

# 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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name Nicholson, William Andrew and Emma Fair, House  
Other names/site number Millennium Manor (preferred)  
Name of related multiple property listing N/A  
(Remove "N/A" if property is part of a multiple property listing and add name)

## 2. Location

Street & Number: 500 North Wright Road  
City or town: Alcoa State: TN County: Blount  
Not For Publication:  N/A Vicinity:  N/A Zip: 37701

## 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

Applicable National Register Criteria:  A  B  C  D

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of certifying official/Title:** **Date**  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission  
**State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Commenting Official:** **Date**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Title:** **State of Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

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**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

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

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**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	
2	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	1	structures
0	0	objects
2	1	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

DOMESTIC/Secondary Structure

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

WORK IN PROGRESS

RECREATION AND CULTURE/Museum

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

No Style

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: STONE; CONCRETE; STEEL; WOOD

**Narrative Description**

Hand-constructed by William Andrew Nicholson and Emma Fair Nicholson between 1938 and 1946, Millennium Manor consists of a contributing stone and concrete residence, a contributing stone and concrete garage, and a non-contributing under-construction steel gazebo. The resources are situated on a rectangular parcel with a tiered lawn at the corner of North Wright Road and Harding Street in Alcoa, Blount County, Tennessee. The property’s principal contributing main residence is a unique stone and concrete building that was constructed for survival of the Armageddon. Its design utilizing hand-carved heavy stone and concrete with arches references the Romanesque Revival style but overall defies categorization under most architectural typologies. An original stone and concrete fence wall surrounds the perimeter of the property and bisects the property to form a stone and concrete retaining wall to support the yard’s upper tier (see Figure 1). The wall is considered a contributing landscape feature. The house retains its original form and design details, including its character-defining massive concrete and stone construction that was used for the arched roof, arched window openings, walls, and flooring. The interior retains its original concrete and stone walls, vaulted ceilings, and floors. Alterations include concrete added to the roof, minimal interior cosmetic changes obscuring the concrete and stone in one room, and new fixtures and cabinetry in the kitchen and bathroom.

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Figure 1: Millennium Manor survey photo taken in 1983, provided by the Tennessee Historical Commission.

### Setting & Site Features

Millennium Manor sits on a 0.46-acre lot at the northeast corner of the intersection of North Wright Road and Harding Street in Alcoa, Blount County, Tennessee. The site is divided into two tiered sections, which are part of the property's original construction and therefore a contributing landscape feature. The west side of the property is the lower tier while the east side is the upper tier. The upper tier is supported on its west side by a stone and concrete retaining wall, which is part of the property's original construction and therefore a contributing feature. Millennium Manor is built into the upper tier. The first level of the building is level with the upper tier while the basement is level with the lower tier. Original external staircases to the north and south of the building provide exterior access between the tiers. A detached garage is built into the upper tier and level with the lower tiered section. A non-contributing gazebo is on the upper section, just south of the building and directly above the garage. The south, west, and north sides of the property are enclosed by a hand-made stone and concrete fence. The fence is part of the property's original construction and is considered a contributing landscape feature.

The property associated with Millennium Manor sits approximately two miles from downtown Maryville, Tennessee. Millennium Manor is located to the east of the Aluminum Company of America (Alcoa), which historically was a massive industrial plant and the namesake of the City of Alcoa. Much of the complex's

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original buildings, including its south and west plant offices (both formerly listed in the National Register) have been demolished. Decommissioned railroad tracks extend along the northwest side of North Wright Road. Millennium Manor is further surrounded by early- to mid-twentieth-century houses, commercial buildings, industrial facilities, and ecclesiastical buildings. Immediately west of the parcel is a small industrial factory, Brimer Steel Erectors, Inc. North of the parcel are early-twentieth-century single-family residences and twenty-first-century multi-family complexes. Immediately to the east of the property is a small kit home that was historically associated with Millennium Manor but was moved to its present location after the property's Period of Significance. Though owned by the same owner as Millennium Manor, it is excluded from this nomination because of its movement to a new location, and it does not contribute to the property's architectural significance. Further east are dense woodlands. To the south is the Pleasant View Missionary Baptist Church. The residential architecture of the area consists predominantly of bungalow and vernacular styles, making Millennium Manor a unique example of its architectural construction and detailing.

### **1. Millennium Manor, (1938-1946) Contributing Building**

Set into the property's upper tier, Millennium Manor is a three-bay-wide dwelling with a rectangular footprint and an extension on the rear, east elevation. On the façade, the residence appears to be two-stories. For purposes of this nomination, the upper level is called the First Level while the lower level is called the Basement because the building was built into the upper tier of the property. Millennium Manor was hand-constructed from 1938 to 1946 using granite and Tennessee Pink Marble with concrete acting as the mortar. The roof is more than three feet thick and features multiple arches that distribute the weight to all walls, making all of them load bearing. The roof was originally left rough with the shapes of multiple stones visible, but the current owners added more than four inches of concrete to cover much of the stones about 2012, leaving a smooth, white-painted arched appearance.<sup>1</sup> The original roof is still visible on the north and south elevations. Seven chimney flues pierce the roof.

The west-facing façade is three bays wide. The basement level is built into the upper tier, so only the façade of this level is visible; all other basement level elevations are underground. The basement level of the façade features a single-leaf entry filled with a replacement wood door covered in metal sheets. The door has a small oculus covered by decorative metal ornamentation. Affixed directly above the main entryway is a non-historic coat of arms. Two window bays flank the entryway. They contain non-original four-light wood windows, which replaced the original multi-light casement windows at an unknown date. The first level has a window in each bay. Each window has an arched opening and concrete sill. All windows have a single non-original pane of Plexiglas covered by non-historic bars that are set at angles to create a decorative pattern, similar to a sunburst. The original stone retaining wall extends from the north and south corners of the façade to the perimeter stone wall.

The south elevation contains another entrance door, set into the first level under a prominent roof arch, and flanked by a window on each side. The door is wood, multi-panel with an arched four-light window. Windows openings are arched with concrete sills. The windows are non-original and match those on the first level on the façade. The roof on this section has not been covered with concrete and is therefore left rough as it was originally. A concrete and stone porch with low walls is located immediately south of this elevation. The porch features an original solid stone and concrete balustrade, concrete benches, and an original six-story deep well.

<sup>1</sup> The date of the change was estimated using Google Earth Imagery. An April 2012 image shows the concrete covering half completed.

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One of the exterior staircases between the tiered levels is accessed from this porch. Also visible on this elevation is an original extension on the rear, east elevation. There is one window on the south elevation of the extension, and it has non-original glass blocks and metal bars.

The east, rear elevation features a three-bay extension that has less height than the main section. Bays are arched and filled with non-original multi-panel doors. The roof is arched.

The north elevation has one window on the rear extension. The main section has three windows and one entryway; all openings are arched, and all windows have concrete sills. The entryway is filled with an original wood panel door and opens onto a poured concrete stoop accessed by four steps. The center window matches those seen on the first level of the façade and south elevation. The other windows are non-original with varying configurations to accommodate HVAC window units. A portion of the original roof has been left exposed on this elevation. A concrete porch is to the north of this elevation, and an exterior staircase giving access between the tiers is accessible from this porch.

## Interior

The interior of the house retains a high degree of architectural integrity and remains largely intact with few alterations. The original room configuration has remained the same though some room functions and names have changed. Originally located in a room at the northwest corner of the first floor, the kitchen has been relocated to the room in the northeast corner; an additional kitchen is on the northwest corner of the basement level. Unless otherwise stated, interior materials are from the period of significance. The floors are concrete, and the walls and ceilings are painted stone and concrete. All walls are substantial; the thinnest exterior wall is twenty-five inches thick, while the thinnest interior wall is nineteen inches thick. There are vaulted stone and concrete ceilings in all rooms, curved arched door and window openings, concrete furniture, and some original metal fixtures.

