

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED JUN 6 1978
DATE ENTERED NOV 15 1978

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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Thematic Resource
Three Cohen Mural Houses (Airy Mount, Wyndehurst, Pleasant Lawn)

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

(see continuation sheet)

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF Versailles

06

STATE

Kentucky

CODE
021

COUNTY

Woodford

CODE
239

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

Thematic Group

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

(see continuation sheet)

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Woodford County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Versailles

STATE

Kentucky

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky (and Supplement)

DATE

1971-1974

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Kentucky Heritage Commission

CITY, TOWN

Frankfort

STATE

Kentucky

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

In Woodford County, Kentucky, there are three rural residences whose plastered parlor walls were adorned with murals in the 1830s. In one instance the murals also embellish the walls of an adjoining stairhall. The itinerant artist involved was Alfred Cohen, who left Marseilles, France, with two brothers in the 1820s and settled in Midway, in the northeast corner of Woodford County. The three houses concerned are the only ones known anywhere to have been painted with murals by Cohen, a primitive artist who had little, if any, formal training. Although these landscape scenes show disregard for correct scale and perspective, they possess charm through the artist's lack of inhibitions. Because the precise dates of the paintings are not known, the three houses and their murals will be described in the sequence of their dates of erection.

Airy Mount

This substantial residence, built in several stages, is located one mile north of McCowan's Ferry Road in rural Woodford County. Appropriately named, the house is situated on the summit of a low, wide rise, and has a commanding view of the gently rolling landscape in all directions.

The earliest portion, constructed ca. 1796, includes the western three bays of the central two-story block (see photo 1). This section consists of a parlor and stairhall below with a bedroom and stairhall above. In addition, there is a one-story wing on the west that appears to have been the original dining room. The house originally faced northwest towards Grier's Creek, as evidenced by the Flemish bond brickwork on the north. Further evidence of the former orientation is the presence of a watertable on the north that continues on the wing, which is built flush with the main block on this former main facade. Above, there is a brick stringcourse (see photo 2). The original kitchen was assumedly an independent building south of the wing since there is an entrance near its southwest corner (see floor plan). There is an enclosed staircase leading to what is thought to have been servants' quarters above this second kitchen built at the same time as the major addition.

While the additions were being made, the house was reoriented to face south. A door space under the main stairhall was enlarged to accommodate double doors, and window panes were altered in the old portion to conform with those of the new.

In 1916 a one-story porch supported by Ionic columns was added to the south (now the main) facade. A large, shed-roofed dormer was installed on either side of the east wing, and frame appendages (recently removed) were added to the rear.

Essentially, Airy Mount's interior remains much as it looked ca. 1850. A fine Federal mantel and original chair-railing are in the parlor. The parlor and stairhall

(continued)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JUN 8 1978
DATE ENTERED	NOV 13 1978

Three Cohen Mural Houses

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 2

are covered with murals by Cohen. Woodwork in the ca. 1840 section is typically Greek Revival (see photos 4 and 5). Baseboards are high and doors are framed by shouldered architraves. A second staircase leading from the present dining room was removed in the 1920s, and a total of three bathrooms have been unobtrusively installed.

Approximately 500 feet northeast of Airy Mount is a one-story stone house (see photo 6) that may have served as temporary quarters while the first portion of the larger residence was being constructed. A large chimney rises from the center of the gable roof to serve both fireplaces of this two-room dwelling. This currently serves as rental property and is in good condition.

Description of Murals:

Both the parlor and its adjoining stairhall at Airy Mount were treated with murals by Alfred Cohen. As a result, its landscape scenes are the most numerous of the three houses. The parlor contains pairs of windows on opposite walls. A centered fireplace and its chimney project into the room, and there are doors leading into the study and stairhall (see floor plan). Chairrailing at the level of window sills is continuous around the parlor, and all surfaces above up to the ceilings are painted with murals. Slightly below eye-level is a consistent horizon, and the dominant hues are blue and green.

For many years, the two largest buildings depicted here were thought to represent the Abbey of Gethsemane near Bardstown, Kentucky, and the Old State House in Frankfort.¹ The former, however, was not yet erected, and the latter fails to show sufficient architectural resemblance. In other scenes, there are children at play, a rider on a lively horse, and two monks conversing beside a tremendous fountain.² A small town, possibly French, is shown in the corner to the fireplace's left. "A river or lake is in the foreground and a masonry levee protects the town from rising waters (see photo 18). A square keep is a medieval survival."³ Elsewhere is another small town, this one nestled among trees. A river approaches the village and is crossed by a great arched bridge of stone. A sailboat and a small steamboat labeled the Heny Clay traverse this stream while tumid clouds pass overhead.

