

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUN 7 1976

DATE ENTERED 10-15-66

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

William Howard Taft National Historic Site

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

2038 Auburn Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Cincinnati

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

First

VICINITY OF

STATE

Ohio

CODE

34

COUNTY

Hamilton

CODE

061

**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 AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

Midwest Regional Office, National Park Service

STREET & NUMBER

1709 Jackson Street

CITY, TOWN

Omaha

VICINITY OF

STATE

Nebraska

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Midwest Regional Office, National Park Service

STREET & NUMBER

1709 Jackson Street

CITY, TOWN

Omaha

STATE

Nebraska

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

List of Classified Structures

DATE

1976

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Midwest Regional Office, National Park Service

CITY, TOWN

Omaha

STATE

Nebraska

(See continuation sheet, page 1)

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" 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		

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

William Howard Taft National Historic Site is located at 2038 Auburn Avenue in the former suburb of Mt. Auburn in Cincinnati, Ohio. Mt Auburn was platted as a town in 1837. Within easy reach of downtown, Cincinnati's first suburb became an ideal location for middle and upper class homes. By 1849, Mt. Auburn had been annexed to the city, and fashionable "Auburn Street" became known as the "Fifth Avenue" of Cincinnati. Among the old homes that reflect the elegant era is the Alphonso Taft home, birthplace of President William Howard Taft.

The Taft property historically included the main house, a garden and orchard, and several dependencies such as a barn and stable. The original house was a two-story brick structure approximately 39 feet by 21 feet with a full basement. It faced west toward Auburn Avenue. Judging from structural and stylistic trends, the building appears to have been constructed in the early 1840s. In 1851, Alphonso Taft, the father of William Howard Taft, purchased the property and added a 40-by-22-foot wing on the east. This addition also contains two stories and a full basement. Because the Tafts were in a relatively wealthy position, they undertook a host of alterations to the house throughout their occupancy. Although none can be singled out as particularly important, it should be noted that during their ownership the heating, plumbing, and lighting systems were completely replaced.

The entire building was constructed of bricks on a rubble limestone foundation. The walls in the lower two stories of the rear addition and the first story of the original structure are three wythes thick and the upper story is two wythes thick. The coursing is American Bond with one course of headers to each seven courses of stretchers. The bricks are set in a lime mortar.

Because of inefficiencies during the original construction and neglect during later years, several major structural problems have arisen within the rear addition. Some of the trouble appears to be related foundation problems. Over the years, the rear addition has gradually shifted. This movement is reflected in the extensive cracks in the masonry walls. Because some problems have developed from rising damp the primary problem appears to be the action of highly expansive clays setting up vertical movements. The moisture problem was temporarily solved when the rear portion of the house was covered with plywood in 1974. At this time, problems with the original house were also remedied. To reinforce areas weakened by deteriorated mortar, a subterranean retaining wall was constructed encasing the foundation of the pre-1851 structure.

During the period 1851 to 1877, before a fire destroyed a portion of the second floor on April 4, 1877, the house was basically Italianate in style. After the fire of 1877, the ceiling of the upper floor was raised and pressed metal details were added to the exterior. Although there was no change in actual square footage, the renovation was much more extensive than was required for necessary repairs.

(See continuation sheet, page 2)

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

William Howard Taft National Historic Site, designated on December 2, 1969, preserves the birthplace and boyhood home of the 27th President of the United States. The house, an example of Italianate architecture, included within the Mount Auburn historic district, saw the birth of Taft on September 15, 1857 and witnessed his growth into manhood. Taft's association with the house ended, except for visits in later years, with his matriculation at Yale University in 1874. This house is the only structure surviving which is associated with Taft and his family.

