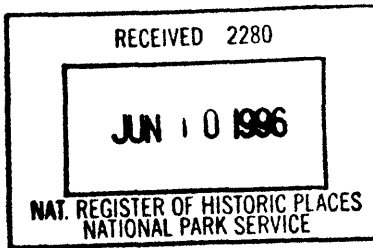


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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Rippavilla

other names/site number Cheairs, Nathaniel, House; Meadowbrook

2. Location

street & number U.S. Highway 31 na not for publication

city or town Spring Hill vicinity

state Tennessee code TN county Maury code 119 zip code 37174

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)
Herbert L. Hays 6/5/96
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, TN Historical Commission
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

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

Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper
**Entered in the
National Register**

Date of Action
7-19-96

Rippavilla
Name of Property

Maury Co., TN
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

		Contributing	Noncontributing	
		3	1	buildings
		0	0	sites
		1	0	structures
		0	0	objects
		4	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single-dwelling
DOMESTIC: Secondary structure

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT: Work in progress

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Colonial Revival; Greek Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: limestone

walls BRICK

roof METAL: tin

other WOOD; GLASS

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheets

Rippavilla
Name of Property

Maury Co., TN
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations N/A
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

C. 1852-1932

Significant Dates

1852, 1855, 1888, 1928, 1932

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Stratton, F.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- 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

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Center for Historic Preservation

Rippavilla
Name of Property

Maury Co., TN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property approximately 4 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	16	504180	3954000
Zone	Easting	Northing	
2			

Carter's Creek 64 NW

3			
Zone	Easting	Northing	
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Megan Dobbs

organization Center for Historic Preservation date May 1996

street & number MTSU Box 80 telephone (615) 898-2947

city or town Murfreesboro state TN zip code 37132

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Saturn Corporation, c/o Jennifer Graham, Saturn Communications

street & number 100 Saturn Parkway telephone (615) 486-5071

city or town Spring Hill state TN zip code 37174

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of

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Rippavilla, Maury Co., TN

VII. DESCRIPTION

Rippavilla, or the Nathaniel Cheairs mansion, is located on U.S. Highway 31 near Spring Hill, Maury County, Tennessee. The plantation house was built on the 1500-acre farm owned by the Cheairs family as part of an original land grant awarded by President James Madison in 1810. The house's primary structural components were built over a period of 36 years but were extensively remodeled between 1928 and 1932, rendering an excellent example of antebellum Greek Revival architecture with twentieth century Colonial Revival modifications. Once a great showplace in Maury County, the gracious house is currently owned by the Saturn Corporation and leased by Maury County. The mansion is currently being restored for use as a museum and meeting facility for the county. The Cheairs house has a long history as a Maury County landmark, representing the synthesis of nineteenth and twentieth century architectural design, and is eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places for its significance in architecture, specifically the transformation of a nineteenth century house into a twentieth century Colonial Revival showplace.

Rippavilla, which is also known as the Nathaniel Cheairs House and Meadowbrook, was built in several phases and then dramatically altered by later renovations. The house built by the Cheairs family is intact, although the Colonial Revival changes dominate the house and characterize it as a superior example of Colonial Revival architecture with strong Greek Revival influence. Significant modifications were made to the nineteenth century house, including changes in floor level and roof lines, interior room configuration, and replacement of the original facade with new porticos.

The original house occupied by Nathaniel Cheairs and his wife, Susan McKissack, was built in 1852 and now serves as a rear wing of the "big" house, which was constructed in 1855 and connected to the original building with a one-story addition built in 1888. The rear wing, or first house, was connected with the two story smokehouse and kitchen around the same time, creating a more unified configuration. Descendants of Nathaniel and Susan Cheairs lived at Rippavilla until the 1920s, at which time they sold the property and the subsequent owner, John Whitfield of

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Birmingham, Alabama, commissioned the significant Colonial Revival style alterations to the exterior and interior of the house. Although these changes characterize the mansion today, there is still significant evidence of the original house configuration and style, rendering a house that expresses the stylistic and social influence of the nineteenth and twentieth century architectural styles in Maury County.

Rippavilla is a large, two story house composed of the original 1852 two-story ell or wing section behind the 1855 addition of the two story grand house and connected by a small one-story building. The main house contains four interior central chimneys with corbelled caps, located in the south and north peaks of the hipped roof. The original house has two interior central brick chimneys, but the east chimney is much taller and more slender than the west chimney, reflecting the twentieth century addition of a coal-burning fireplace. Despite the different periods of construction and stylistic influence, the house has several unifying characteristics, including the cut stone foundations, Flemish bond brick walls, hipped roofs of seamed tin, and double-hung windows with flat wood lintels, sills, and louvered wood shutters. The original windows were replaced during the 1928 renovations by six-over-six paned windows, and several original windows were altered in size and configuration as well as location.

The primary facade faces west toward U.S. Highway 31 and presents an imposing presence on the rural landscape. According to a site assessment conducted by the Tennessee Historical Commission, this entrance replaced the original facade on the south side of the main house, and exemplifies the twentieth century Colonial Revival alterations. The site visit determined a circa 1920 date for the addition of the west and north porticos, indicated by the presence of stretcher bond brick instead of the Flemish bond brick found on the earlier buildings. Other evidence includes the raised porch bases with tile floors, the raised roof line (original roof is still visible via attic), and the addition of the wide entablature.