### *First Floor*

The primary section of the house features a cross plan with a foyer extending from the southwest to the northeast and a transept hallway extending northwest to southeast. The foyer features a sitting area to the north and an office nook to the west. Located in the northwest corner is the original location of the kitchen, but it is currently used as storage. The new kitchen is in a room in the northeast corner of the dwelling. The kitchen is accessed through an interior archway. The north wall of the kitchen includes the entry door to the exterior porch on the north side of the building.

Across the hallway from the kitchen is the Copper Room at the southeast corner. The Copper Room includes most of the alterations in the dwelling. The concrete floor was recently covered by a tile floor, and the walls feature new cast crown molding detail painted gold. While most of the doorways in the residence are unadorned rounded arches, the doorway leading into the Copper Room is embellished with new Corinthian fluted pilasters and an arched floral pediment. The door surround is painted gold. These alterations were all completed about 2008.<sup>2</sup> While these alterations have covered the original character-defining unembellished stone and concrete walls, floors, and door openings, these alterations are mostly limited to this single room and are therefore a minimal alteration to the building as a whole.

<sup>2</sup> Les Jones, "Millennium Manor Open House on Memorial Day," May 27, 2004, <http://www.lesjones.com/posts/000919.shtml>, accessed October 15, 2008. Copy of article on file at Tennessee Historical Commission.

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Separating the new kitchen and the Copper Room is a half-bath. The bathroom features a flat, unembellished non-original cedar trim painted gold. Non-original gold plated décor and light fixtures are attached to walls. The original sink and toilet have been replaced with modern fixtures. The Pink Room comprises the southwest corner of the dwelling, so named for the pink painted walls. The ceiling is painted blue.

The rear extension contains two rooms and a staircase to the basement level. These rooms are all accessed from the exterior. Flanking the stairwell to the north is a utilities room and to the south is a bathroom.

*Basement*

The primary basement entrance from the façade opens into a full-length hall leading to a staircase to the upper tier on the east elevation. The narrow staircase features a simple round metal handrail. The stone and concrete walls and ceilings are painted throughout the basement but are otherwise unembellished. The kitchen in the northwest corner features new cabinetry, fixtures, and appliances. Six rooms comprise the basement and are arranged with three on each side of the hallway. Each entryway is filled with a flush wood door and features original hardware.

**2. Garage (c. 1938-1946) Contributing Building**

Two garage bays pierce the stone retaining wall south of the dwelling. Built into the upper tier of the property, the garage is constructed from stone and concrete with vaulted ceilings. The vehicular bays of the garage currently have no doors but originally had retractable wood doors. A doorway allows access between the two vehicular bays. Presently, the garage is used for storage. The garage does not connect to the dwelling, other than the fact that both are built into the upper tier of the property, so it is inventoried separate from the house. The garage is considered contributing because it was part of the property's original design and contributes to the property's unique architectural significance.

**3. Gazebo (2020) Non-Contributing Structure**

The gazebo is located directly above the detached garage on the upper tier and directly south of the residence. The original gazebo was constructed of wood with a hipped asphalt shingle roof (see Figures 2-4), but it was demolished in January 2020. The current owners added additional low stone and concrete walls where the original gazebo's wood walls were located. On top of these new walls, the current owners are constructing a new gazebo with steel support columns. The owners are also in the process of building crenellations atop the new walls within the footprint of the gazebo; this design is intended to invoke the appearance of a castle. As this gazebo, its associated walls, and in-progress crenellations are not original and are not an accurate reconstruction of the original wood gazebo, this structure is considered non-contributing.

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Figure 2: Original Gazebo, July 24, 2019. Photo taken by Rebecca Schmitt

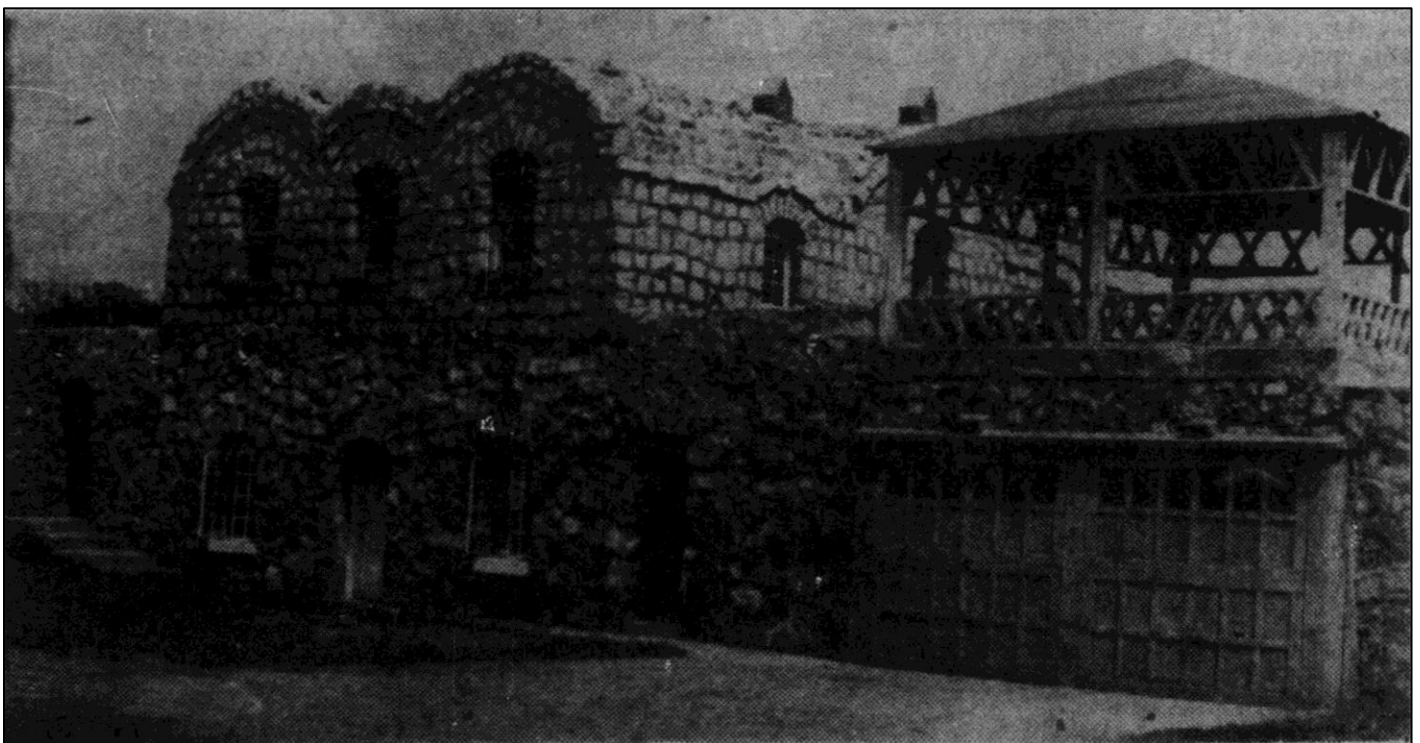


Figure 3: Millennium Manor, 1947. Photo from the *Knoxville News Sentinel*, August 31, 1947.



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Figure 4: Millennium Manor in 1983. Photo taken by the Blount County Historical Trust. Courtesy of the University of Tennessee-Knoxville University Libraries, <https://digital.lib.utk.edu/collections/islandora/object/bcpl%3A186>, accessed August 26, 2020

### Integrity

Millennium Manor features a high level of integrity. The structure has remained in the same location and orientation since its construction in 1938-1946. Millennium Manor's major character defining feature is its hand-carved stone and concrete structure, which comprises its floor, walls, and roof. Alterations include window and door replacements, addition of concrete to the roof, and the addition of new flooring and decorative materials into one room of the building. These alterations have not significantly impacted the overall design, materials, and workmanship of the property. The building still has its intact stone and concrete structure, materials, and overall form, intact garage, and intact property features such as the tiered configuration of the yard and the stone walls. The non-contributing gazebo is visible and will change the view of Millennium Manor from the façade, but it is separate from the significant main structure of the building and does not directly impact the dwelling's character-defining features. Therefore, its non-contributing status should not be viewed as detrimental enough to jeopardize the property's overall eligibility. The property's setting adjacent to major industry and residential neighborhoods is consistent with its historic setting. Millennium Manor maintains its association with its significance as a unique example of architecture built to withstand the Armageddon and its feeling as such is also intact considering its largely unembellished exterior materials and interior spaces.

