

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1** NAME

HISTORIC Elm Court

AND/OR COMMON

**2** LOCATION

STREET &amp; NUMBER Between Polk and Elm Streets

CITY, TOWN Butler

NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE Pennsylvania

VICINITY OF

CODE  
42COUNTY  
ButlerCODE  
019**3** CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY  | OWNERSHIP                                   | STATUS  | PRESENT USE  |
|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT               | <input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED        | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM                       |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE | <input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED                 | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE              | <input type="checkbox"/> BOTH               | <input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS           | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SITE                   | <b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>                   | <b>ACCESSIBLE</b>                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT                 | <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED | <input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC                    |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED   | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED          | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION                |
|   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> NO                         | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:                          |

**4** OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Dr. and Mrs. Dean E. Burget, Jr.

STREET &amp; NUMBER R.D. #2

CITY, TOWN Chester Springs

VICINITY OF

STATE  
Pennsylvania 19425**5** LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Butler County Courthouse

STREET &amp; NUMBER Main Street

CITY, TOWN Butler

STATE  
Pennsylvania**6** REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Pennsylvania Inventory of Historic Places

DATE 5/1/79

 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS FPMC

CITY, TOWN Harrisburg

STATE  
Pennsylvania

| CONDITION                                     |                                       | CHECK ON                                    | CHECK ONE   |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT | <input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE |
| <input 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

Elm Court, the estate of B.D. Phillips, features a forty-room residence built around an enclosed central court and set into a hillside amidst a series of landscaped terraces. The house, measuring approximately 125.70 feet by 159 feet, is of limestone, marble and slate over a steel reinforced concrete frame. Construction, under the direction of Harry Wimer, construction engineer, was begun in early 1929 and completed in mid-1930 at a cost of \$3,000,000.

The exterior of the house, picturesquely irregular in configuration, is characterized by numerous typically Tudor features: complex slate roofs with many gables, large groups of rectangular windows, rich oriel and bay windows, interesting chimney treatments, and intricately carved stone detailing.

The interior plan rambles about the central courtyard on two multi-level stories. Finishing throughout the interior is all intact and shows careful attention to detail by the architect, builder, and craftsmen. Rich oak panelling is enriched by linenfold and other decorative carving. Each of the carved interior doors is patterned after a different famous door in England. The house also contains a wealth of stained glass windows, all made in England. The subject matter of the windows in each room corresponds to the purpose of the room. Elaborate metal work throughout the house by Samuel Yellin of Philadelphia includes grilles, gates, sconces, candelabras, torchieres, and chandeliers. The bathrooms are all marble-lined and feature fixtures of silver and gold plate.

The first floor contains an Entrance Hall, flanked by the Library and Study, the Main Stair Hall, a large sunken Living Room, a long Great Hall, a small Sun Room, the Dining and Breakfast Rooms, and the Kitchen and Garage Service areas. (These rooms are strung out in a clockwise fashion around the central court.) The treatment of the Main Stair Hall and Great Hall best reflect the richness of Elm Court. The Main Stair Hall features a landing dominated by a magnificent cathedral-like Gothic window. Carved wooden vaulting in the side hall areas add warmth to this two-story stone-walled space. The Great Hall contains a huge greystone fireplace extending from floor to ceiling and bearing on its apron the sculptured Phillips coat of arms with its motto "Ducet Amor Patriac" (The Love of Our Father Leads Us). A carved Skinner pipe organ dominates one end of the room, and heavy oak paneling on the ceiling is set off by carved transverse beams.

On the second floor are eight guest rooms, the large master bedroom with two adjoining dressing rooms, a sewing room, a music room, and seven bedrooms for employees. Medallions on the windows throughout depict scenes from English literature. Music symbols appear in the music room, and king and queen scenes in the master bedroom suite is topped by a carved figure of a knight bearing a shield.

Service areas are located on the ground and first floors, and living quarters for employees above the garage and service areas. The kitchen and service areas contain their original fixtures. Of particular interest are a Super Service Range made by the Majestic Manufacturing Company in St. Louis and a

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

Description

7

2

built-in refrigerator. Two identical hot water gas-fired furnaces on the ground floor guarantees a constant supply of heat to the residence. Garages and shops are located adjacent to the kitchen area.

Like the great English gardens, the landscaping of Elm Court has been developed in an architectural manner as a series of interlocking terraces, highlighted by walls; and garden houses, which are an extension of the house itself. The courtyard garden, based on the precedent of European cloisters, contains a geometric pattern of boxwood, ivy, yew, and potted plants. The sunken garden terrace with its central pool, recently filled in but soon to be restored, is entered from a terrace down broad stone steps. It fills the area enclosed by the curving driveway and what is known as "Linden Avenue" with its rows of beautiful linden trees.

Beyond these formal gardens, the natural woodland surrounding Elm Court has been carefully developed. Existing trees were preserved in the original plan and dogwood planted against the background they provided. Also planted in this somewhat contrived woodland were rhododendrons, evergreen azaleas, ferns, evergreen shrubs and ground covers.