The two-story, stretcher bond brick west facade is dominated by the full-height Greek Revival pedimented portico, which features a denticulated cornice and heavy molding and a smaller dentil course beneath the open frieze of the pediment. Four

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large, fluted columns support the portico, resting upon squared concrete bases and ending in elaborate Corinthian capitals decorated with an acanthus motif, called "Tower of the Winds". Two large pilasters flank the recessed entrance and support the second floor balcony. The two-story entrance provides interior access on both the first and second floor, and both entrances are of the same size and basic configuration. The first floor entrance is characterized by a single six-panel wood door flanked by slender engaged columns which support the plain cornice of the doorway. A four-light transom and two six-light sidelights enhance the single door, which is recessed from the facade wall. The second floor doorway opens to a broad balcony with decorative wrought-iron railing. This entrance mirrors the first floor entrance in size but contains double paneled wood doors with wood framed screen doors. On either side of the double screen doors is a wood pilaster with plain capital, which also separates the single-pane transoms from the single-pane sidelights.

The symmetrical fenestration of the west facade is composed of two bays of windows on either side of the full-height pedimented portico. The windows are all six-over-six double hung sash with flat wood lintels and louvered and hinged wooden shutters on either side of each window. These windows were modified slightly in size and ornamentation during the Colonial Revival style remodeling and illustrate the types of subtle alterations that transformed the overall appearance of the facade.

The second portico is located on the north elevation and is less imposing when compared to the west facade, but shares similar ornamental features. The asymmetrical configuration of the two-story north facade of the big house is composed of seven bays, including five bays of first and second floor windows, the full-height portico, and a bay of first and second floor windows. Like the west facade, all windows are six-over-six double-hung sash with flat wood lintels and louvered wooden shutters. The two-story portico, or colonnaded porch, has a slightly hipped roof supported by four large squared columns with plain capitals, and two squared, paneled pilasters which flank the recessed entrance. The first and second floor doorways are identical to

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those on the west facade, with the exception of a wood frame and screen door which was added to the single paneled wood door on the first floor. The second story portico balcony has a latticed wood railing which is typical of Colonial Revival exterior ornamentation. Concrete and brick steps lead up to the tiled portico floor which extends out away from the portico. A five foot high brick wall (circa 1932) borders the former gardens on the northeastern end of the facade.

The north elevation of the original house, now considered a rear wing or ell of the main building, was the primary facade of the 1852 Cheairs house and is connected to the main house by a one story, Flemish-bond brick connector building. The two bay connector contains paired six-over-six double hung sash windows with wood lintels and a five panel wood door with brick lintel and wood keystone. The original two-story, common-bond brick building has a slightly hipped roof of standing seam tin above a wide molded cornice. Two large central interior brick chimneys are located on either side of the central entrance. The original house is composed of the three bay facade, the one bay recessed portion, and the two bay kitchen/smokehouse section. There is strong evidence that the recessed area was created by connecting separate kitchen and smokehouse complex. The three bay facade of the original house contains three six-over-six double hung sash windows with wood lintels on the second floor and one six-over-six double hung sash window with wood lintel flanked by two six-panel wood and six-pane half-glass doors with metal and glass storm doors and wood lintels.

The two-story recessed entrance is similar to the porticos on the west and north facades of the main or big house in that it contains a primary entrance on the first floor with an identical configuration on the second floor balcony. The ground floor recessed entrance is flanked by square wooden pilasters and contains three doors located on the center and two side walls of the recessed area. All three doors are three panel wood and six pane half-glass doors with metal and glass storm doors beneath wood lintels. Concrete steps lead up to the concrete floor of the porch. The second floor balcony is identical in configuration and ornamentation to the ground floor with the exception of the middle door, which is absent from the balcony. A wood Chippendale style railing matches the railing on the

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second story balcony and landing of the rear porch on the big house (west elevation).

The now attached kitchen/smokehouse is accessible via the east door of the recessed entrance. The two story common-bond brick elevation contains two six-over-six double hung sash windows with wood lintels on the second floor.

The east elevation of the house is also composed of several buildings constructed at different times, forming a "U" shape around the central courtyard, and composed of the original building, the rear of the main house, and the ell section of the main house. From a south to north direction, this elevation is contains the rear sections of both the original house and the later house as well as the twentieth century renovation of the rear verandas and covered side porch. The end of the original two-story house, at the southeast corner, is common-bond brick with a plain wood cornice and contains only one bay with a second story six-over-six double hung sash window with flat wood lintel and a first floor exterior coal chute, also with flat wood lintel.

The middle section, or rear of the main house, has Flemish-bond brickwork and wide denticulated wood cornice with projecting roof. This section contains a double veranda with three brick pillars and one wood column, all of which extend to the full height of the building. The first story is composed of a half veranda with open newel staircase which provides access to both the second floor veranda and the basement. To the east of the staircase is the fully enclosed portion of the veranda, containing only one six-over-six double hung sash window with flat wood lintel and wood shutters directly next to the intersection with the connecting building. An identical window is located south of the staircase, facing north.

The second story veranda runs from the southwest corner of the main house to the junction of the north wing of the main building. The veranda has a plank wood flooring, beaded board ceiling, and brick exterior walls and contains five bays. From southwest to northwest, this section is composed of a single, five panel wood door with wood framed screen door, one six-over-six double hung sash window with flat wood lintel and wooden shutters, and a paired six-over-six double hung sash window

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flanked by single six-over-six double hung sash windows, all with flat wood lintels but without shutters. A wooden Chippendale style railing runs the length of the front view of the veranda on both the first and second floors.

The third section of the east elevation has the same wide denticulated cornice as the rest of the main house, and includes the east end of the main house ell, a ground floor porch enclosure, and corresponding second floor window. The 1855 ell is common-bond brick has one bay with one six-over-six double hung sash window with wood lintel and hinged wooden louvered shutters on each floor. This section has visible limestone foundation, distinguishing it from the later addition, which contains one bay, composed of the arched opening of the partially enclosed porch and second floor one-third window with wood lintel and one wood shutter.