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**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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1938-1946

**Significant Dates**

1938, 1946

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Nicholson, William Andrew

Nicholson, Emma Fair

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

N/A

- 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph**

Millennium Manor is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level of significance. Designed and hand-constructed by William Andrew Nicholson and Emma Fair Nicholson between 1938 and 1946, the building is a unique example of stone and concrete construction designed to withstand the Armageddon. The building defies architectural classification due to its purpose-built design. Character-defining features include its massive unembellished stone and concrete construction, arches, and interior layout. Contributing landscape features include the tiered lawn, stone and concrete retaining wall, and stone and concrete fence surrounding most of the property. A two-stall stone and concrete garage also contributes to the architectural significance of the property. The Period of Significance is limited to 1938-1946, which are the years of its construction.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

**Historic Context of Blount County and Alcoa, Tennessee**

Located in the East Tennessee region, Blount County is bounded by Knox County to the north, Loudon County to the west, Monroe County to the southwest, Sevier County to the northeast, and the North Carolina state line to the southeast. As noted in Goodspeed's *History of Tennessee*, Blount County encompasses approximately 470 square miles of varied terrain and is defined by a low-lying valley bordered by the Little Tennessee River to the northwest and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park to the southeast. The Great Smoky Mountains comprise most of the county with elevations reaching over 5,400 feet.<sup>3</sup>

Named after Governor William Blount, Blount County was erected from the southeast portion of Knox County in July 1795 by the General Assembly of the Territory South of the Ohio River.<sup>4</sup> Following Blount County's incorporation, the county commissioners created the town of Maryville, named after Governor Blount's wife Mary Grainger, as the county seat. Blount County quickly became a thriving agrarian community with 600 residents, three churches, five stores, two tailors, two silversmiths, and the Southern and Western Theological Seminary, now known as Maryville College. These early residence and businesses advocated for rail construction as early as the 1830s; by the 1870s five rail companies were chartered in Blount County. These rail lines were a fundamental factor during Maryville's industrial and commerce expansion after the Great Depression.<sup>5</sup>

Small farms defined Blount County in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These early farmsteads typically featured a primary residence, barns, a smokehouse, sheds, other small buildings, and small areas for cultivation.<sup>6</sup> Farming was the primary vocation until the 1930s. The socioeconomic ramifications of the Great Depression resulted in farmers abandoning land and moving in search of profitable jobs. This migration and

<sup>3</sup> Philip Thomason, *The Settlement and Development of Blount County, 1785-1865*. National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. United States Department of the Interior: Washington D.C., 1989.

<sup>4</sup> Inez E. Burns, *History of Blount County, Tennessee: From War Trail to Landing Strip, 1795-1955* (Nashville, TN: Benson Printing Company, 1957).

<sup>5</sup> Thomason, *The Settlement and Development of Blount County, 1785-1865*.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

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the early construction of rail lines supported an economic shift from an agrarian society to a diverse industrial community consisting of mass-production plants.

At the turn of the century the Aluminum Company of America (Alcoa) was the leader of industrial production. Looking to expand to the southern region, Alcoa constructed a small industrial community northwest of Maryville in 1914. In 1919, the small settlement was incorporated and named Alcoa. The small rural town initially consisted of reduction plants, service plants, and 150 residential mill houses.<sup>7</sup> The industrial boom in the town of Alcoa encouraged migration from surrounding counties and other parts of Tennessee. By 1920, the town was home to 3,258 residents living in approximately 700 houses.<sup>8</sup>

Following the incorporation of the Alcoa Plant, new construction surrounding the plant occurred to support the population growth rate. South of the Alcoa Plant a small commercial main street was established, which included one- to three-story, flat roof brick buildings along the town's main streets. Surrounding the plant, vernacular workhouses and mill villages comprised Alcoa's early twentieth-century dwellings. Residential buildings were represented by simple, one- to two-story, double-pile, frame dwellings with few embellishments or ornate design elements (see Figures 9 and 10).<sup>9</sup> Located amongst these modest frame dwellings, William and Fair Nicholson began the construction of their stone house.

### **Nicholson Family and Construction of Millennium Manor**

William Andrew Nicholson was born in Gilmer County, Georgia on April 24, 1877 to Andrew J. Nicholson and Laura Jane Nicholson, née Wright. As the second oldest son, William assisted his father by working on the farm. While working as a farmhand, Nicholson learned to read, write, and studied a variety of agricultural and industrial trades. In 1896 at age 19, William Nicholson married Emma Fair MacArthur in Gilmer, Georgia. Immediately after getting married, the couple moved into a rental house on Cartersville Street, and William began work as a railroad section head.<sup>10</sup> By 1910, William and Emma (commonly referred to by her middle name Fair) moved to Macon, Bibb County, Georgia. While in Macon William was employed as a railroad section boss and Fair was listed as unemployed on the census.<sup>11</sup> A 1920s census listed the Nicholsons living in Town Creek, Georgia with seven of their ten children; William was working as a merchant at a general store.<sup>12</sup> By the 1930s the Nicholson family was living on rented farm property in Pike County, Georgia. William was self-employed and working as a contracted sawyer at a lumber mill.<sup>13</sup> After living in the Pike County area for seven years, William Nicholson accepted a full-time job as a construction workman at the Alcoa plant and moved to Tennessee in 1937.

<sup>7</sup> Burns, *History of Blount County, Tennessee: From War Trail to Landing Strip, 1795-1955*.

<sup>8</sup> Thomason, *The Settlement and Development of Blount County, 1785-1865*.

<sup>9</sup> The Otto Cochran House is located approximately 415 ft southeast from Millennium Manor and was constructed c. 1930, the same decade as Millennium Manor. The rectangular, one-story frame dwelling features an asphalt-shingle roof, asbestos siding, and few exterior design elements. The Otto Cochran House is a comparable representation of a typical residence found in Alcoa in the early- and mid-twentieth century. A review of recent aerials indicates the dwelling has been demolished.

<sup>10</sup> United States Federal Census, 1900. Georgia. Ancestry.com, accessed June 2020, 11.

<sup>11</sup> United States Federal Census, 1910. Georgia. Ancestry.com, accessed June 2020, 18a.

<sup>12</sup> United States Federal Census, 1920. Georgia. Ancestry.com, accessed June 2020, 2b.

<sup>13</sup> United States Federal Census, 1930. Georgia. Ancestry.com, accessed June 2020, 3a.

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Figures 5 and 6: William Andrew Nicholson and Emma Fair Nicholson, Dates Unknown. Images Courtesy of Find a Grave.com

Newspaper sources portray William and Fair Nicholson as devout, kind, and hardworking.<sup>14</sup> Though no information has been found to indicate that William and Fair Nicholson associated with a specific Christian denomination, the Nicholsons believed in pre-millennialism. Pre-Millennialism is a belief rooted in a literal interpretation of the Book of Revelations. They believed that Jesus would return to Earth, and the Battle of Armageddon would commence at the end of the world, resulting in the defeat of Satan and the establishment of a 1,000-year reign of peace known as the Millennium.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Blount Web, "Lies, Legends and Unlikely Stories about Millennium Manor."