Cohen embellished the parlor's wallspaces between the chair-railing and baseboards with marbled panels. Originally, red swags of drapery skirted the ceiling, but these have been concealed.

(continued)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JUN 6 1978
DATE ENTERED	NOV 15 1978

Three Cohen Mural Houses

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 3

The same color scheme continues in the stairhall where the artist encountered technical difficulty. In an attempt to solve the problem posed by the irregular space above the stairs, "Cohen's solution was to have the terrain follow the slope of the railing opposite the handrail of the banister."⁴ As a result, trees are upright but the buildings incline downwards. A similar, though more correct, scene is on the opposite wall. Filling the triangular space between a closet door, chair-railing, and the stairs' string is a rustic log cabin against a tree-filled setting. Completing the scenic group at the staircase's upper landing is a palm tree with curving fronds--a visual reminder of the Mediterranean where Cohen originated.

Wyndehurst

Built in several stages like Airy Mount, Wyndehurst (see photo 7) is located on a small rise one-half mile west of McCowan's Ferry Road, five miles southwest of Versailles. The earliest section, seemingly built in 1810, consists of a single downstairs room (C on floor plan) with a "quarter-turn-with-winders" staircase leading to two rooms above. This portion probably served as temporary quarters while the front lateral section was being completed (rooms A, B, and those above), apparently in 1811 as indicated by shifted bricks around the first-floor window at the far right. An earthquake occurred in Kentucky on January 10, 1811, causing some damage to buildings in the central part of the state.⁵

The kitchen, contemporary with the earliest construction and totally detached originally, is a one-story brick section that has a wide fireplace at its southern end. The five-bay main facade is laid in Flemish bond, windows are double-hung sash with nine-over-six panes and flat brick arches above, and the centered entrance serves as the visual attraction. Its adeptly paneled double doors are framed by rope molding and fluted colonnettes on the sides, and by an elliptical window with a reeded reveal above. There is a chimney on either end and these are built one brick outside the wall. The one-story wooden porch was added in the 1960s by the current owners.

There is not, as one would expect, a hall separating the parlor and sitting room. The parlor's original mantel has been replaced, but chair-railing has been retained. The parlor is Wyndehurst's only room adorned with murals (see color photo 2).

(continued)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JUN 6 1978
DATE ENTERED	NOV 16 1978

Three Cohen Mural Houses
CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 4

The sitting room features a fine Federal mantel that is flanked by multi-paneled presses (see photo 10). An open "quarter-turn-with-winders" staircase with decorative stringers is on the opposite wall (see photo 11).

The third and last brick section (D on floor plan) contains Greek Revival interior features, and appears to date from the 1840s (see photo 12). In the northwest corner is an enclosed staircase providing access to a single room above.

In recent years, frame appendages have been added to the south and west, and the kitchen is no longer a detached building. Other than these alterations, Wyndehurst remains much as it would have appeared ca. 1845. A considerable amount of interior woodwork has been retained and all original ash flooring is intact.

Description of Murals:

The parlor at Wyndehurst has a centered fireplace and chimney protruding from the side wall. On the opposite side are a connecting door and a projecting staircase approached from the dining room. The other two walls are each pierced by a door and a pair of windows.

Due to the protrusions, murals here have a shifting skyline. Above the fireplace is a square house beside a stream and an arched bridge. Flanking this scene on a lower level is a "classic villa on the Mediterranean."⁶ On the other side is a flag-flying steamboat in the middle of a river, with a large arched bridge in the background.

The space opposite the fireplace in Wyndehurst's parlor measures 14 feet in length and is the largest uninterrupted painted area in any of the three houses. In the middle of this active scene (see photo 19) is a pond being crossed by a rowboat and a sailboat. A horse-drawn cart approaches a small bridge. A man fishing from the shore and a horse pulling a barrel-laden cart are in the lower left. Trees, both stocky and slender, surround the pond. Beyond the water are two houses, and there is "a church-like building that has four vanes attached windmill-fashion to its spire."⁷ To the right of the door leading into the adjacent room is an unexpected fountain spurting water, and beside it is a large palm. These conclude this expansive scene.