The south elevation of the house is divided into three sections based on the chronology of construction. This elevation is composed of the two story, four-bay main house (1855), the one-story, one bay connector (1888), the two-story, four bay original house (1852), a two story, one bay connector (1888), and the kitchen/smokehouse(1888). Based on site visits and careful examination, it appears that this elevation initially served as the facade of the main house in 1855, but was altered after the addition of the west and north porticos during the Colonial Revival remodeling. The southwestern section of the elevation is Flemish-bond brick with a wide denticulated cornice and shows evidence of the original four bays despite the newer, three bay composition and the addition of a one-story solarium, which conceals evidence of the original facade entrance.

The solarium, or sun porch, is wood on a brick foundation and has a flat roof with seamed tin and crenelated metal coping above a plain cornice. This addition, built circa 1920, strongly reflects the influence of Colonial Revival designs open plans and side porches. The solarium facade has three bays, comprised of double eight-pane French doors with two-pane transoms, flanked by paired elongated, two-over-three pane casement windows with two-pane transoms. Four sets of paired, pilasters are located at each corner of the facade and on either side of the double French doors. The wood pilasters, which extend to the wood cornice, are embellished with an acanthus motif and compose most of the

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exterior wall. Each side wall has a similar configuration, containing two sets of paired, elongated two-over-three casement windows with two pane transoms, flanked by paired wooden pilasters.

Directly above and on either side of the solarium are five six-over-six double hung sash windows with flat wood lintels and louvered wooden shutters. The fourth bay of the southwestern section of the elevation contains the open wall of the second floor rear veranda directly above a first floor six-over-six double hung sash window with flat lintel and shutters. The middle section of the south elevation contains the one-story one bay connector building, which has a metal covered side gabled roof, brick walls, and a central doorway with five panel wood door and wood framing. A five foot high brick wall originates at the junction of the 1888 connector and the original house and extends beyond the house to encompass a large yard.

To the east of the connector lies the original two-story Flemish-bond brick house constructed in 1852, with its stone foundation, plain wood cornice and hipped roof. The symmetrical fenestration of this section is comprised of the four bays of the original house, each containing a single window on the first and second stories, the one bay connector, and two bay kitchen/smokehouse, all containing single six-over-six double hung sash windows with wood lintels. Unlike their counterparts in the 1855 house, these windows do not have the Colonial Revival style louvered shutters and are more in keeping with the original design of the house. The hewn stone foundation is also visible along this portion of the elevation, but there is a change in thickness at the junction of the original house and the circa 1888 connector building, which links the current coal furnace with the rest of the mansion.

The mansion interior is also very ornate and exhibits the progression of architectural and decorative design as it evolved over the years and was influenced by changing trends. While the exterior exhibits a high degree of Colonial Revival influence, the interior is a superior example of early twentieth century revival style and its application to a large, nineteenth century mansion. The interior configuration of the original 1855 Cheairs house was replaced by the twentieth century remodeling, which completely changed not only placement and size of rooms, but also

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the floor levels, ceiling height, and decorative elements. The rear ell section, or original portion of the house, however, was altered in the 1970s for use as apartment quarters.

The main house has a basic square plan with a central hall and four large rooms located off the main hall and a grand staircase leading to the second floor. Hardwood floors, plaster walls and ceilings, crown molding and raised plaster molding are all characteristic of the main house interior decoration. The interior woodwork is painted white, and illustrates the strong Colonial Revival influence in the use of paneled doorways and wood paneled walls, molded door frames with cornices. Other decorative elements indicating a high style revival house include plaster ceilings with decorative molding and scrolled brackets.

Few changes have been made to the configuration of the rooms, with the exception of a circa 1930 bathroom and circa 1950 kitchen. The original wood floors in these areas were replaced with tile and in the bathrooms, tile was added to the lower half of the plaster walls.

The central hall is dominated by an impressive double-return staircase. This treatment is characteristic of Colonial Revival styles, and presented a more imposing image to visitors as they entered the front hall. The staircase has a curved banister lip and handrail, narrow, squared balusters, and stained wood treads. The wood risers and balustrade are painted. The central hall has two large cased openings on the north wall of the hallway, and a third cased opening on the south wall, which lead to large reception rooms. At the rear of the hall, on the east wall are two recessed closets located on either side of the grand staircase.

The number of rooms contribute to the complexity of the interior description. In an attempt to clarify the interior configuration and location of the rooms, each room is assigned a number and letter, which are keyed to correspond with the attached plans.

The south side of the hall opens to two large rooms connected by a wide cased opening with cap trim and raised paneling. The first room (A), located on the southwest corner, has plaster walls with paneled wood wainscoting and molded baseboards and cornices. An elaborate wood mantel is located on the south wall

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breast with panel strip molding. The denticulated cornice of the mantel has a wide frieze with a garland and rosette pattern, supported by squared pilasters with urn, shell, and garland design. The fireplace is also characterized by a herringbone firebox and hearth, bordered by marble facing. A ten pane glass door with wood frame, located on the east side of the fireplace, provides access to the solarium, which is also connected to the adjacent room.

The solarium (1B), like the other rooms, has ornamented plaster walls with fretwork cornice, strip molding, and molded chair rail. The tile flooring is patterned with blue and yellow diamond and hexagons and a wide border. A second door, located on the north wall of the room, is identical to the door leading into the front parlor and has the same recessed opening with paneled framing.

The second parlor (1C), which is adjacent to both the front parlor and the solarium, has wood floors, plaster walls with strip molding and a wide molded cornice. The door to the solarium is located on the west side of the wall chimney breast, which is centered on the south wall. The fireplace is identical in design to the fireplace and mantel in the front parlor, with ornamental reliefs, marble facing, and herringbone firebox and hearth. A four panel wood door with molded door frame is located on the east wall, connecting the room with the smaller service room (1D).

This service space also contains wood floors, molded cornice, plaster walls with strip paneling, and wide baseboards. The four panel wood door with molded door frame located on the east wall provides access to the one story connector building which joins the big house with the original house. Windows on the east and north walls open to the rear courtyard and porch.