Recent work on the house by the architectural firm of Loeffler & Johnson of Pittsburgh has included only repair and restoration measures. No major alterations have been made.

| PERIOD  | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC  | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING     | <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART          | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING            | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC                             | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899              | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE                | <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY                        | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION                 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-       | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS          | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY               | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT               | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)                |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION              |  |   |

SPECIFIC DATES 1929-30.

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Harry Wimer/Benno Janssen

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Retaining all of its original fixtures and detailing, Elm Court stands as a rare period piece of the Gothic Revival of the 1920's and 30's. It is also one of only two buildings in Butler by Benno Janssen, the other being a small classical office building for the J.W. Phillips Gas & Oil Company. Benno Janssen (1874-1964), working in conjunction first with Franklin Abbott and later with William York Cocken, was considered to be quite a fashionable designer. In tune with the eclecticism of his time, Janssen worked in both the Italianate - Classical and Romantic country house styles. Best known for his work in Pittsburgh - the Pittsburgh Athletic Association (1901-11), Mellon Institute for Industrial Research (1931-37), the E.J. Kaufmann House (1924-25), and Long Vue Country Club (1922-26) among others - he might be seen at his most creative in this residence. The building is more than a representative example of the Tudor Gothic style of the 1920's and 1930's; it is the architect's superb interpretation of this style which gives it its unusual grace and aesthetic proportion. Janssen's imagination and excellent attention to detail, together with the uninhibited use of materials, craftsmen, and artisans, makes this house truly unique.

Elm Court contains a wealth of art in its English stained glass, limestone relief carvings, carved woodwork, and hand-crafted metal work. All these elements are integral parts of the structural and decorative schemes of the house. Of particular interest is the metal work of grilles, gates, sconces, candleabras, torchieres, and chandeliers created by Samuel Yellin of Philadelphia. Mr. Yellin was a well-known artisan of the 20's and 30's in Philadelphia, whose works may be found at Princeton University, Columbia U., Cornell U., Yale U., U. Of Pittsburgh, U. of Pennsylvania, Bryn Mawr College and many other public and private buildings and homes in the United States. The Philadelphia Museum of Art plans an exhibition of Mr. Yellin's work in 1980. All of the original drawings of the metal work in Elm Court are in the possession of Mr. Harvey Yellin at the Yellin Museum in Philadelphia.

The original landscape work, done by Nicolet and Griswold of Pittsburgh in connection with Benno Janssen, is a fine example of the "period design" in landscaping which corresponded to architectural trends of the era. The entire estate was planted with specimen trees and shrubs which are now mature after 50 years of growth. Aside from aesthetic considerations tied to the architecture of the house and grounds, the trees form an arboretum of sorts as the planting has grown unchanged for 50 years.

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

Significance

8

2

Benjamin Dwight Phillips (1885-1968), builder of this estate, lived there from 1929 until his death. The house served as headquarters for his philanthropic endeavors which were mainly architectural in nature. His gifts were used for support and construction of many college and university buildings including Milligan College, Culver Stockton College, Lincoln Christian College, Bethany College, Phillips University, Pepperdine College and Disciples of Christ Historical Society in Nashville, Tennessee. Mr. Phillips was the president and major stock holder of T.W. Phillips Gas and Oil Co. of Butler, PA. This company had previously been the Phillips Brothers Oil Company founded by his father in 1863. Because he shunned publicity much of his generosity was unknown to the general public. Consequently, few people have ever had access to Elm Court. The great majority of his estate in excess of fifty million dollars was left to charity upon his death. During his lifetime, Mr. Phillips never allowed his name to be placed on any of his buildings. Elm Court remains a monument to this generous man.

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Fitch, James M. & F.F. Rockwell, Treasury of American Gardens. New York, Harper Brothers, 1956, 42.  
 Murch, J. DeForest, B.D. Phillips: Life and Letters. Published privately, 1969.  
 Communication, James Johnson, President Loeffler & Johnson Architects, Pittsburgh, Pa.  
 Communication, Weaver, President, Pittsburgh, Stained Glass Co. Pittsburgh, PA.  
 Communication, Harvey Jellin, Samuel Yellin Metalwork, and Museum, Phila. Pa.

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 8.9 E 17 593270 4524760

UTM REFERENCES

|   |      |             |               |   |      |             |               |
|---|------|-------------|---------------|---|------|-------------|---------------|
| A | 1,7  | 5,9,3,3,8,0 | 4,5,2,4,7,6,0 | B | 1,7  | 5,9,3,4,8,0 | 4,5,2,4,5,4,0 |
|   | ZONE | EASTING     | NORTHING      |   | ZONE | EASTING     | NORTHING      |
| C | 1,7  | 5,9,3,3,7,0 | 4,5,2,4,4,4,0 | D | 1,7  | 5,9,3,2,8,0 | 4,5,2,4,4,4,0 |
|   | ZONE | EASTING     | NORTHING      |   | ZONE | EASTING     | NORTHING      |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See Cont. Sheet

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 Eliza F. Smith

ORGANIZATION

Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Fdn.

