheran Church and the Siloah Lutheran Church, all of whose locations are unknown. In addition, he also designed the following churches in Milwaukee: Sherman Park Lutheran Church (2703 North Sherman Boulevard); Temple Beth-El (N. 48th Street); and Congregation Beth Israel Synagogue, built in 1925 (2432 N. Teutonia Ave., NRHP - 3/5/92). Bruns also designed commercial buildings and residences as well, including the following in Milwaukee and the surrounding area: Liberty State Bank (2708 North King Drive); the Bunde and Upmeyer store (135 West Wisconsin Ave.); "the beautiful home occupied by the Nieman family at the Fox farm and the Yahr residence (3340 North Hackett Ave.), both of which he built and furnished, also did

³³ Gregory, John G. History of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1931, Vol. 1V, pp. 131-134. Biography of Herman H. Bruns.

³⁴ *Ibid*, pg. 133. Bruns's return to Milwaukee took place ca.1921.

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the landscaping."³⁵ "The beautiful home of the Nieman family at the Fox farm" is, of course, the building that is the subject of this nomination.

All of Bruns's identified buildings are notable for the general excellence of their architecture, but what is especially notable is Bruns' ability to supply his clients with designs that are as notable for their interiors as for their exteriors. Certainly, the Nieman house is one of the best expressions of Bruns's manifold talents as an architect and decorator, talents for which he was well known in his day. "Gifted along many lines, he [Bruns] has become widely known as an architect, as a consulting decorator, and as a landscape, pictorial and mural artist, doing notable work in these connections."³⁶

Bruns was listed as an architect in the Milwaukee City Directories until 1933. "Bruns' whereabouts after this time are not fully known, but his father's obituary on November 24, 1942 indicated that sons Benedict J., Herman H., and Alvin C. were in Chicago. Perhaps the lack of architectural commissions brought on by the Depression led Herman Bruns to join his brother's practice in Chicago... At present it is not known when [or where] he died. He was still registered as an architect in Wisconsin in 1954, although he was still living in Chicago at the time."³⁷ Despite this lack of knowledge about the overall scope of Bruns's work, what has been identified to date clearly represents the work of a master architect as defined by the NRHP and the Nieman house is an outstanding example of this body of work.

Consequently, it is believed that the Nieman house meets the test of Criterion C, which asks that a nominated property exhibit "Distinctive design or physical characteristics." The house exhibits nearly all of the design characteristics that are typically associated with the Tudor Revival style such as steeply pitched roofs, usually side-gabled; a facade dominated by one or more prominent cross gables, usually steeply pitched; decorative (i.e., not structural) half-timbering; tall, narrow windows, usually in multiple groups and with multi-pane glazing; massive chimneys, commonly crowned by decorative chimney pots. These elements have been skillfully blended by the architect, who created an excellent representative example of the style. The Nieman house is also notable for being constructed out of reinforced concrete, an atypical material that was used in only the finest country houses of the time. The significance of the house is further enhanced by its very intact and elaborate original interior and by the very fine physical condition of the building and of the associated garage building.

³⁵ Gregory, John G. Op. Cit., pg.133.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Vollmert, Les & Carlen Hatala. National Register Nomination Form for the Beth Israel Temple, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Milwaukee Dept. of City Development, Dec. 16, 1991. Nomination on file at the State Historic Preservation Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Blueprints of a Residence and Garage at Thiensville, Wisconsin, to be built for Fromm Bros., Nieman & Co., dated 4/11/1928. In the possession of the owners.

The Cedarburg News. May 30, 1928, pg. 5; August 8, 1928, pg. 8; January 9, 1929, pg. 10; April 24, 1929; April 12, 1944.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

See continuation sheet

- 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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 4 acres

UTM References

A	<u>1/6</u>	<u>4/1/9/6/1/0</u>	<u>4/1/8/9/4/2/0</u>	B	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / /</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / /</u>	D	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / /</u>

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated parcel of land that is associated with the Nieman house is located in the west half of the southeast quarter (W $\frac{1}{2}$ of SE $\frac{1}{4}$) of Section 10, T9N, R21E, in the Town (now City) of Mequon, Ozaukee County, Wisconsin. Beginning on a point on the east right-of-way line of the north-south running STH 57 (aka Cedarburg Rd.) that is located 1750-feet north of the intersection of said right-of-way with the north

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary contains the landscaped portion of the larger 26 acre parcel of land that is now associated with the house. This visually well-defined area is centered on the house and consists of all the land that has historically been associated directly with the house itself, which land is separate from and distinctly different than the land that surrounded it.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Timothy F. Hegglund/Preservation Consultant

For: N. Timothy and Suzette Lynch

organization _____ date January 5, 1995

street & number 1311 Morrison Street telephone (608)-251-9450

city or town Madison state Wisconsin zip code 53703

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The Milwaukee Journal. April 12, 1944; October 16, 1984; April 16, 1985.

Nero, Phil and Sharon Thatcher. "Remnants of a Dynasty." The Milwaukee Journal, Wisconsin Magazine, February 3, 1991.

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Items a-d are the same for each photo

Photo 1

- a) Edwin J. Nieman, Sr. House
- b) Town of Mequon, Ozaukee County, Wisconsin
- c) Timothy F. Heggland, August 5, 1994
- d) State Historical Society of Wisconsin
- e) Rear Elevation, facing S
- f) Photo 1 of 9

Photo 2

- e) Rear elevation, facing SW
- f) Photo 2 of 9

Photo 3

- e) Garage, facing E
- f) Photo 3 of 9

Photo 4

- e) General view, facing NW
- f) Photo 4 of 9

Photo 5

- e) East-facing side elevation, conservatory, facing W
- f) Photo 5 of 9

Photo 6

- e) Main facade, facing NE
- f) Photo 6 of 9

Photo 7

- e) Main entrance, facing N
- f) Photo 7 of 9

Photo 8

- e) Detail of main entrance door, facing N
- f) Photo 8 of 9

Photo 9

- e) Detail of conservatory fountain, facing E
- f) Photo 9 of 9

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Boundary Description, Continued

right-of-way of the intersecting east-west running Highland Road, then proceeding due east from said point approx. 375-feet to a Point A that coincides with the NW corner of the main block of the house. The boundary then circumscribes a rectangle around the house that extends around the house at a distance of 100-feet west of Point A, 150-feet north of Point A, 200-feet south of Point A, and 400-feet east of Point A. The short east and west sides of the rectangle measure 350-feet-long while the long north and south sides measure 500-feet-long. The resulting rectangle encloses approx. 4 acres.

Owners

Dr. N. Timothy & Suzette Lynch
13030 N. Cedarburg Rd.
Mequon, WI 53097