The north side of the main house is composed of two large rooms connected by a secondary hall which opens to the north portico. The front room (1E) is essentially a mirror of the front room on the west side of the house (1A), the only exception is the difference in the mantel design on the north wall fireplace. Like the other fireplaces, it is located on a wall breast with marble facing and herringbone brick firebox and hearth. The wide mantel has a scroll pattern above a dentil course which rests on

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a wide entablature with gougework and an alternating pattern of oval rosettes and grape bunches. A narrow band of egg and dart molding rests above fluted colonettes with Ionic capitals and Doric bases. The herringbone brick firebox and hearth are bordered by marble facing, outlined by a narrow band of egg and dart molding. The room opens to the center and secondary halls through wide cased openings with paneled framing located on the south and east walls.

The fourth large room (1F) lies on the east side of the secondary hall on the north side of the house and is also characterized by narrow plank flooring, plaster walls with strip paneling, molded cornices, and wide baseboards. The primary entrance to the room is through the wide cased opening located on the west wall connecting the room to the secondary hall and the north portico. The room is also dominated by an ornate fireplace on the east wall breast, which is enhanced by two brass wall sconces. The mantel piece is a simple design with a plain mantle and frieze supported by pilasters resting on square bases. The stretcher brick firebox and hearth enclose an early gas heater. A large plaster medallion is centrally located on the plaster ceiling, which supports a simple frosted glass pendant chandelier. The fireplace is flanked by two four panel wood doors with molded door frames which open to small service areas.

The northeast door opens to a small hall or butlers' pantry (1G), which is adjacent to a narrow kitchen (1H). The kitchen is located in northeastern corner of the main house with a small connecting butlers' pantry and small bathroom (1I). The kitchen, which was probably added at the same time as the 1888 connector building between the original and main houses, is typical of the early progressive era and domestic movement, with built-in cabinets, fixtures, and functional but sparse design. A plain four panel wood door allows access to the north side of the courtyard and the partially enclosed porch with round arches, added during the 1932 Colonial Revivalization.

The configuration of the second floor follows the same plan of the first floor, providing four bedrooms, a dressing room, center sitting area, and a kitchen. The addition of a second floor kitchen (circa 1960), although a detraction from the overall appearance, did not dramatically alter the room from its original design. All rooms retain their plaster wall cladding and

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ceilings, hardwood floors, wood door and window frames, and in most cases, the original crown molding.

The double-return staircase is the focal point of the second floor, which also contains a large open landing with direct access to the west balcony and access to the north portico via a secondary hall. The double flights of stairs are connected by this landing, and share a delicate banister with curved handrails, squared posts, and slim balusters. The double two panel wood doors to the west balcony are located opposite the triple windows on the east wall, which are enhanced by wide wooden framing with raised panels and carved strip molding.

The central landing serves the four primary bedrooms, located on the north and south walls of the landing hall, with plain four panel wood doors to each room. The southwest bedroom (2A) is connected to the southeast bedroom (2B) by a narrow hall with a small bath. The bathroom is located on the south wall of the hallway and like the first floor baths, contains its original circa 1920 fixtures and tilework. Both south side bedrooms are characterized by wide plaster cornice molding, and carved wood door and window frames. The primary decorative features, however, are the wood mantels with denticulated cornices and carved pilasters. The ornamentation is characterized by variations of a delicate wreath and festoon patterns or raised oval rosettes with beading and urn designs. Brick facing surrounds circa 1920 heating units.

The north bedrooms are identical to the south rooms in interior design, but the configuration is somewhat different. The northwest bedroom (2C), opens to both the center hall and the secondary hall. The secondary hall, aside from providing access to the north portico balcony, is designed as a dressing room, with large, projecting wardrobes built into each side of the hall, which also contains four panel wood doors connecting it with the center hall and the northeast bedroom.

The northeast bedroom (2D) has a wall breast fireplace on the east wall flanked by a walk-in closet on the right and the entrance to the second floor kitchen on the left. Like the other three bedrooms, this room contains the same wide cornice molding, baseboards, and framing, the only exception is the herringbone

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brickwork in the fireplace, which is visible because the modern heating element was removed.

The kitchen (2E) is spatially intact, but needs removal of the circa 1960s cabinetry, fixtures, and linoleum to be fully compatible with the decorative cornice molding and carved door and window frames.

The rear balcony overlooks the central courtyard between the main house and the rear wing, and is equipped with a exterior staircase leading to the ground floor. From the courtyard, as well as the main house interior, is access to the single story 1888 building. The small, one story connector building (1J) is accessible from the courtyard and provides direct access into the original house. The connector building has an interior door on the west wall, opening to room D, and two exterior doors located on the north and south sides of the building. This portion of the house was remodeled again circa 1970, when the rooms were modernized for use as small apartments. Despite the addition of vinyl flooring and inexpensive plywood paneling, the basic configuration of the rooms is intact. The connector is composed of two main rooms (1J and 1K), with small closets and a modern bath. A short set of stairs descends down from room 1J into the first floor of the original house, via a small, framed entrance.

The two-story original house and rear wing has a basic three-part configuration, with large rooms located on either side of the middle staircase and hall section. The staircase is characteristic of mid-nineteenth century design, and is the most intact decorative element in the building. The central stairwell and hall is flanked by a large room (1L) on the west and two smaller rooms (1O, 1P), on the east. A small bathroom (1N) connects rooms L and O. The rooms are all spatially intact, although very restrained in ornamentation. The second floor mirrors the first floor rooms, in both configuration and general decoration.

The former kitchen/smokehouse section (1Q) was modified for use as a coal furnace and coal storage around circa 1880. The space is no longer used in this capacity, and is currently vacant and in need of clean-up and repairs. This two-story section has a finished second floor room (2Q) located directly above the basement level room, which is accessible via another set of

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stairs, descending from the exterior center porch area of the building.