(continued)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JUN 6 1978
DATE ENTERED	

Three Cohen Mural Houses

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 5

Between the outside entrance and a window, there is a short section of road leading past a house with an elevated porch. The opposite portion of wall contains a circular-towered structure perched on a high peninsula. Like the parlor of Airy Mount, this room originally had red swags below the ceiling and marbelized panels below the chair-railing. Both, however, have been covered by paint.

Pleasant Lawn

Pleasant Lawn, built in 1829, is located at the end of Williams Road, 1 1/2 miles east of the Midway-Versailles Pike, and approximately 2 1/2 miles northeast of Versailles. This property was an object of neglect for many years, but the residence has undergone a tasteful restoration, and the surroundign grounds of sweeping lawns and mature trees of various species are now being well maintained.

The house faces southeast and is of triple massing--a one and one-half story central section flanked by lower one-story wings of different widths (see photo 13). The central section is served by an off-center arcade composed of nine arches that rest on circular piers and have radiating voussoirs (see photo 14). The central arch is of slightly larger dimensions and is not precisely aligned with the entrance. The Palladian window piercing the tympanum above is also off center.

The two-bay wing on the west appears to have been added shortly after 1829. This section contains a single chamber used as a guest room, and its only entrance is off the gallery.

The north facade (see photo 15) is thought to have been the original front. The central section's entrance is treated with sidelights and is sheltered by a one-story, pedimented porch supported by two brick columns. To the east of this side is a second arcaded gallery counterbalancing that on the south. This gallery is five bays wide and, like that on the opposite side, it is surmounted by a tympanum containing a Palladian window. A stone plaque set into the peak bears an inscription testifying that Pleasant Lawn was built in 1829 by Daniel Jackson Williams, the first owner.

All chimneys are built flush with the walls, and the north and south facades of this brick construction are laid in Flemish bond. Windows are double-hung sash with panes numbering either six over six or nine over nine. All windows are capped by splayed jack arches. There are four dormers added in 1964: two project from the gabled roof of the east wing's south and two project from the north of the central section.

(continued)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JUN 6 1978
DATE ENTERED	NOV 15 1978

Three Cohen Mural Houses

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 6

Pleasant Lawn is one room deep on both levels. The entrance hall contains a "dog leg staircase" and has double doors at the front and rear. Like Airy Mount and Wyndehurst, the parlor is the only room whose walls were adorned with murals by Cohen.

In 1964, the central section's interior was gutted by a fire. The murals and all woodwork were carefully reproduced by expert craftsmen who were guided by numerous color photographs taken before the fire. Duplicated woodwork includes baseboards, doors, window and door frames, and the staircase (see photo 16). Two mantels contemporary with Pleasant Lawn's date of construction replaced those destroyed (see photo 17).

One alteration made during the central section's reconstruction involved centering the parlor's fireplace (see color photo 3), formerly off-center by several inches.

The east wing, undamaged by the fire, contains a dining room, a kitchen, and an enclosed staircase. There are two chambers on the second level, but these are not connected and are approached by respective staircases. The west wing, also untouched by the fire, contains a single room, whose fireplace is flanked by built-in cupboards, and whose ceiling beams of walnut became exposed during the restoration (see photo 18).

Description of Murals:

As mentioned, the murals of Pleasant Lawn's parlor were destroyed in a 1964 fire that gutted the central section of this house. All damaged areas were restored to their original states under the supervision of Restoration Architect, Robert McMeekin, A. I. A., of Lexington, Kentucky. This included faithfully copying the murals on canvases. The canvases were attached to the walls--work being based on color photographs taken before the fire.

Entrance to the parlor is through a centered door off the stairhall. Directly opposite is a fireplace flanked by arcuated niches (originally, the fireplace was off centered). Sets of windows face from the north and south walls (see floor-plan).

Above the fireplace, whose chimney is built into the wall, is a domed building with an arched entrance and a pedimented, tetrastyle portico. Flanking this totally white building are two gigantic palm trees. Centered below the structure is the stiff profile of a man on horseback. The road on which the horse travels leads off to a cluster of pines on the left.

(Continued)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JUN 6 1978
DATE ENTERED	NOV 15 1978

Three Cohen Mural Houses

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 7

The scene in the niche to the right of the fireplace deteriorated early and was conjectured on canvas. The other niche is painted with cabins in front of a lake with mountains in the background and trees in the foreground. Churning across the lake is a sister-boat to that of Wyndehurst--this one labeled the "Franklin." "On the panel between the front windows there is a wide diagonal road, a tree to each side, and two dwellings farther back. The one on the left, with its steep roof, small dormer, and porch across the front, resembling a French Creole house of the lower Mississippi region."⁸

Filling the corner between the hall door and the first front window is a body of water in the foreground, and a stone wall and a group of buildings beyond a smooth lawn. Structures depicted include a square tower and a basilica-like building surmounted by a belvedere. There are smaller gabled edifices, and in the water is a second square tower resting on a podium (see photo 20).