DATE

3/23/79

STREET & NUMBER

One Landmarks Square

TELEPHONE

412/322-1204

CITY OR TOWN

Pittsburgh

STATE

Pennsylvania 15212

**12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL     

STATE   X  

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

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

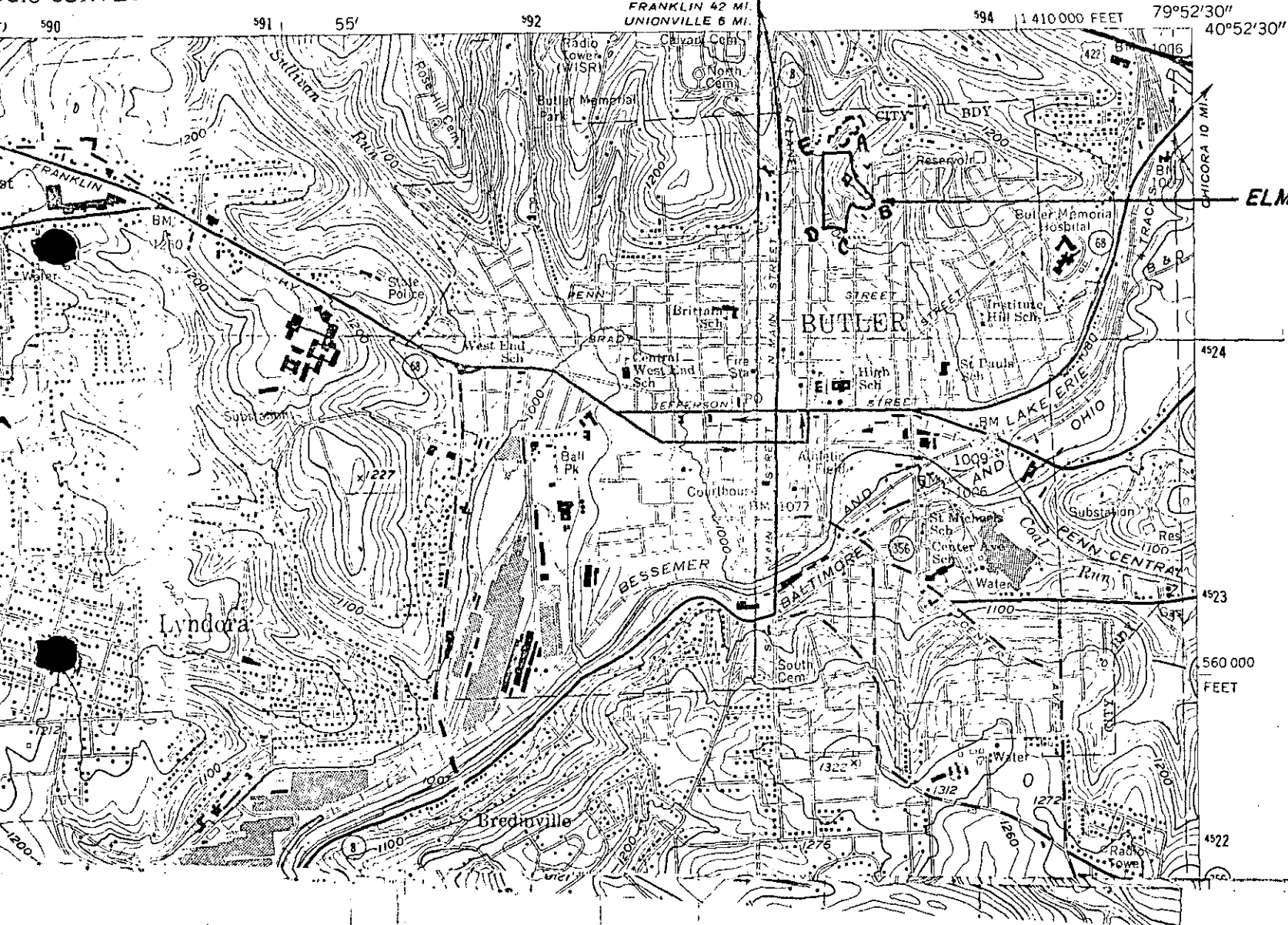
DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

PENNSYLVANIA  
 CIVIL AFFAIRS  
 TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY

**BUTLER QUADRANGLE**  
 PENNSYLVANIA—BUTLER CO.  
 7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)  
 SW/4 BUTLER 15' QUADRANGLE

5065 IV NE  
 (EAST BUTLER)



|               |   |          |
|---------------|---|----------|
| Elm Court     |   | N4524700 |
| Butler County |   | N4524540 |
| Zone 17       | A | E593380  |
|               | B | E593480  |
|               | C | E593370  |
|               | D | E593280  |
|               | E | E593270  |

CHICORA 10 MI.

ELM COURT

4524

4523

560 000  
 FEET

4522

FRANKLIN 42 MI.  
 UNIONVILLE 6 MI.

594 1 410 000 FEET

79°52'30"

40°52'30"

590

591

55'

592