

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
PH0684384  
FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED SEP 14 1978

DATE ENTERED DEC 22 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  
 Compton and Bloomfield

 AND/OR COMMON  
 (Morris Arboretum)
**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

9414 Meadowbrook Avenue (above ...)

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Philadelphia

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

2

STATE

Pennsylvania

CODE

42

COUNTY

Philadelphia

CODE

101

**3 CLASSIFICATION****CATEGORY** DISTRICT BUILDING(S) STRUCTURE SITE OBJECT**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 MUSEUM COMMERCIAL PARK EDUCATIONAL PRIVATE RESIDENCE ENTERTAINMENT RELIGIOUS GOVERNMENT SCIENTIFIC INDUSTRIAL TRANSPORTATION MILITARY OTHER:**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania

STREET &amp; NUMBER

34th and Walnut Streets

CITY, TOWN

Philadelphia

VICINITY OF

PA STATE

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Philadelphia City Hall

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Broad and Market Streets

CITY, TOWN

Philadelphia

STATE

PA

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1964

 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington, D.C.

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input 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 1887 John T. Morris, and his sister Lydia T. Morris began acquiring land on one of the hills that give Chestnut Hill its name at the northwestern edge of Philadelphia. Shortly afterwards, they retained Theophilus Parsons Chandler, architect for fashionable, establishment Philadelphia, to prepare drawings for a grand, baronial greystone mansion which was given the ducal English name "Compton". It joined the earlier T.M. Stewart, Charles B. Dunn and Edward N. Benson residences to form the most important group of Chandler's suburban houses in Philadelphia.

The house was carefully sited on the hillcrest, framing through the stone arches of its windows extraordinary views of the Wissahickon Valley, and the countryside towards Whitemarsh and Camp Hill. Perhaps the house and vistas stimulated the interest of the owners in the potential that the land offered, or more likely, the English concept of the garden like country retreat remained so alive among the anglicizing Philadelphia gentry that an arboretum seemed a reasonable pre occupation. When John T. Morris retired in 1891 from active management of the family iron works, the arboretum became the primary focus of his interests, though he remained an active member of numerous Philadelphia boards, serving as manager of the Philadelphia Savings Fund Society, chairing the Philadelphia Contributionship, and acting as overseer for the William Penn Charter school. The arboretum which John T. Morris (1847-1915) and Lydia T. Morris (1849-1932) created was willed to the University of Pennsylvania which has administered the 180 acre property ever since.

The Morris Arboretum exists in two principal physical dimensions, as a manifestation of the life style of Philadelphia gentry and as a landscape arboretum and educational facility, accented by architectural set pieces, specimen trees, theme gardens, and so on. The two aspects reinforce each other, fusing into a complex cultural object that depends on English tradition and the well established local enthusiasm for arboreta, beginning with Bartram's Garden, and including the nearby Cope family arboretum, Awbury. The architectural elements are significant features, of the property, though their effect was much diminished by the destruction in the past decade of Chandler's masterful "Compton" of 1887-9.

Other buildings from John T. and Lydia T. Morris' tenure include the stable of 1906, in the vicinity of the main house, and also by Chandler, and a gardener's cottage by Cope and Stewardson, architects for the University of Pennsylvania, Bryn Mawr College. That cottage, dating from 1904, stands near Hillcrest Avenue, near the current public entrance to the arboretum. Though the two buildings were designed by two very different architectural generations, they are visually related by their reflection of the architectural idiom previously established by Chandler in the great house. From the house came the picturesque massing, the rough textured local stone laid up in quarry faced irregular courses and the medievalizing flavor of the style. The relation between house and stable was of course more direct since both were by the

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same architect. Chandler's carriage house displays the insistent romanticism of the main house, with small diamond paned windows, contrasting with overscaled brackets supporting balconies, and a diminutive stair, enclosed in a round tower made to seem all the more small by the great carriage arches that indicate the building's purpose. The gardener's cottage, though depending on the same materials and forms was based on the turn of the century conventions that called for a more mimetic use of historic style: here an appropriately rural English late medieval style, whose purpose no doubt reflected what Ralph Adams Cram had called the expression of "ethnic continuity".

One other structure of a non garden sort is of interest, a palisade sided water tower, with cantilevered second floor. In form, and structural articulation it recalls the water tower designed by Frank Furness for the Samuel Shipley estate near West Chester. Since Furness also worked for John L. Welsh, the former owner of the Compton property, it may be possible to attribute this odd little structure to his office.