On the other side of the door, Cohen created a pleasing composition that shows several trees beside an irregular stream. A path leads up to a gabled building beside the window, and a second building, apparently a dwelling, is in the background. There is a continuous frieze of red swags and tassels around the parlor of Pleasant Lawn. Unlike Airy Mount and Wyndehurst, this parlor has no chair-rails, and as a result there are no marbled panels. This provided Cohen the opportunity to work on a scale larger than at the other two houses.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JUN 6 1978
DATE ENTERED	NOV 15 1978

Three Cohen Mural Houses

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE

FOOTNOTES

¹Clay Lancaster, "Primitive Mural Painter of Kentucky: Alfred Cohen," American Collector, December, 1948, p. 7.

²Ibid., p. 7.

³Ibid., p. 7.

⁴Ibid., p. 7.

⁵Richard Collins, History of Kentucky, Vol. I (Berea: Kentucky Imprints, 1976; originally published 1874), p. 26.

⁶Lancaster, American Collector, p. 8.

⁷Ibid., p. 8.

⁸Ibid., p. 19.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Airy Mount, Wyndehurst, and Pleasant Lawn are three residences in Woodford County whose parlors were adorned with primitive murals in the 1830s. These scenes were painted by Alfred Cohen and have been compared with New England frescoes of the same period.¹ Despite Cohen's technical shortcomings, the murals represent a significant period in the history of the fine arts in Kentucky. Admitted to the United States in 1792, Kentucky has several buildings that were designed by renowned Eastern architects as well as by capable natives. "Yet Kentucky has distinguished itself but little in other branches of the fine arts," states an authority.² Thus, these murals are a somewhat unique contribution to the state's artistic legacy. Also, the houses are significant both architecturally and historically on their own merits.

In each house, the medium employed was oil on plaster, and the similarity of coloring, technique and subject matter assign them to Alfred Cohen.³ Cohen was born at Bordeaux in southern France in the early 1800s. With his two brothers, John and Henry, he sailed from Marseilles in his mid-teens. The three brothers settled in the northeast corner of Woodford County, where a number of French families were already established.⁴

Rexford Newcomb, Kentucky architectural historian, writes:

Perhaps Cohen was painting some of these murals between mid-November, 1833, and early July, 1834, for the Lexington Observer and Reporter (November 14, 1833) carries the following note: 'A SWINDLER: A. Cohen, a Sign Painter, has left our good city without paying... for advertising.' Apparently, he redeemed himself, for on July 9, 1834, the same newspaper printed the following: 'Some time last summer we gave notice that Mr. ALFRED COHEN, Sign and Ornamental Painter, had left the city without paying.... Within the past few days, Mr. Cohen has returned and paid us his bill, and satisfied us that his object in leaving the city was solely to obtain means of discharging the debt due us and some others.'⁵

Cohen married Jenny Farris of Kingston, and they lived on the Richmond Pike outside Lexington until 1850 when they moved to Danville.⁶ By all accounts, no other houses were treated with murals by Cohen; sign-painting probably provided the steadiest business.

(continued)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUN 6 1978

DATE ENTERED

Three Cohen Mural Houses

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 2

The painter's "semi-Mediterranean quality may have been inspired by contemporary wallpapers or retained as a remembrance of his early childhood in southern France."⁷ His persistent artistic vice was the lack of correct perspective. Particularly in cases of complex buildings, objects are not viewed from a fixed point. In a 1948 article on these murals, Clay Lancaster theorizes that some of these technical inaccuracies did not intimidate Cohen: "It matters little to him that the skyline shifts as much as one-third of the picture height as the landscapes progress around the room. Like the early European primitive, or the Far Eastern painter of horizontal scroll paintings..., he considers accidental barriers as a legitimate excuse for shifting the horizon to any new level he wishes."⁸

The overall effect of Cohen's murals is nothing short of delight. In part, this is achieved through the juxtaposition of simplified scenes beside complicated ones. His attention to detail is original and unique. The color schemes are pleasing, and the obvious inspiration and spontaneity add to the murals' charm.