The interior modifications reflect a high degree of Colonial Revival stylistic influence, and are further enhanced by the contributing exterior elements of the house, including a garden wall, garage, and outbuildings.

A large brick wall was added in 1932 as part of the Colonial Revival additions, with brick posts and pedimented openings, extends from the north and south sides of the main house and forms a border around the rear of the complex. (C)

Directly behind the house on the east side is a four bay brick garage, circa 1930, with seamed tin hipped roof and four sets of paired six-pane half glass and paneled wood swinging doors, located on the west side of the garage. Four four-over-four double hung sash windows are symmetrically placed along the east elevation of the building. (C)

An early single pen log cabin is also located on the property, moved to this location in 1993. The small building has a stone foundation, half-dovetail notched logs, and a wood shake gabled roof with weatherboard gable-end infill. A centrally located, vertical board door is framed by rough hewn timbers and is the only opening on the building. (NC, due to removal from original site and loss of integrity)

The large three-bay cantilevered barn with gabled roof and two side lean-to drive-throughs is weatherboard with board and batten side walls on the drive-throughs and rests on a stone foundation. This circa 1880 barn is important in reinforcing the agricultural history of Rippavilla, which continued after its prominence in the antebellum period. (C)

The interior design and intact features of the mansion correspond with the stylistic elements of the exterior, rendering a comprehensive expression of the integrated Greek Revival and Colonial Revival styles of architecture. The house exhibits a high degree of historical integrity and is an excellent example of both 19th and 20th century style and design.

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VIII. Statement of Significance

Rippavilla is eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places under criterion C for significant architecture, representing the impact of the Colonial Revival styles applied to nineteenth century architecture in Middle Tennessee.

The Cheairs plantation, originally composed of over 1500 acres, was part of a land grant awarded to the Cheairs family by President James Madison in 1810. Nathaniel Cheairs, born in Maury County in 1818, eventually inherited the property from his father in 1850 and made plans for the construction of an impressive home for himself and his bride, the former Susan McKissack. Cheairs was a prominent landowner in Maury County and according to county tax records, owned at least 40 slaves at the time of the Civil War. As was the case in many plantations, the slaves supplied not only farm labor, but it is very likely that several slaves would be skilled craftsmen who contributed to the carpentry and interior construction of the house. The brick used in the construction of the house was also supplied by family, for Susan McKissack Cheairs was the daughter of William McKissack, who owned a large brickyard in the county and contributed supplies and labor for building Rippavilla. The architect credited with the design of the mansion is F. Stratton of Virginia, who also designed nearby Ferguson Hall (the Martin Cheairs house, NR 12/12/76), which is currently located on the property of the Tennessee Children's Home. Nathan Vaught, a master builder in Columbia, is mentioned in the construction history of Ferguson Hall, and believed to have been instrumental in the building of both Ferguson Hall and Rippavilla.

A common practice among planters was to build a rather modest dwelling first to serve as temporary living quarters while the "big house" was designed and constructed, a process which often took several years. The original building occupied by the Cheairs family was built in 1852 and later served a servants quarters once the family moved into the larger house. The massive main house was complete in 1855, which was no mean feat given the particularities of Nathaniel Cheairs and his control over the construction of the new house. Stories regarding Cheairs and his compulsive nature include accounts of his ordering walls to be rebuilt as many as three times before he deemed them suitable.

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Once the main house was finished, the Cheairs family moved from the smaller house, which then became servants' quarters. The Cheairs family made Rippavilla a seat of hospitality in Maury County, where they enjoyed a peaceful life until the outbreak of the Civil War, when Nathaniel left home to join the Confederate Army. Despite his opposition to secession, Cheairs was commissioned as a major and served the duration of the war and was captured and imprisoned twice. The mansion remained with the Cheairs family following the war and sustained very little damage and the main house was still the primary family dwelling, with additional quarters located in the original house. In 1888, the small one story connecting building was added, making the original house a rear extension of the main building and providing direct access between the two houses, and the kitchen/smokehouse section was incorporated into the original building.

The Cheairs family occupied the mansion until the 1920s, when they sold the house to Alabama coal baron John G. Whitfield, who renamed the house Meadowbrook. The Whitfields were the first owners outside the Cheairs family and had a tremendous impact on the mansion exterior and interior. The remodeling and modernization of the house began in 1928 and was complete by 1932, costing upwards of 750,000 dollars. The remodeling, according to the Tennessee Historical Commission, included a new raised roof, raised floor levels, and the addition of both the west and north porticos (as evidenced by the change in brick patterns), and the south elevation solarium. Interior changes include the center hall and staircase, interior plasterwork, and the creation of rear courtyard, and rear balconies. In 1932 the house was further enhanced by the construction of the six foot brick wall and courtyard enclosure, and the four car garage.

The Colonial Revival alterations are significant because they illustrate the revival craze characteristic of the early 1930s. In his article The American Colonial Revival in the 1930s, David Gebhardt maintains that the Colonial revival was "the" ultimate ideal in the thirties, reinforced by Hollywood movies, a strong sense of nationalism, and interest in the past. This craze was not limited to the design of new buildings, but encompassed older architecture as well, where there was a "strong urge to colonialize older dwellings", particularly in domestic architecture (116). In keeping with the style of the times, many

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established houses were revitalized by altering the interior in particular or by adding external features like gardens, which imbued the house with a fresh interpretation of the past.