Several other buildings belong to the Morris Arboretum that were not commissioned by either Morris. On the property across the Montgomery County line, called "Bloomfields" stands a handsome, and ancient mill building, and adjacent farm house dating from the early 19th century. The mill is now boarded up, awaiting future restoration. Another addition to the original property is the David W. Pepper house, now called Gates Hall and serving as the administrative center for the Arboretum. It was acquired in 1948, presumably with no consideration of the house and stable, but only as an addition to the land; the acquisition has proven fortuitous for the house and stable are fine examples of the astylar work of Philadelphia's most creative residential architect of the 1890s, Wilson Eyre. Here rough ledge stone was laid in narrow courses on the main facade, forming a stone version of the all over texture of the Shingle Style. The openings in the wall mark the essential uses of space, vertical window for the stair, projecting porch of the entrance, small windows for powder rooms, largest for bedrooms, and suggest from the outside the unconventional, freely flowing spaces within. On the rear, Eyre used shingle, coursed as if cyclopean blocks of stone to emphasize his pun on the facade materials.

A third group of architectural pieces are more properly part of the landscape architecture serving as focal points for the grounds, but their architectural merit suggests the involvement of one or more local architects, most probably Chandler, so some discussion of these elements seems warranted. Few of the objects are securely dated, though the land acquisition process and dated photographs

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provides enough evidence to work out a rough chronology. For example the various developments along the stream, the tholos, the swan pond and bridge, and the cabin could not have been constructed until 1901 when the land was acquired to Hillcrest Avenue; nor could the main overlook of the property, the so called "Seven Arches", near the principal entrance from Germantown Avenue have been erected until 1910 when the lower tract of land was purchased.

The earliest of the architectural features, presumably constructed before 1900 include those closest to the main house, the brilliantly colored, "orange balustrade" with its cruciform plan gazebo, the formal garden, pergola and perhaps fountain, though not the retaining wall and corner lookout, and the early greenhouse buildings. All are of the rough textured local stone, with squared joints, in the manner of the house, but not the later buildings. A second group, also in the early "rustic" style appears along the stream bank and includes the "Swan Pond Bridge", and the rustic log cabin. The cabin's antecedents include the woodman's rustic cottage so popular for the English Garden, but also the so called Hunter's cottage that was hidden in a glade of the Centennial Fairgrounds offering the Philadelphia city dweller a hint of life in the wild west. The last of the rustic elements, the "Seven Arches" overlook was probably erected around 1910.

Shortly after 1900 the taste of the Morrises evolved towards more sophisticated architectural accents of the type seen in English gardens and surely known to them from their extensive library of books on gardens that included such classics as Humphry Repton's Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening (1795). The first of these, erected some time before 1909 when it was published in the 5th volume of the history of the Morris family, was the elegant tholos temple that stands by the Swan Pond. Its cold white stone, an abrupt departure from the usual quarry faced local stone is the material counterpart to the change from rustic to highly detailed Tuscan columns and entablature. Another of this later group, most of which are to be found in the lower field, where in 1909 herds of Jersey cattle grazed, is the step fountain, a limestone stair set into an open hillside, given interest by the trickle of water that once flowed across its surfaces. The Mercury Temple of 1913 is the last, and the only dated structure. Though looking to English precedent, it is ultimately derived from Hadrian's Villa, and like its source engages all of the senses, vision in the sunny architectural niche containing a figure of Mercury whose dominant motif, of an alternately arcuated and trabeated colonnade has Hadrian's villa as its source. Below the trickle of water is heard, and the cool damp darkness of the grotto suggests by contrast the dual nature of Mercury's personality.

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The gardens are laid out in a manner that suggests that the Morris owners had understood Repton's approach to the large site landscape garden, not as a unity but rather as diverse experiences. Repton's ideas can be understood from his description of Woburn Abbey:

The terrace and parterre near the house, the private garden only used by the family, the rosary or dressed flower garden, in front of the greenhouse, the American garden for plants of that country only, the Chinese Garden, surrounded in a pool in front of a great Chinese pavilion to be decorated with plants from China, the botanic garden for scientific classing of plants, the animated garden or menagerie, and lastly, the English garden or shrubbery walk connecting the whole, sometimes commanding views into each of the distant objects and sometimes into the park and distant country.