The houses's dates of erection, and consequently their architectural styles, vary. Begun in 1796, Airy Mount reveals held-over Georgian features, as seen in the north facade's water table and stringcourse of brick (see photo 2). This was among the first houses in Woodford County to be constructed of brick. Wyndehurst's Federal main section was erected in 1812, and the entrance on the east facade (see photo 7) is an outstanding example of its style. The composition consists of handsomely paneled double doors crowned by an elliptical light--the whole being framed by a rope molding. Pleasant Lawn (1829) is architecturally the most interesting of the three. The recessed, arcuated porches (see photos 13, 14, and 15) are of extreme rarity in this region. With the windows in the tympanums on north and south, they speak of an unmistakably Palladian quality.

In addition, all three houses are associated with persons prominent on either the local, state, or national levels. Coincidentally, each was either constructed on a Revolutionary War land grant or by a veteran of that war.

History

Airy Mount was built for Colonel William Henry Stanley Field, an officer in the Revolutionary War who married his cousin, Sally Field, in Culpepper County, Virginia. They came to central Kentucky prior to 1790--taking possession of a thousand-acre land grant. The Fields first resided in a one-story stone dwelling while awaiting the completion of Airy Mount, one of Woodford County's first brick residences.

(continued)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JUN 6 1978
DATE ENTERED	NOV 15 1978

Three Cohen Mural Houses

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 3

In 1799, Colonel Field was found guilty of murdering his wife despite defense provided by Henry Clay whose mother's farm adjoined Field's. Shortly after his execution, a female slave confessed to the crime.⁹

Airy Mount was next acquired by a cousin, Willis Field, who erected a distillery on the banks of Grier's Creek, a short distance from the house. He employed the famed distiller James Crow to operate the business. Crow is credited with having been the first person to produce bourbon whiskey "by any regularly defined rule."¹⁰ Bourbon produced at the Field distillery is reputed to have gained instant popularity, with many orders coming from Eastern cities and foreign countries.

Willis Field also erected a gristmill and hemp factory on the property around Airy Mount, and later in life he served as sheriff of Woodford County and as a state legislator for several terms. When he died in 1837, he left a comfortable fortune to his wife and twelve children. Among his offsprings was Charles William Field who was born at Airy Mount in 1828. Charles was graduated from West Point in 1849 and led a distinguished military career, serving the Confederacy during the War Between the States. Following a severe wound received in the second engagement of Second Manassas, he became superintendent of the Bureau of Conscription in Richmond for a brief period. Field was promoted to major general in 1864, and was among the five men of this rank who were present with General Robert E. Lee at Appamattox.¹¹

General Field's career after the War was equally illustrious. "He engaged in business for a while, was in the service of the Khedive of Egypt, was doorkeeper of the national House of Representatives, was a civil engineer in government employ, and was superintendent of the Hot Springs, Arkansas, reservation."¹²

Subsequent owners of Airy Mount during the 1800s and early 1900s have included Matt Hayden, Colonel William H. Edwards and Samuel Wooldridge.¹³ The current owners have installed modern conveniences, but in a manner respecting the original character. Frame appendages added to the rear in the early 20th-century have been removed, and a step-by-step sympathetic exterior and interior restoration is in process.

The earliest portion of Wyndehurst dates from ca. 1810--the main section being added later in 1812, and a major addition in the 1840s. The house was built for General James McConnell, a Revolutionary War veteran who came to Kentucky in 1781, first purchasing a lot in Lexington, then moving to Cincinnati, and finally, returning to Kentucky in 1788. Upon his return to the state, he settled on a farm in Woodford County and donated a corner of his property to the Baptists of the area.¹⁴ Members of this faith used the land as the site for the Hillsboro Church which still stands.

(continued)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

JUN 6 1978

DATE ENTERED

NOV 15 1978

Three Cohen Mural Houses

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 4

For a period of years, General McConnell commanded the State Militia. He was married twice, the first wife being Elizabeth Viley. After her death, he married her sister, Maria. These sisters were members of a distinguished central Kentucky family noted for their outstanding farms, and each produced three children. Wyndehurst remained in the possession of General McConnell's descendants until 1907 when it was purchased by J. S. Williams. A porch and other frame appendages have been added by the current owners, and the house is presently in fair condition--the murals and much of the interior woodwork being intact.