Since the Colonial Revival style was to a large extent a part of the Progressive movement, early twentieth century progressive reformers typically encouraged the symmetrical fenestration of eighteenth and nineteenth designs. Fanlights, pediments, and porticoes were used to visually enhance the symmetry of the house and reinforce the center entrances, which again represented order. The Greek Revival elements found in Rippavilla's imposing architecture reflect the implementation of various sub-styles included in Colonial Revival designs. Rippavilla is commonly included in architectural texts as a fine example of Greek Revival architecture, specifically in James Patrick's Architecture in Tennessee, 1769-1897 in which he lists Rippavilla as part of the "Architecture of Southern Nationalism" (177). Roger Kennedy also mentions Rippavilla in his study, Greek Revival America for its distinctive "Tower of the Winds" capitals on the west portico columns (419).

The Colonial Revival style encompassed both exterior and interior design and was to a large degree, sponsored and promoted by the Progressive movement. Bridget May discusses the influence of the Progressive Era on architecture and interior design in her article, Progressivism and the Colonial Revival. May states that this architectural style was an outgrowth of progressivism and the social and political reform movements of the first few decades of the twentieth century (108). Progressives generally criticized the inefficiency, cluttered space, and gaudy architecture of nineteenth century houses and emphasized the implementation of modern technology and materials to create a clean, efficient space for gracious living (110). Simplicity was the key to interior decorating and elements like exposed hardwood floors, paneled walls and doors, and decorative plasterwork characterized high style revival.

Rippavilla epitomizes the modernized Colonial Revival house with its painted wood paneling, plaster medallions and cornices, and built-in kitchen cabinetry. May asserts that the extensive use of white in interiors is evidence of the acceptance of hygienic interior decoration. Progressives highly recommended white walls, floors, cabinets, and counters because they regarded the

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color as "pure, wholesome in its mental influence, and noble." By the 1920s, white had become a part of the visual cues for the colonial style (117). Rippavilla epitomizes the use of white in interior decoration with its painted walls and white paneling. The "modern" bathrooms installed circa 1928, are also good examples of the updating of houses and the promotion of "hygienic" bathrooms with clean white tilework on the floors and walls and chrome fixtures. The house interior was also designed with open floor plans to allow the most free-flowing space, while maintaining organized and specialized room configuration.

Rippavilla is significant as a graciously designed Colonial Revival with strong Greek Revival elements. The house still embodies elements of its original nineteenth century design but is dominated by the influence of the twentieth century revival style, which according to May, indicate how "the alliance of old and new, past and present produced a house that was a manifestation of its time" (122). Rippavilla is also important to the architectural legacy of Maury County because it is certainly one of the most outstanding and impressive examples of the Colonial Revival style in both exterior and interior design. The house is a valuable artifact from the pre-Civil War era and excellent example of the stylistic adaptation of a great house as it evolved over time.

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Rippavilla, Maury County, TN

X. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property consists of approximately 4 acres along Highway 31 south outside Spring Hill, Maury County, Tennessee. The parcel is surrounded by fence lines and an access road (see tax map). The tax map for this nomination has the scale 1" = 400'. In the past, the Tennessee Historical Commission has used this scale map for nominations and has found that the 1" = 400' adequately meets our office needs. The Tennessee Historical Commission does not have the facilities to prepare maps to the scale preferred by the National Park Service.

Boundary Description

The nominated boundaries contain all of the extant historic property, under a single ownership, associated with the architectural significance of Rippavilla. The boundaries also represent the acreage under current development as a historic house site.

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Rippavilla, Maury Co., TN

PHOTOGRAPHS

Rippavilla
Spring Hill, Maury Co., TN

Photos by: Carroll Van West
MTSU Center for Historic Preservation
P.O. Box 80
Murfreesboro, TN 37132