The Taft family has had a significant role in the history of our nation for almost one hundred years. Alphonso Taft, the only child of Peter Rawson and Sylvia Howard Taft, after a distinguished career as a Cincinnati lawyer and a member of the Ohio judiciary served in President Ulysses S. Grant's cabinet and as minister to several European powers. One of his sons, William Howard Taft, was elected President of the United States and served as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court from 1921 until 1930. He is the only man to head two of the three branches of our government. Horace Dutton Taft, another son, founded the Taft School. Robert Alphonso Taft, the President's son, was the Republican leader in the Senate from 1939 until his death in 1953. Mr. Republican's son, Robert A. Taft, Jr., is currently serving the people of Ohio as their junior United States Senator.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bearrs, Edwin C., Historic Structure Report, Historical Data-Home, William Howard Taft National Historic Site, Ohio, Denver Service Center, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, October 1972.  
Draft Environmental Assessment, Master Plan, William Howard Taft National Historic Site, Denver Service Center, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, February 1976. (See continuation sheet, page 5)

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .50

UTM REFERENCES

A 

1	6	7	1	5	4	0	0	4	3	3	2	8	0	0
ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING						

B 

ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING						

C 

ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING						

D 

ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING						

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

David Arbogast

Historical Architect

ORGANIZATION

National Park Service

DATE

May 7, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

1709 Jackson Street

TELEPHONE

402-221-3423

CITY OR TOWN

Omaha

STATE

Nebraska

# 12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_ NONE \_\_\_

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is  National \_\_\_ State \_\_\_ Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE *David Arbogast*  
Deputy Assistant Secretary

DATE JUN 1 1976

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 10/20/76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 6 PAGE 1

TITLE OF SURVEY: Historic Sites and Buildings  
DATE OF SURVEY: 1960  
TYPE OF SURVEY: County  
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Cincinnati City Planning Commission  
CITY: Cincinnati  
STATE: Ohio

TITLE OF SURVEY: Mount Auburn Historical Survey  
DATE OF SURVEY: 1971  
TYPE OF SURVEY: Local  
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Mount Auburn Community Council  
CITY: Cincinnati  
STATE: Ohio

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

A second major alteration took place in 1964, when an attempt was made to restore the exterior of the house to its pre-1877 appearance. The existing condition of the building reflects this restoration. At present, the only variance from the overall exterior dimensions of the historic period is the addition of a two-story octagonal bay, approximately 6 feet by 22 feet, to the south exterior wall of the rear wing, replacing the two-story piazza along the adjacent wall. The original part of the structure contains none of the original windows and a large number of the interior openings and partitions have also been altered. In the addition, many of the original architectural details such as door architraves remain, but these features have been reused extensively. Consequently, the interior fabric of the house reflects the period after 1877 more than it does the earlier period.

A situation which further contributes to the problem of interpreting the original interior architectural detailing arose during the time (1940-1961) when the house was used as apartments. During this period many more partitions were added, openings were changed, walls were closed up, and the entire surface of the second floor and much of the first was covered with hardwood flooring.

The setting of the Taft Home has been altered considerably since the period of greatest historical significance. In land transfers since the historic period, the property size has been reduced from the original 1.82 acres to the present 0.5 acre. Frontage on Auburn Avenue has remained the same (100.00 feet), but the east-west depth of the lot has been cut to 220.00 feet. The house has been isolated by the destruction of neighboring houses on either side. The Mt. Auburn area as a whole, however, retains its essential character as a 19th century neighborhood, and is witnessing a revitalization largely shown by the rehabilitation of many fine old homes. The Mt. Auburn Historic District, surrounding the Taft property, is listed in the National Register.

The property is fronted on Auburn Avenue by a sidewalk restored in 1974-75 with brick paving approximately 12 feet in width with granite curbing. The front wall of limestone blocks with sandstone coping about four foot in height was dismantled, moved west approximately 6" to the historic property line and reinforced in 1974-75. The decorative iron fence atop the wall along its entire length has also been repaired and set in place. The carriage entrance was reduced to its historic dimensions and restored. The present width between the piers is 10 and one-half feet. The central entranceway, opening onto the sidewalk which leads to the front porch, is in place.

With the exception of the steps at the front entrance, the concrete walkways and stairs on the grounds are not historic. These modern features, are, for the most part, in the same locations as the historic stairs and walks. The only significant departure from the historic pattern is the addition of a walk around the northeast side of the house. During the historic period, it is likely that all walks, including the front sidewalk along Auburn Avenue, were of unmortared, herringbone-patterned brick.