<http://www.blountweb.com/millenniummanor/lies.htm>, accessed June 2020; Hal Boyle, "Millennium Manor Castle," *Daily Times*, July 9, 1957. <http://www.blountweb.com/millenniummanor/newsarticles.htm>, accessed June 2020; "Millennium Manor Castle." *News Sentinel*, July 15, 1944, Special Edition. <http://www.blountweb.com/millenniummanor/newsarticles.htm>, accessed June 2020; Ken Garland, "Millennium Manor Castle," *News-Sentinel*, June 19, 1996, Sunday Edition. <http://www.blountweb.com/millenniummanor/news03.htm>, accessed June 2020; Mike Kilen, "Millennium Manor Castle: The House that Fear Built." *The Tennessean*, March 21, 1999, Living Section. <http://www.blountweb.com/millenniummanor/news02.htm>, accessed June 2020.

<sup>15</sup> Numerous newspaper accounts explain the Nicholson's beliefs. They also state that the Nicholsons did not belong to a church. "Wife Buried, Husband Waits Alone for Christ," *The Knoxville Journal*, March 3, 1950; Julian Granger, "Blount Countian Must Await Second Coming Alone in Hand-Built Castle," *Knoxville Journal*, March 2, 1950; Bert Vincent, "Strolling with Bert Vincent," *Knoxville News Sentinel*, August 31, 1947. The current owners believe that the Nicholsons were influenced by the

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According to the Nicholsons' calculations, they believed the world would end in 1959 (later altered to 1969 after 1959 passed) but their faith in Jesus Christ would give them everlasting life. Thus, they needed a house that would last the same length of time. In 1938, when the Nicholsons were sixty-one years old, they began excavation and construction on a stone and concrete residence to prepare for the end of the world. The building was designed with the sole purpose to survive the Battle of Armageddon and provide a home for the Nicholsons as they lived with Christ during the Millennium.<sup>16</sup>

Millennium Manor exhibits a unique form of construction using materials that were not prone to rust or rot. Nicholson used locally sourced granite and Tennessee Pink Marble as the primary materials while concrete acted as a mortar. The Nicholsons utilized arch construction methods to ensure the structural integrity. First, Nicholson constructed the frame skeleton of the dwelling in wood and covered it with a tarp. He stacked the stone over the frame structure in arch formations above individual rooms, window openings, and door openings. Oral History interviews with Alcoa locals revealed William Nicholson spent six to eight hours a day hauling marble and stone from a local quarry. He used a ramp and cart mechanism to lift and move the heavy stones (see Figure 5). After the stone was in place, the Nicholsons bound the stones together using concrete mortar made from roughly 4,000 bags of cement, lime, and water. The framing and tarp were removed once the mortar set. No nails or metal was used on the construction due to the Nicholsons' concern about rust and degradation. Materials prone to degradation, such as the wood windows, doors, plumbing, and electric wiring were all placed to allow for easy replacement. The basement level was completed first with work progressing upwards as each structural component below was completed. Fair Nicholson aided her husband with the construction over the eight years of construction. The last structural component of the roof was completed in 1946. The resulting building is virtually indestructible. While there is no evidence that the Nicholsons ever formally named their home, Associated Press reporter Hal Boyle published an article in 1957 that noted the building was known locally as "Millennium Manor" or "The House that Faith Built."<sup>17</sup>

While the house was never able to prove its strength at the end of the world, the Nicholsons continued to live in the house until their deaths. Fair Nicholson died in 1950, and her husband followed in 1965. None of the Nicholsons' children moved into the house after their deaths. Millennium Manor was occasionally used as an event space, such as a haunted house for Halloween, but was mostly left vacant. In 1995, the current owner purchased the property.<sup>18</sup>

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beliefs of the House of David communal religious society from Michigan, but thus far no definitive documentation has been uncovered to confirm that.

<sup>16</sup> "Alcoa Works on Own Home for Years; Wife Helps in Constructing Stone Wall," *Knoxville News Sentinel*, July 16, 1944.

<sup>17</sup> Hal Boyle, "Millennium Manor Castle." *Daily Times*, July 9, 1957; Mike Kilen, "Millennium Manor Castle: The House that Fear Built." *The Tennessean*, March 21, 1999, Living Section, <http://www.blountweb.com/millenniummanor/news02.htm>, accessed June 2020; "Builder of Huge Stone House Plans to Live 1,000 Years," *Johnson City Press Chronicle*, March 2, 1950; Bert Vincent, "Strolling with Bert Vincent," *Knoxville News Sentinel*, August 31, 1947.

<sup>18</sup> Amy McRary, "Alcoa's Stone Fortress Put Back in Shape," *The Leaf Chronicle*, June 23, 2020.

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Figure 7: William Nicholson surrounded by marble and stone during Millennium Manor construction.  
Photo Courtesy of Dean Fontaine.

### **Architectural Significance**

Millennium Manor is significant as a unique example of religious-inspired, survivalist architecture purpose-built to survive the end of the world. The building defies typical architectural categorizations as it does not follow the tenets of any academic or popular styles or forms. The Nicholsons utilized such ancient building techniques as the arch and such strong materials as stone and concrete to construct a building that would be virtually indestructible. The property's primary character-defining feature is its massive stone and concrete structure. Walls, floors, and ceilings are multiple feet thick and were mostly left unembellished. All rooms feature vaulted ceilings. All door and window openings similarly used arch construction techniques. The Nicholsons even used concrete and stone to create some permanent furniture, such as a chair (see Figure 8), further ensuring their eternal comfort. Indicative of a home built during the rising popularity of the automobile, the home also features a two-stall garage, built sometime during 1938 to 1946. The property's stone fence, retaining wall, and tiered arrangement of the lawn are also character-defining features of the property and express its architectural significance embodying strength and survival.

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Figure 8: William Nicholson in a Concrete Chair in Millennium Manor's Bathroom (still extant).  
From *Knoxville News Sentinel*, August 31, 1947.

Within the local geographical context of Alcoa, Tennessee, Millennium Manor is unlike any other residential building. The majority of early-to-mid-twentieth century dwellings in Alcoa, particularly those close to the Alcoa plant, are bungalow or vernacular forms. Many were built as company housing for plant workers and feature simple wood-framed front-gable forms (see Figure 9). Larger two-story wood-framed, front-gabled homes were constructed for supervisory personnel (see Figure 10). Later mid-twentieth century neighborhoods further west of the Alcoa plant primarily include Ranch style houses. With its massive stone and concrete construction, Millennium Manor exhibits unique construction methods and materials within Alcoa.



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Figure 9: Typical One-Story Worker Housing in Alcoa, Tennessee. This house was built ca. 1920. Photo taken in 1983 by the Blount County Historic Trust. Photo from the Blount County Public Library. <https://digital.lib.utk.edu/collections/islandora/object/bcpl%3A159>, accessed August 26, 2002.



Figure 10: Typical Two-Story Dwelling in Alcoa built ca. 1920. Photo taken in 1983 by the Blount County Historic Trust. Courtesy of the Blount County Public Library, <https://digital.lib.utk.edu/collections/islandora/object/bcpl%3A158>, accessed August 26, 2020.

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As Millennium Manor's design was directly influenced by religious beliefs, its architectural significance should also be considered within the context of religious architecture. While religious buildings have been built in a wide variety of styles, many emphasize verticality to subconsciously draw attention to the heavens. In the nineteenth century, styles such as Gothic Revival were particularly suited to religious architecture as its style frequently included elements that emphasized verticality such as pointed arches and spires. Another common style was Romanesque Revival, known for its use of thick masonry walls and heavy arches, exemplified on H.H. Richardson's Trinity Church in Boston (NHL 12/30/1970; NR 7/1/1970). Although Millennium Manor postdates the height of Romanesque Revival's popularity in the United States, the building's thick masonry structure and frequent use of arches is suggestive of the style. However, it does not embody most other aspects of the style, such as asymmetry or towers, and therefore cannot be categorized as an example of Romanesque Revival. By the early-to-mid-twentieth century, when Millennium Manor was constructed, ecclesiastical architecture had shifted to popular styles of the time, such as Classical Revival, Colonial Revival, and eventually Modern. Millennium Manor shares no physical characteristics with any of those styles.