Negatives: Tennessee Historical Commission
2941 Lebanon Road
Nashville, TN 37243

Northwest corner of house, looking southeast
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West facade, looking east
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Detail, west portico
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North facade, looking south
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Detail, north portico
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South elevation, main house, looking north
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South elevation, original house, looking north
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East elevation, looking west
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East elevation, main house; north elevation, original house,
looking southwest
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North elevation, original house; east elevation, main house,
looking west
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Detail, connector building between main house and original house
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Detail, east balcony and exterior stairs
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Detail, north side courtyard
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Detail, Colonial Revival wall
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Four bay garage, looking northeast
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Colonial Revival landscaping and boxwoods, looking northeast
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Circa 1880 barn, looking southeast
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Log building, looking east
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Center staircase, looking east
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Center staircase, looking north
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Detail, fireplace, room 1A
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Detail, fireplace, room 1B
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Solarium, looking northwest
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Solarium, looking northwest
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Detail, fireplace, room 1F
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Kitchen (room 1H), looking south
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Detail, bathroom, room 1I
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Center staircase, looking northwest
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Center hall, second floor, looking east
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Center hall, second floor, looking west
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Room 2A, looking south
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Detail, upstairs bathroom
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Detail, fireplace, room 2C
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Detail, door to north portico balcony
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Second floor secondary hall, looking south
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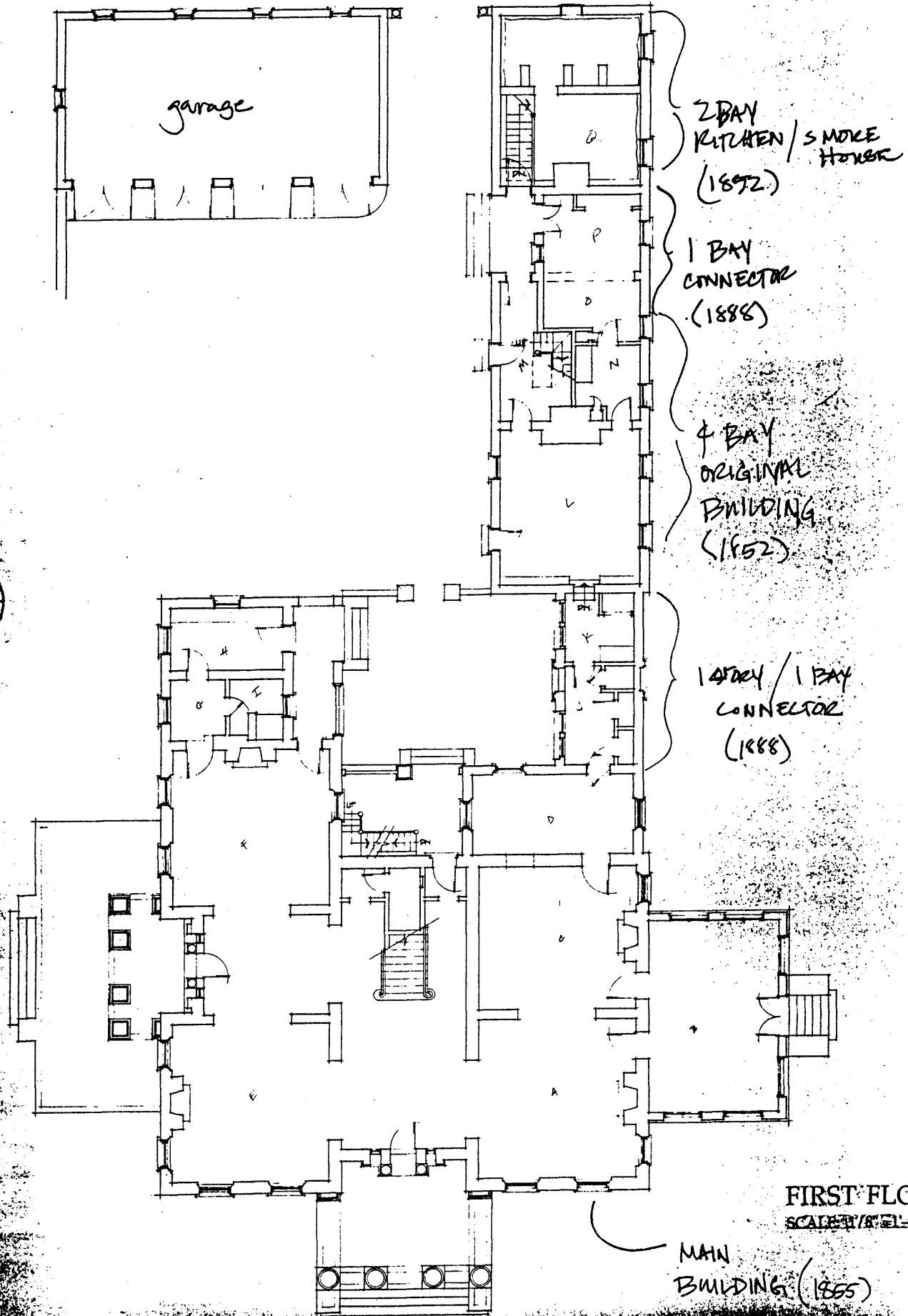
Room 2D, looking east
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Room 2E, looking southeast
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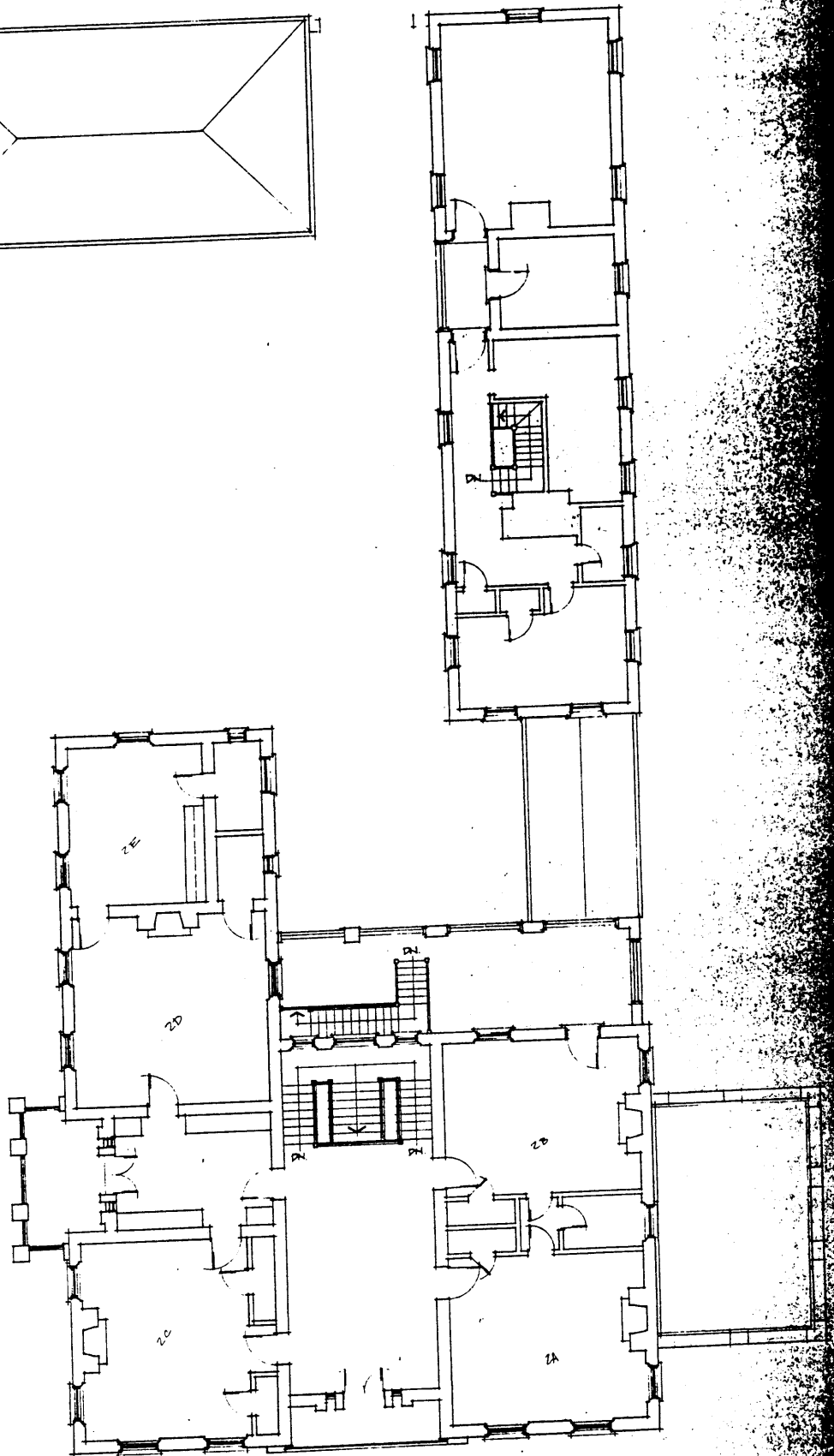
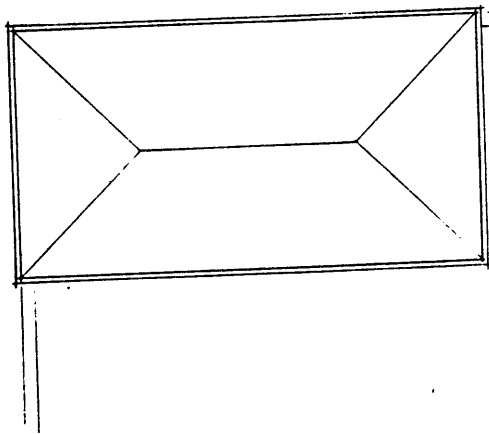
Room 1J, connector building, looking east
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East Room, second floor original house, looking east
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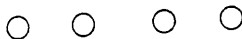
RIPPRAVILLA, MAURY CO., TN