(See continuation sheet, page 3)

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ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 3

The form, if not the surface and gradient of the carriageway drive, is fairly well preserved, paralleling the north property line and departing the large carriageway entrance. This thirteen-foot wide drive leading to the back of the property has been the object of application of various types of surface treatment, all of it in poor condition, and slopes rather sharply downward toward the back of the property. This drive gives way to modern fill approximately 50 feet east of the carriageway entrance, which covers the historic rear topography and traces of historic features. The depth of this fill is approximately 12 feet.

The marked downward slope of the property from west to east is not nearly so great as in historic times, due to the addition of fill on the back lot. Historically, this downward slope continued eastward along the entire strip of original property.

The east boundary of the reduced property is marked by a "Cyclone" fence erected by the county, except the northeast corner where a short length of iron fencing is cemented atop a retaining wall. To the east of the line lies the macadam juvenile court parking lot, and further back is the northern end of the juvenile building and its lawn, also encroaching on the historic eastern extension of the Alphonso Taft property. Because of the loss of integrity this portion of the original Taft ownership is not included in the nomination. It is acceptably screened from the house by vegetation along the fence.

Tracing the approximate north boundary line of the property is an old stone retaining wall which reaches a height of approximately ten feet at the northeast corner. This was built, or at least altered, on numerous occasions by Alphonso Taft and served to keep unstable deposits under the Taft carriageway, carriage house and back lot from slumping northward and northeastward into a large rectangular depression which pertained to adjoining properties. The wall is presently discontinuous and somewhat erratic in orientation, in places standing as far as four feet outside the surveyed property line.

Historically derived vegetation on the property can be readily identified. Two large horse chestnut trees flank the east-west sidewalk on the front lawn, and a smaller oak tree stands off the southwest corner of the house. White and purple honeysuckle grows beside and just south of the carriage drive inside the carriageway entrance. A large pear tree to the north of the front portion of the home may well be historic. Banks of feral grapes grow in unkept vegetation along the entire north property line. A large catalpa tree situated just off the southeast corner of the house is of historic attribution. Large and impressive hackberry and ash trees are spaced just inside the south property line near the back of the lot. The landscaping on the property was rather casual reflecting the suburban atmosphere of Mt. Auburn area at that historic period.

(See continuation sheet, page 4)

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ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 4

The authorized boundary of William Howard Taft National Historic Site also includes land which was not part of the original Taft property but was included for administrative purposes. This nomination, however, includes only the immediate setting of the house on the surviving .5 acre portion of historic Taft property. The additional land is an adjacent .28 acre parcel that was cleared of an apartment building which was a neighboring residence during the historic period and donated to the National Park Service by the William Howard Taft Memorial Association. The property has 101.35' frontage on Auburn Avenue with an east-west depth of 120.03 feet. The land slopes from Auburn Avenue having a total drop of 20 feet in the first 100 feet. Access to this parcel is off Southern Avenue down a steep drive. Approximately 20 feet of property along the eastern end has been paved and is now used by the residents of Southern Arms Apartments for parking. The site is composed chiefly of rubble remaining after the demolition of the structure. This material is unsuitable for any development without extensive construction.

William Howard Taft National Historic Site depends for its integrity on the preservation of the house and its appropriate and compatible development to interpret to the public the significance of Taft and his family in American history. Park Service planning for the property is not complete, however, and no decisions have been made on its future treatment. Priority will be given to preservation countering the serious structural problems. Otherwise, the house has in the past been adversely affected by isolation caused by the removal of its neighbors on either side. The property should be protected from incompatible intrusions in its immediate vicinity, and it would be desirable that any future construction within its view be comparable in scale and mass to the sizable 19th century houses typical of the neighborhood.