The main reason why Millennium Manor differs from other religious buildings is that its design was directly influenced by the belief that the world was to end, rather than an effort to symbolically reference God or the heavens. The Nicholsons deliberately designed the house to be indestructible to survive the Battle of Armageddon and stand for 1,000 years during the Millennium era. While pre-millennialism was and remains a common belief throughout the United States, particularly among Protestant denominations, no other building like Millennium Manor has been identified.

Due to the property's unique survivalist motivations, it is therefore also appropriate to consider Millennium Manor within the context of architecture constructed for the sole purpose of survival. The closest architectural parallels within this context are World War II-era bunkers, as well as the bomb and fallout shelters constructed during the Cold War era. Usually constructed of reinforced concrete, wartime bunkers were built partially or fully underground. Above ground sections were typically low to the ground with narrow or limited windows. Purpose-built for survival and defense, the bunkers were usually unembellished and undecorated. More commonly seen in Europe, such as at the Maginot Line Fortification in Germany (see Figure 11), these types of bunkers were also constructed on the coasts and at military bases within the United States and its territories. For instance, the Dutch Harbor Naval Operating Base and Fort Mears on Amaknak Island within Alaska's Aleutian Islands contains World War II-war bunkers (NR/NHL 2/4/1985). The bunkers were constructed of reinforced concrete, slightly below ground, atop Hill 400 to ensure a good vantage point while remaining low to the ground to minimize the building as a target (see Figure 12).<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Erwin N. Thompson, "Dutch Harbor Naval Operating Base and Fort Mears, U.S. Army," National Register of Historic Places Nomination form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1984).

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Figure 11: Maginot Line fortification, constructed circa 1930, near Lembach, Germany. Photo by Jonathan Andrew. Source: House and Home, “Armageddon architecture: upmarket bunkers for the worried wealthy,” <https://www.ft.com/content/afe67b5c-fea0-11e6-8d8e-a5e3738f9ae4>, accessed June 2020.



Figure 12: Bunker Hill. Photos Courtesy of Alaska.org, <https://www.alaska.org/detail/bunker-hill>, accessed August 26, 2020.

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In the post-World War II era, as geopolitical conflicts between the United States and Soviet Union intensified, many Americans began to fear nuclear attack. The Federal government distributed information encouraging citizens to create their own home shelters, usually located in basements or buried in backyards. Relatively few people built shelters, mostly due to lack of access to money and material. Therefore, most Cold War bomb and fallout shelters were built by public entities, such as the federal government and most often at military installations. An example can be found on Peanut Island, Florida. In 1960 the military built a top-secret underground bomb shelter known as Detachment Hotel. The shelter was intended for President John F. Kennedy's use in the case of nuclear war while he was visiting a family estate on nearby Palm Beach. The shelter was built using quarter inch-thick corrugated steel and lead walls buried under layers of concrete. The shelter's most prominent characteristics are its location underground as well as its unembellished materials meant to ensure survival, similar to the unembellished appearance of Millennium Manor. A similar shelter was constructed in 1961 near the Kennedy compound in Massachusetts (Kennedy Compound NHL/NR 11/28/1972)<sup>20</sup>

There are a few unique examples of privately owned shelters. One such shelter within Tennessee is the Wooten Fallout Shelter in Memphis (NR Listed 11/27/2019). Built by radio executive Hoyt Wooten from 1961-1963, the reinforced concrete shelter was built below ground with four feet of earth above the roof. The walls, floors, and ceilings of the shelter were twelve inches thick. The above ground section of the shelter consisted only of pyramidal concrete shields meant to deflect radiation. Unlike most other shelters, the interior of the Wooten shelter was highly decorated to promote physical and psychological comfort.<sup>21</sup> A similar privately owned shelter was built in Mount Dora, Florida in 1961. Financed by twenty-five of the community's wealthiest families, the underground shelter had more than 30 rooms. It was constructed of concrete block, and decoration was conveyed primarily by its furnishings.<sup>22</sup>

More recently, fear of cyber, biological, nuclear, and political warfare has revitalized the trend for modern bunkers by wealthy survivalists. Some twenty-first-century bunkers are complex and luxurious featuring waterfalls, greenspace, heat and air conditioning, climbing walls, dog parks, and pools. Some have been built into former nuclear missile silos or at former military installations.<sup>23</sup>

As compared to many of these survivalist buildings, Millennium Manor stands as the earliest example with unique characteristics. Most survivalist buildings used combinations of metal, concrete, and earth to create an impenetrable barrier between its occupants and the dangers of the outside world. In contrast, the Nicholsons utilized a combination of locally sourced stone, concrete, and earth. While many public, military, and private

<sup>20</sup> Lizette Alvarez, "Long-Secret Fallout Shelter was a Cold War Camelot," *The New York Times*, October 1, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/02/us/for-kennedy-a-secret-shelter-was-a-cold-war-camelot.html>, accessed August 26, 2020;

<sup>21</sup> Rebecca Schmitt, "Wooten Fallout Shelter," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2019).

<sup>22</sup> "The Mount Dora Catacombs," Abandoned Florida, <https://www.abandonedfl.com/the-mount-dora-catacombs/>, accessed August 26, 2020; Bill Sievert, "Gimme Shelter," Mount Dora Buzz, <https://www.mountdorabuzz.com/who-knew/mount-doras-biggest-secret-the-catacombs>, accessed August 26, 2020.

<sup>23</sup> House and Home, "Armageddon architecture: upmarket bunkers for the worried wealthy," <https://www.ft.com/content/afe67b5c-fea0-11e6-8d8e-a5e3738f9ae4>, accessed June 2020.

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bunkers and shelters were constructed at great cost using professional labor, the Nicholsons constructed their home by hand. Rather than relying on steel reinforcement within concrete for strength and stability, they utilized ancient techniques of the arch to ensure that the building would be indestructible and able to stand for hundreds of years as a unique example of religious-inspired survivalist architecture. Its construction methods and materials physically represent the pre-millennialist religious belief in a way that few, if any, other buildings can convey. Its high degree of integrity and architectural significance justify listing Millennium Manor in the National Register of Historic Places.

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“Wife Buried, Husband Waits Alone for Christ” *The Knoxville Journal*, March 3, 1950.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):		Primary location of additional data:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	State Historic Preservation Office
<input type="checkbox"/>	previously listed in the National Register	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other State agency
<input type="checkbox"/>	previously determined eligible by the National Register	<input type="checkbox"/>	Federal agency
<input type="checkbox"/>	designated a National Historic Landmark	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local government
<input type="checkbox"/>	recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #	<input type="checkbox"/>	University
<input type="checkbox"/>	recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other
<input type="checkbox"/>	recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #	Name of repository: Personal Possession of Dear Fontaine	
Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): BT-4389			



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**10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreage of Property** Less than 1 **USGS Quadrangle** Maryville, TN 147-SW

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: N/A

Latitude: 35.780232

Longitude: -83.965233

**Verbal Boundary Description**

Millennium Manor is bound on the northwest by North Wright Road, on the southwest by Harding Street, and to the southeast and northeast by legal property lines. These boundaries correspond to the legal boundaries of Blount County Parcel 037P B 027.00. These boundaries are depicted on the enclosed tax map.