Pleasant Lawn was constructed in 1829 for Daniel Jackson Williams on land given to him by his father. The latter, Captain Daniel Williams, served in the Revolutionary War, and came to central Kentucky shortly after the War had ended. Captain Williams was descended from Sir William Williams, a Welsh Baron, and from Roger Williams, the founder of Rhode Island.¹⁵ His wife, Mary Jackson Williams, was a close relative of President Andrew Jackson.

Daniel Jackson Williams was by profession a surveyor. He obviously acted as his own architect, and Pleasant Lawn is said to have been constructed by farm labor. Williams may have based his design after that of White Cottage, an 1824 Lexington residence whose features included "a 35-foot recessed portico composed of a five-bayed arcade sustaining a steeply pitched brick pediment pierced by a Palladian window."¹⁶ The portico of White Cottage "may have come from a published diagram of some 16th-century villa in the vicinity of Venice or Vicenze, or from some interpretation of the Italian designs in the British Isles."¹⁷ Pleasant Lawn's major similarities to White Cottage, which has been demolished, include its general impression and its indented porticos. That on the rear (originally the front) of Pleasant Lawn is about equal in size to that which was on the Lexington house.

Daniel Jackson Williams died in 1858, leaving the house to his son, Jackson Williams, a lawyer and philanthropist. The following owner was Jackson's daughter, Bette Rogers, who willed it to her son, Joseph Williams Rogers. For many years, Pleasant Lawn either sat vacant or was used as a tenant dwelling, until purchased by Mr. and Mrs. William C. Robinson in 1964. The Robinsons vastly improved the property and house with some alterations. The interior of the central section was gutted by fire, but a careful duplication of the destroyed features occurred.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JUN 6 1978
DATE ENTERED	NOV 15 1978

Three Cohen Mural Houses
CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE

FOOTNOTES

¹Nina Fletcher Little, American Decorative Wall Painting 1700-1850 (New York, E. P. Dutton and Co., 1972), p. 121.

²Clay Lancaster, "Primitive Mural Painter of Kentucky: Alfred Cohen," American Collector (December 1948), p. 6.

³Ibid., p. 6.

⁴Ibid., p. 6.

⁵Rexford Newcomb, Architecture in Old Kentucky (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1952), p. 92.

⁶Ibid., p. 92.

⁷Ibid., p. 92.

⁸Lancaster, p. 6.

⁹Elizabeth M. Simpson, The Enchanted Bluegrass (Lexington, Transylvania Press, 1938), pp. 210-13.

¹⁰Ben Chandler, "Early Times in Woodford County," The Woodford Sun, Versailles, Kentucky, no date or page.

¹¹Kent Masterson Brown, Lexington, Kentucky, Research provided July 21, 1976.

¹²D. S. Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants (New York, Scribner and Sons, date unknown), p. 87.

¹³Simpson, p. 215.

¹⁴William Railey, History of Woodford County (Versailles: Woodford Improvement League, 1968), pp. 418-19.

¹⁵Simpson, p. 139.

¹⁶Clay Lancaster, Ante Bellum Houses of the Bluegrass (Lexington, University of Kentucky Press, 1961), p. 75.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 75.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Chandler, Ben. "Early Times in Woodford County." Versailles, Kentucky: The Woodford Sun, n. d.

Collins, Richard. History of Kentucky, Vol. I. Berea: Kentucke Imprints, 1976 (originally published in 1874).

(continued)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

(See continuation sheet.)

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

UTM REFERENCES

A	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

B	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Daniel Kidd, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Kentucky Heritage Commission

DATE

January 1978

STREET & NUMBER

104 Bridge Street

TELEPHONE

564-3741

CITY OR TOWN

Frankfort

STATE

Kentucky

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Edward W. Melton

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

5/25/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Charles Adams

DATE

11-15-78

ATTEST

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Marcella Sharp

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

11-13-78

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JUN 6 1978
DATE ENTERED	

Three Cohen Mural Houses

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9

PAGE 2

Freeman, D. S. Lee's Lieutenants. New York: Scribner and Sons, n. d.

Lancaster, Clay. "Primitive Mural Painter of Kentucky: Alfred Cohen." American Collector. December 1948, pp. 6-9.

Little, Nina Fletcher. American Decorative Wall Painting; 1700-1850. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1972.

Newcomb, Rexford. Architecture in Old Kentucky. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1953.

Railey, William. History of Woodford County. Versailles: Woodford Improvement League, 1968.

Simpson, Elizabeth. The Enchanted Bluegrass. Lexington: Transylvania Press, 1938.

Additional information supplied by Kent Masterson Brown, Lexington, Kentucky,
July 21, 1976.