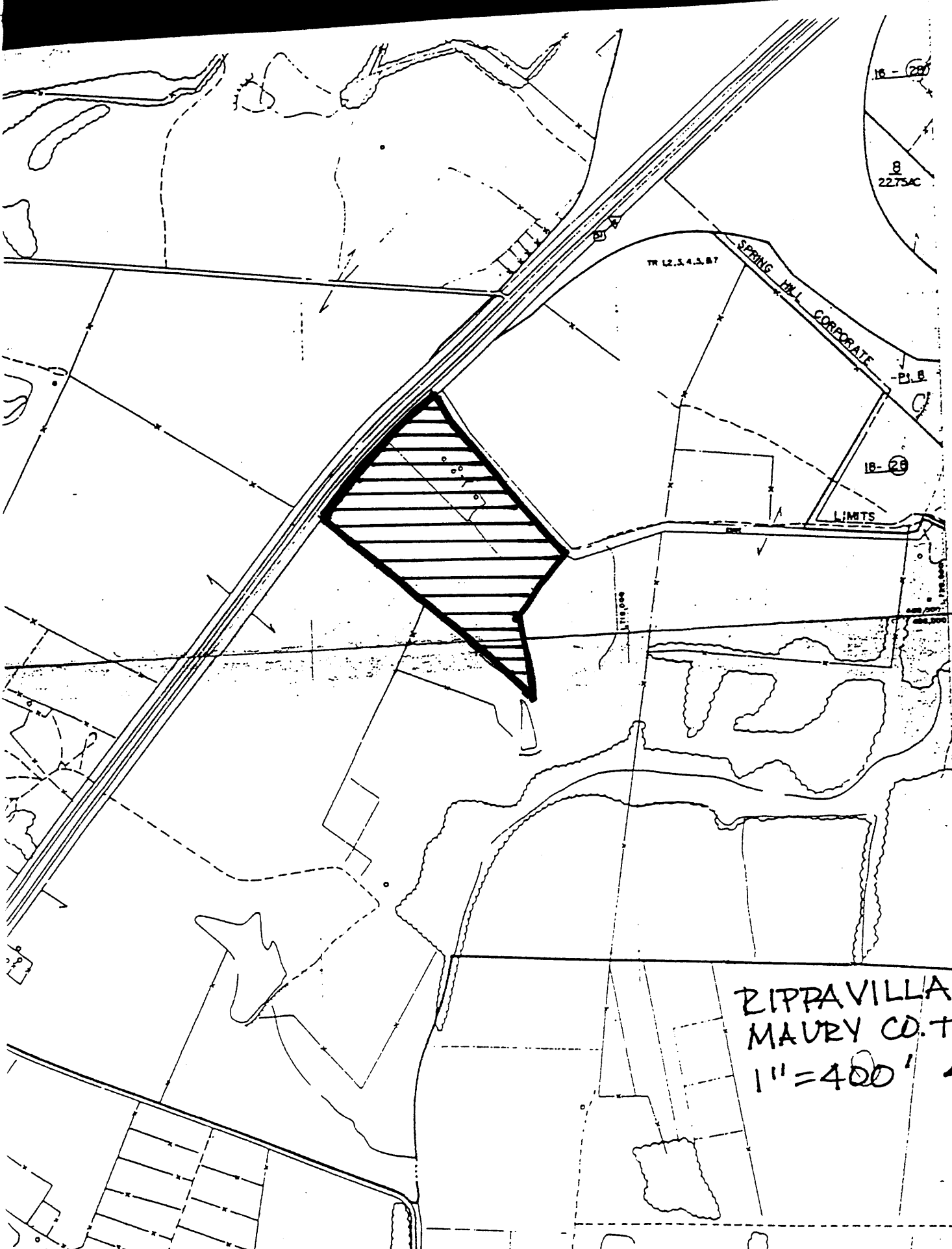


RIPPAVILLA, MAURY CO., TN



SECOND
FLOOR





ZIPPAVILLA
MAURY CO. TN
1" = 400' ↑