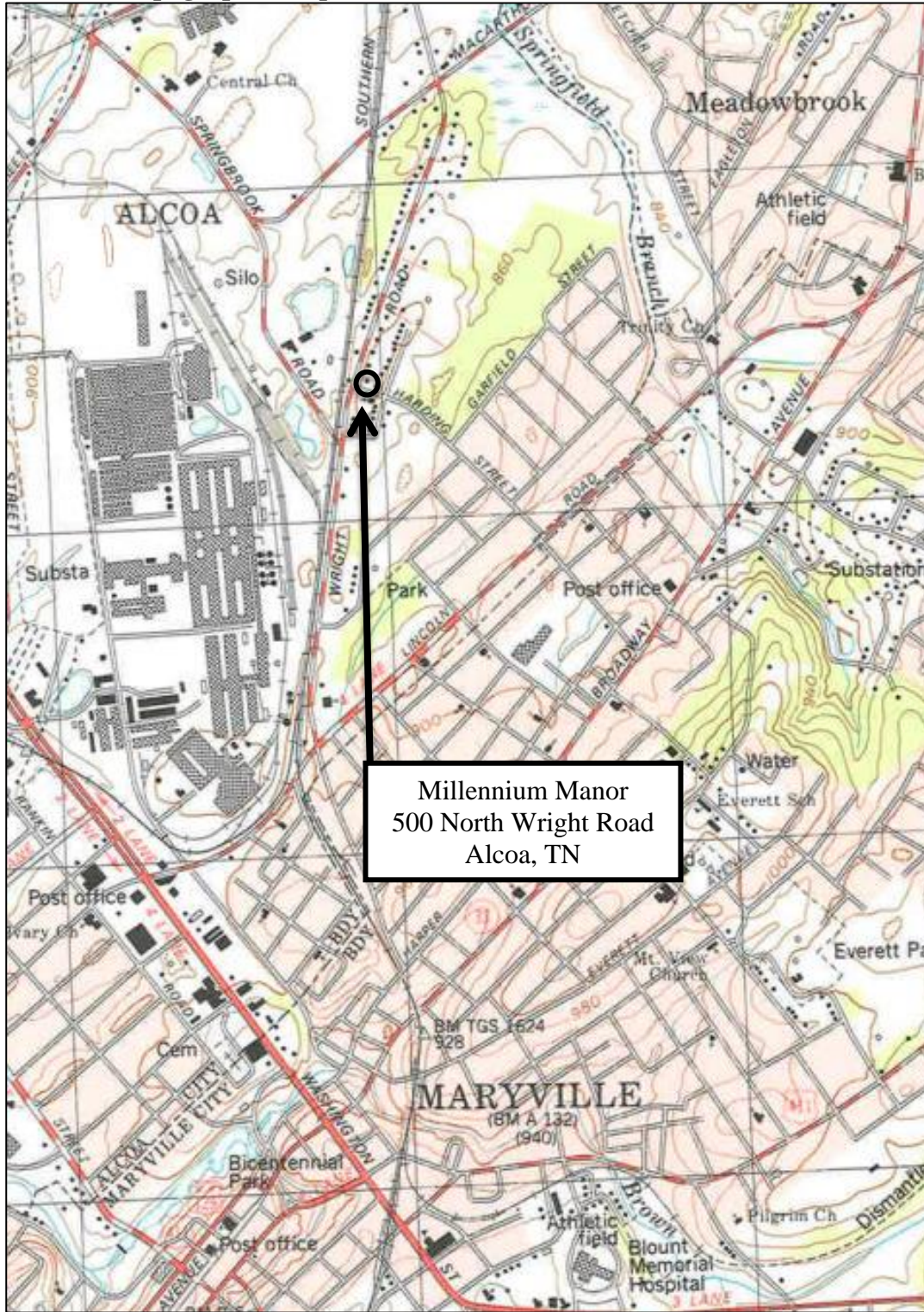
**Boundary Justification**

These boundaries encompass the architecturally significant resources associated with Millennium Manor. These boundaries exclude adjacent land owned by the same owner but is unnecessary to convey the property's architectural significance.

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**USGS Topographic Map with the Location of Millennium Manor Indicated**



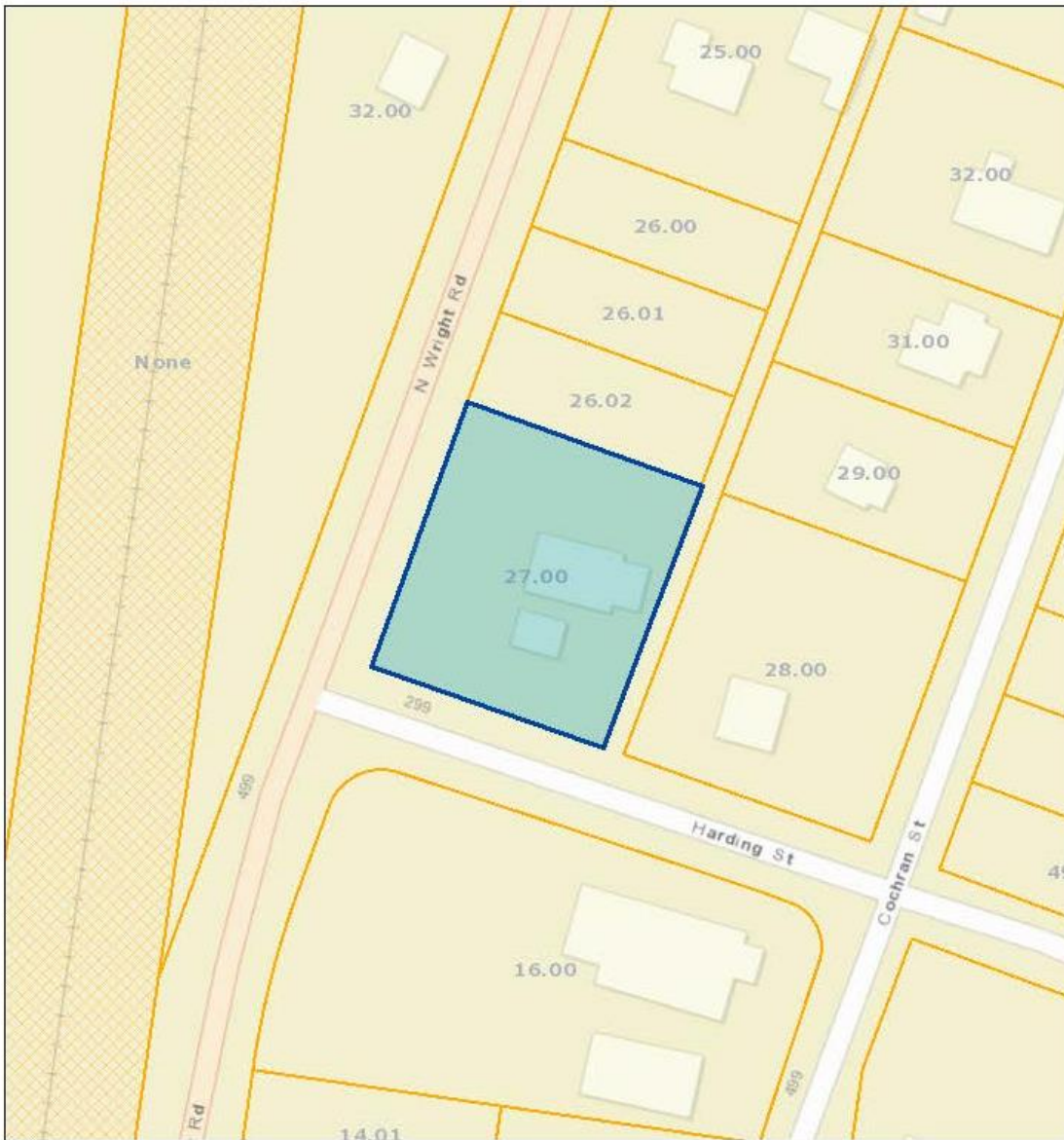
Maryville, TN 147-SW Quadrangle, 1979. Original Map Scale 1:24,000

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**Property Tax Map with Legal and NRHP Boundaries**

Blount County - Parcel: 037P B 027.00



Date: July 10, 2020  
County: Blount  
Owner: FONTAINE DEAN JOSEPH  
Address: N WRIGHT RD 500  
Parcel Number: 037P B 027.00  
Deeded Acreage: 0  
Calculated Acreage: 0  
Date of Imagery: 2019

Source: Esri, HERE, Garmin, USGS, Intermap, INCREMENT P, NRCan, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), NGCC, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community  
TN Comptroller - OIG  
State of Tennessee, Comptroller of the Treasury, Office of Local Government

The property lines are compiled from information maintained by your local county Assessor's office. It is not to be used as evidence of property ownership in any court of law.