These ideas, and more all appeared at the arboretum, with here and there and Italian gesture of water courses, and small fountains to add sound as a unifying device. Other elements include:

Chinoserie and Japonaiserie. The inclusion of the John Morris Oriental garden and the Japanese Hill Cloud Garden are suitable ingredients in an ideal garden. The occurrence of the former became very frequent in English gardens long before accurate accounts in plans or drawings of Chinese gardens were available at the end of the 18th century. Sir William Chambers' Dissertation on Oriental Gardening, 1772, although a hoax was influential in the design of what the 18th century English thought a Chinese garden might be like. Chinoserie became even more frequent once actual Chinese plants were introduced to complete the design, but not more accurate.

The pagoda that once stood in the major oriental garden was a picturesque ornament found in Chinese and Japanese gardens. A number of chinoserie pagodas have been built in western landscapes, the most famous being at Kew Gardens. Built in 1772 by William Chambers, it was probably an influence of the Morris pagoda, as were many of the follies at Kew, because it was also an arboretum, which had successfully integrated aesthetic principles.

Japonaiserie was a later introduction in the English landscape, in the 1860s, when Japan was first opened to the West. Unlike Chinoserie, it was not lightheartedly mimicked, but treated quite seriously and studied as an art form. Japanese gardener designers

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were brought brought to Europe to work in their own traditions. This fashion was continued at Morris Arboretum. John Morris collected several books on the subject dating from the late 19th century.

Swan Lake. This is the most typically picturesque area of the garden. Views or prospects of it derive directly from the 17th century landscape paintings by Claude, Poussin and Salvator Rosa. Looking at any of the great gardens of England we find the same scenes, for instance, the Swan Lake at Stourhead.

Parterres. The laying out of intricate geometrical patterns, marked out with plants is a practice of considerable antiquity. It originated in the adaption or translation of mosaics into garden. Traditionally, parterres of knots (simpler forms or patterns) were placed next to the house of such a size and proportion that the eye, when near the building (which was raised above the surrounding garden) could take in and comprehend the pattern at one glance.

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input 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 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 1887-9, 1904, 1906; 1893 BUILDER/ARCHITECT T. P. Chandler, Cope and Stewardson, Wilson Eyre, Jr.

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Though the Arboretum's principal significance lies in its original purpose, as a setting for botanical studies enriched and augmented by 18th and 19th century romantic modes of thought that joined aesthetic perception to scientific method, it is also part of the social and cultural history of 19th century Philadelphia, representing the life style and avocation of John T. and Lydia T. Morris, both members of the very old, very established Philadelphia Morris family. That it is the creation of an old Philadelphia family is evident, for it is not a "folly" in the manner of the late 19th century nouveau riche; rather it is a carefully planned, conservatively developed and above all useful place reflecting values much appreciated in the Quaker City.

Not only does the Morris Arboretum capture the character of old Philadelphia enlightened avocation, it is also the repository of numerous architecturally significant structures including works by noted Philadelphia architects Theophilus Parsons Chandler (the now demolished house, and the carriage house-stable), Cope and Stewardson (the gardener's cottage and the estate gates) and Wilson Eyre, Jr. (The David Pepper house, now known as Gates Hall). Of these the remarkably complete Pepper house is of extraordinary importance, for it is one of the major transitional houses in Eyre's oeuvre, that moves away from 19th century eclecticism towards a free, astylar design mode that anticipates much early 20th century architectural development. The stable is one of the few buildings of that type by Chandler to survive fire, suburban developments and changing methods of transportation. The gardener's cottage, though designed after the untimely deaths of Cope and Stewardson, is representative of the firm's medievalizing work and is a handsome example of the estate outbuilding favored in the Philadelphia region. Together with the mill and farm house in "Bloomfield", they form the core of important architectural ensemble that spans from the 18th to the 20th century, recounting the changing use of land of the Philadelphia countryside.

The importance of the landscape architectural features has been treated at length in the description. When restored with proper planting, water flowing and reintegrated into a restored arboretum, they will again emphasize the aesthetic perception as a significant aspect of scientific inquiry.

The importance of the arboretum is further evident from the description published in the University of Pennsylvania Gazette when the arboretum was given to the University. The diversity

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of the site that supported a broad spectrum of regional and international plants, the wide variety of specimen trees, particularly the exotics from China, the botanical gardens, the wealth of support facilities, including greenhouses, botanical library and collection of engravings of gardens, warranted in the eyes of the University writer comparison with such internationally known arboreta as the Arnold in Boston and the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew. With the current programs for testing urban plants, education, community outreach and other activities, the Arboretum is one of the vital arms of the University of Pennsylvania.



# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Robert C. Moon, The Morris Family of Philadelphia. 5, Philadelphia, 1909, pp. 247 ff.  
 Richard Webster, Philadelphia Preserved, Philadelphia, 1976, p.263.  
Pennsylvania Gazette XXI:17 (1 June 1933), pp. 442, ff.also, XXXI:4 (15 November 1932), pp 107 ff.  
Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders Guide, 6 Jan. 1906; 27 April 1904, e

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 170

QUADRANGLE NAME Germantown

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 | 48,05,20 | 4,43,82,60

C 18 | 48,16,00 | 4,43,72,80

E 18 | 48,10,00 | 4,43,68,20

G 18 | 48,03,00 | 4,43,79,60

*See continuation sheet LMS 12/22/78*

QUADRANGLE SCALE, 1:24,000

B 18 | 48,11,00 | 4,43,77,20

D 18 | 48,14,00 | 4,43,70,80

F 18 | 48,05,00 | 4,43,73,60

H | | | | | | | | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See continuation Sheet)

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

STATE Pennsylvania CODE 42 COUNTY Philadelphia CODE 101

STATE Pennsylvania CODE 42 COUNTY Montgomery CODE 091

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

George E. Thomas, Ph.D.

ORGANIZATION

Clio Group

DATE

10 August 1978

STREET & NUMBER

3920 Pine Street

TELEPHONE

215-386-6276

CITY OR TOWN

Philadelphia

STATE

PA

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL X

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

*Ed Weintraub*

TITLE ED WEINTRAUB, Director  
Office of Historic Preservation

DATE

9-8-78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

*W. J. Lewis*

DATE

12/22/78

ATTEST: William Lewis  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

12/22/78

for CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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COMPTON AND BLOOMFIELD, Philadelphia County

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From the intersection of Germantown Avenue, 545 feet, northwest along Germantown Avenue; north 628 feet across feeder stream; northwest, across Wissahickon Creek 116 feet; north, along west bank of Wissahickon Creek 462 feet; northwest on a line parallel to Stenton 224 feet; then along Wissahickon Creek to Northwestern Avenue; northeast along Northwestern Avenue to Stenton Avenue; southeast along Stenton to Erdenheim Street; South west on Erdenheim Street to Meadowbrook; southeast on Meadowbrook Lane to point 540 feet from bend in Meadowbrook; south west 552 feet on a line parallel to Northwestern Avenue; south east 485 feet perpendicular to last, to Hillcrest; along Hillcrest to German-town Avenue closing the block.

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### GEOGRAPHIC DATA

Acreage of Nominated Property: 175  
Quadrangle Name: Germantown  
Quadrangle Scale: 1: 24,000

### UTM Regerences

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18	481005	4436840
B	18	480865	4436910
C	18	480910	4437360
D	18	480230	4437860
E	18	480525	4438260
F	18	481090	4437710
G	18	481000	4437580
H	18	481455	4437340
I	18	481340	4437200
J	18	481450	4437105

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Verbal Boundary Description

Begin at the intersection of Germantown Avenue and Hillcrest Avenue  
Thence West 545' along Germantown Avenue  
Thence North 930' across Cedar Stream  
Thence Northwest 120' across Wissahickon Creek  
Thence North 460' along the West bank of the Wissahickon Creek  
Thence Northwest 200'  
Thence Southwest 225' to a point on the Wissahickon Creek  
Thence 160' along the North bank of the Wissahickon Creek  
Thence 315' to the South bank of the Wissahickon Creek  
Thence Southwest 580' to a point 28' East of Northwestern Avenue  
Thence Northwest 70' across Northwestern Avenue into Montgomery County  
Thence Northeast 300' across the Wissahickon Creek  
Thence Northwest 1210' along and through the Wissahickon Creek  
Thence 92' Northeast  
Thence North 580'  
Thence Northeast 270' through the Wissahickon Creek  
Thence continuing in a Northeasterly direction in three legs to Stenton Avenue  
Thence Southeast on Stenton Avenue to Erdenheim Street  
Thence Southwest on Erdenheim Street to Meadowbrook Avenue  
Thence Southeast 1700' along Meadowbrook Avenue  
Thence South 570' along a line parallel to Northwestern Avenue  
Thence Southeast 580' to Hillcrest Avenue  
Thence South along Hillcrest Avenue to the point of beginning.