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Name of Property

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Property Tax Map with Aerial View

Blount County - Parcel: 037P B 027.00



Date: July 10, 2020  
County: Blount  
Owner: FONTAINE DEAN JOSEPH  
Address: N WRIGHT RD 500  
Parcel Number: 037P B 027.00  
Deeded Acreage: 0  
Calculated Acreage: 0  
Date of Imagery: 2019

Esri, HERE, Garmin, © OpenStreetMap contributors  
TN Comptroller - OLG  
TDOT  
State of Tennessee, Comptroller of the Treasury, Office of Local Government  
(OLG)

The property lines are compiled from information maintained by your local county Assessor's  
office by tax lot to coincide the evidence of proper ownership in any court of law.



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**11. Form Prepared By**

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Name Kerri Ross; Rebecca Schmitt

Organization Tennessee Historical Commission

Street & Number 2941 Lebanon Pike Date May 5, 2020

City or Town Nashville Telephone (615) 770-1092

E-mail [Kerri.ross@tn.gov](mailto:Kerri.ross@tn.gov); [Rebecca.Schmitt@tn.gov](mailto:Rebecca.Schmitt@tn.gov) State TN Zip Code 37214

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to map.
- **Photographs** (refer to Tennessee Historical Commission National Register *Photo Policy* for submittal of digital images and prints)
- **Additional items:** (additional supporting documentation including historic photographs, historic maps, etc. should be included on a Continuation Sheet following the photographic log and sketch maps)

**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.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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**Photo Log**

Name of Property: Millennium Manor

City or Vicinity: Alcoa

County: Blount County

State: TN

Photographer: Rebecca Schmitt; Dean & Karen Fontaine

Date Photographed: September 23, 2019; July 24, 2019; July 9, 2020

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 24: Façade and Front Wall and Yard of Millennium Manor. View to the southeast.
- 2 of 24: North Elevation and Façade. View to the southeast.
- 3 of 24: Façade of Millennium Manor, Garage, and Gazebo. View to the east.
- 4 of 24: Façade of Millennium Manor, Garage, and Gazebo. View to the northeast.
- 5 of 24: Garage and Gazebo. View to the east.
- 6 of 24: Garage Stall. View to the east.
- 7 of 24: Lower Tier of the Yard with stone fence. View to the north.
- 8 of 24: Driveway on the Lower Tier of the Yard. View to the south.
- 9 of 24: South Elevation of Millennium Manor and the Gazebo. View to the north.
- 10 of 24: South and East Elevations of Millennium Manor and Gazebo. View to the northwest.
- 11 of 24: South and East Elevations of Millennium Manor. View to the northwest.
- 12 of 24: East and North Elevations. View to the southwest.
- 13 of 24: North Elevation. View to the south.
- 14 of 24: North Exterior Staircase Between the Tiers. View to the west.
- 15 of 24: Foyer, First Level. View to the north.
- 16 of 24: Foyer, First Level. View to the south.
- 17 of 24: Northeast Room, First Level. View to the northeast.
- 18 of 24: Southeast Room, First Level. View to the west.

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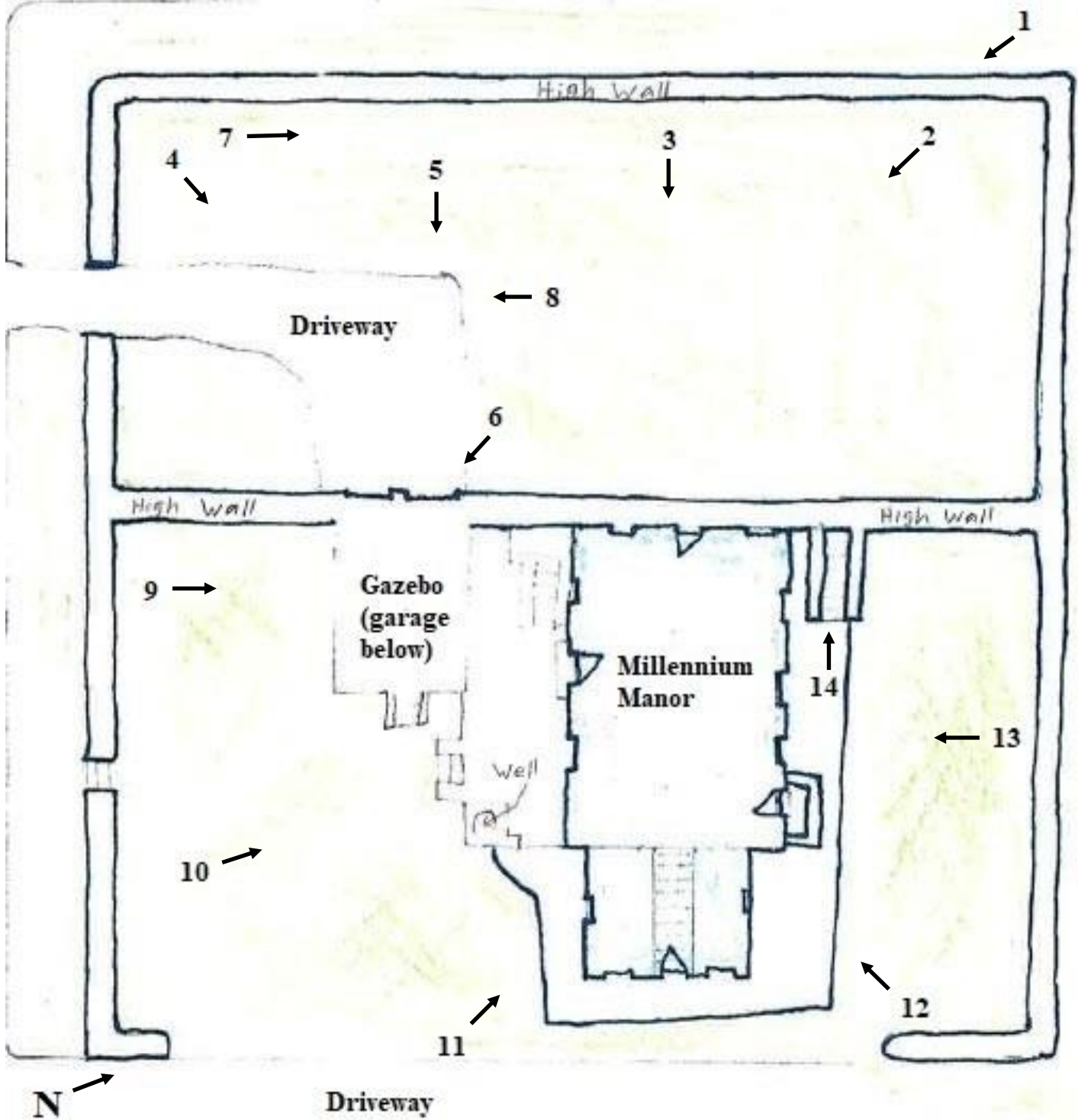
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- 19 of 24: Southwest Room (Pink Room), First Level. View to the east.
- 20 of 24: Staircase to the Basement. View to the west.
- 21 of 24: Basement Central Hallway. View to the west.
- 22 of 24: Basement Central Hallway and Exterior Door on the Façade. View to the west.
- 23 of 24: Representative Basement Room. Southwest Room on the Basement Level. View to the northeast.
- 24 of 24: Basement Kitchen (Northwest Room). View to the northwest.

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Site Plan with Photo Key



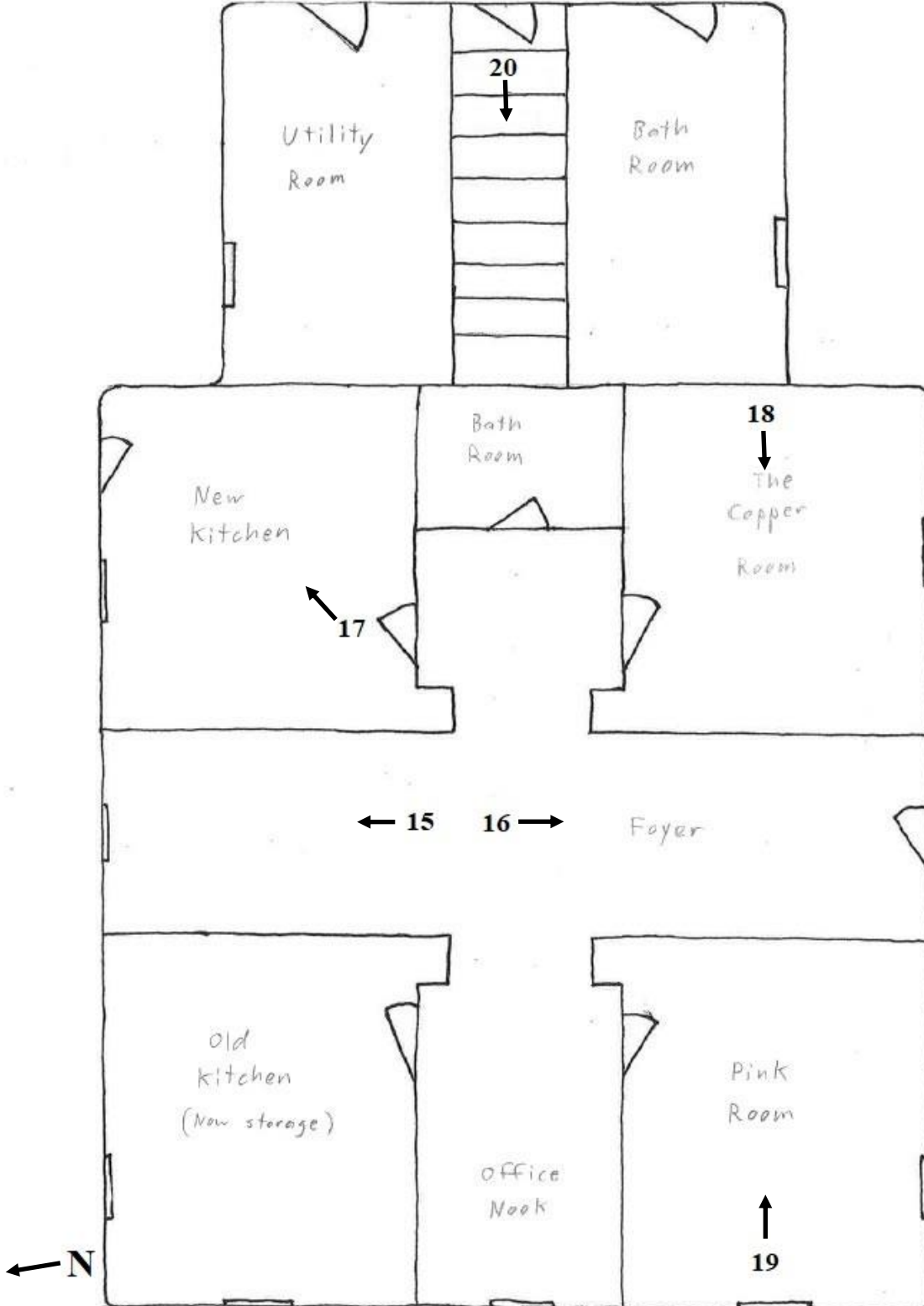
Not To Scale



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**First Floor Plan with Photo Key (Rooms Labeled with Current Room Name)**

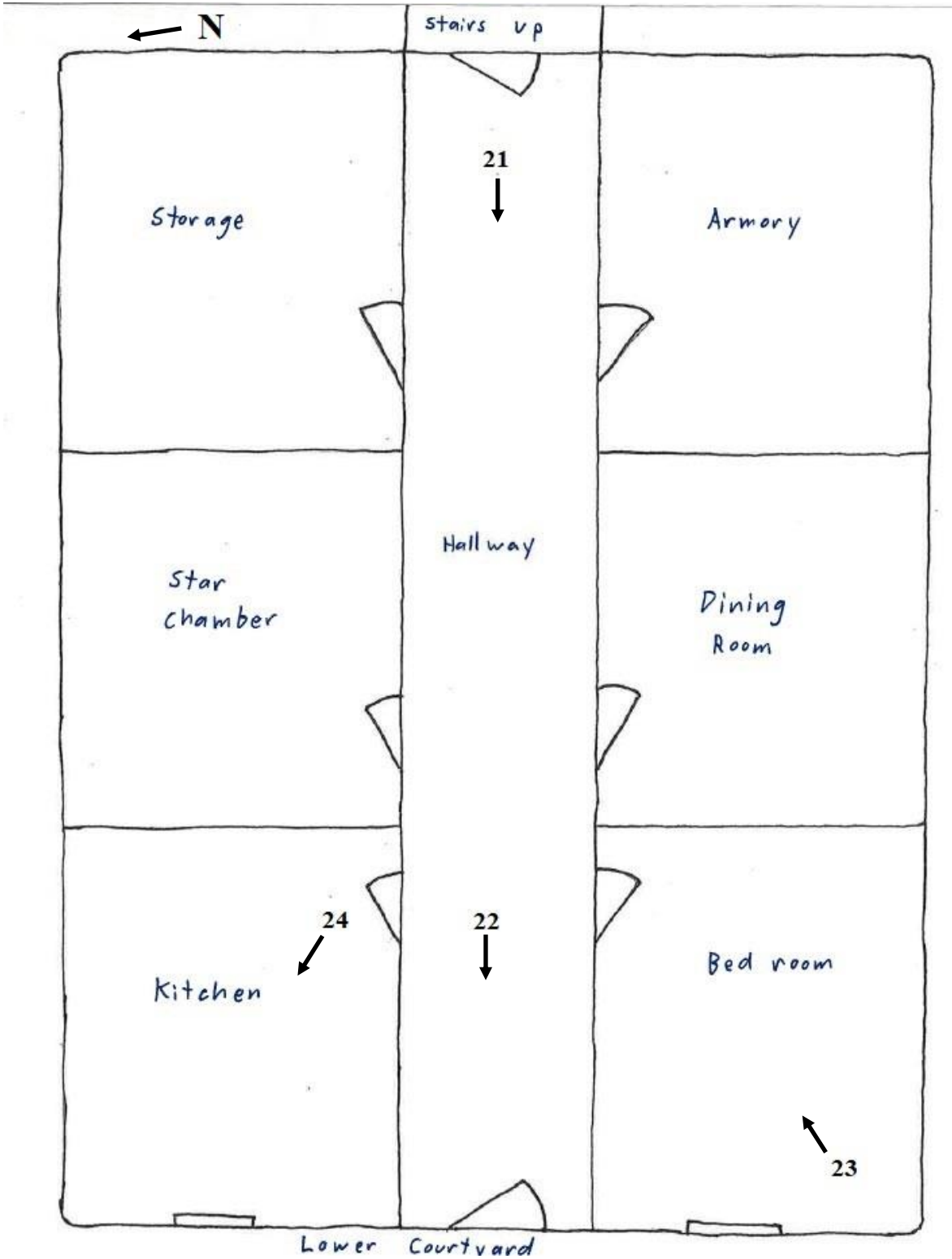


Not to Scale

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**Basement Plan with Photo Key (Rooms labelled with Current Room Name)**



Not to Scale

**Property Owner:**

(This information will not be submitted to the National Park Service, but will remain on file at the Tennessee Historical Commission)

---

Name Dean J. Fontaine

Street &  
Number 500 N. Wright Road Telephone (865) 406-3887

City or Town Alcoa State/Zip TN, 37701



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11 OF 24



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**MILLENNIUM MANOR**

**ALCOA, BLOUNT COUNTY, TENNESSEE**

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National Register Listed  
SG100005788  
11/18/2020