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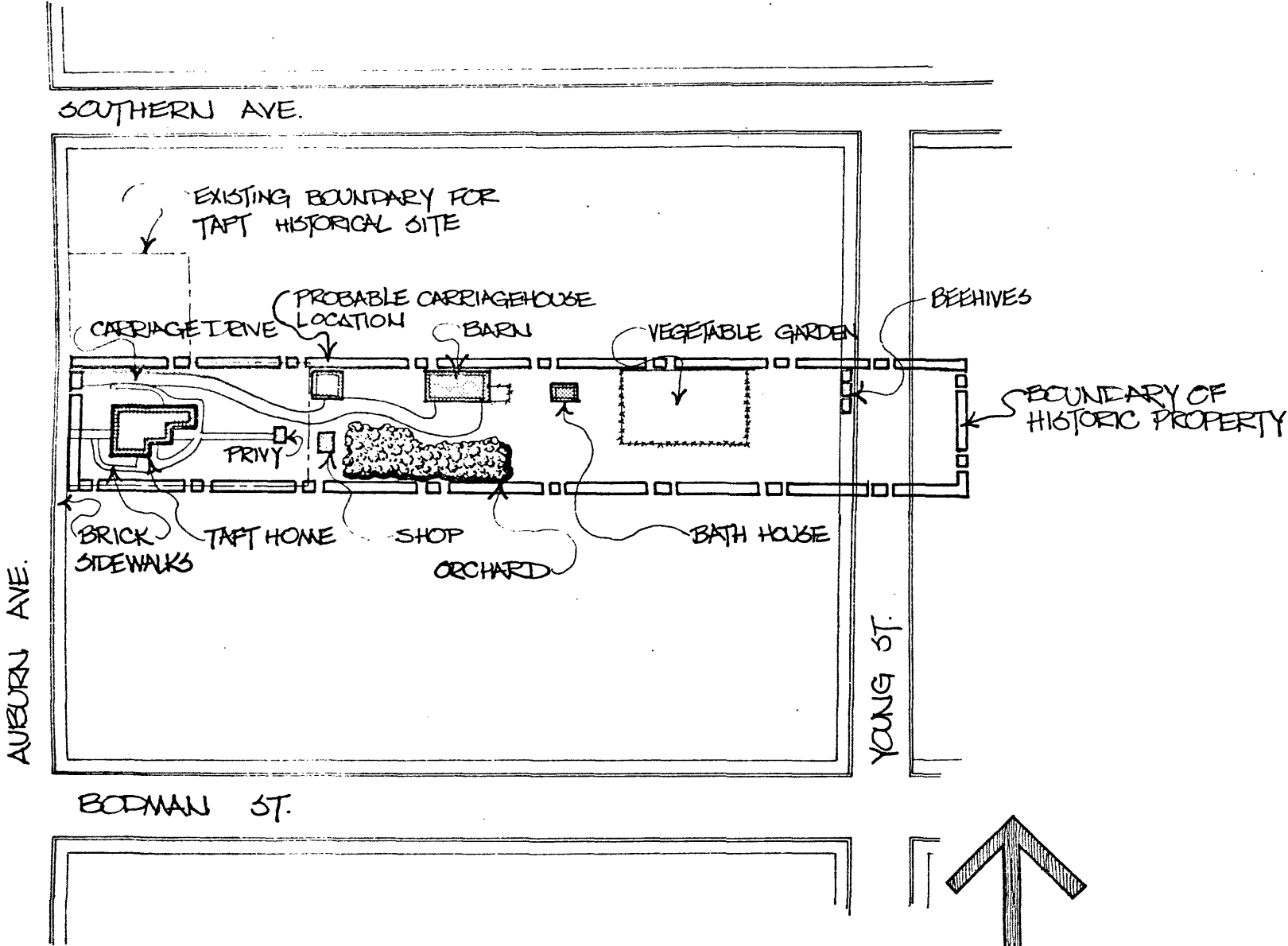
CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 5

Leonard, A. A., Life of Alphonso Taft, Hawke Publishing Company, 1920.

Pringle, Henry F., The Life and Times of William Howard Taft, Connecticut, Archon Books, 1964, Volumes I and II.

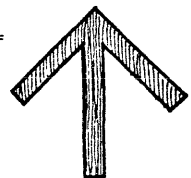
Ross, Ishbel, An American Family: The Tafts-1678-1964, Cleveland, World Publishing Company, 1964.



# HISTORIC BASE MAP

WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT N.H.S. OHIO

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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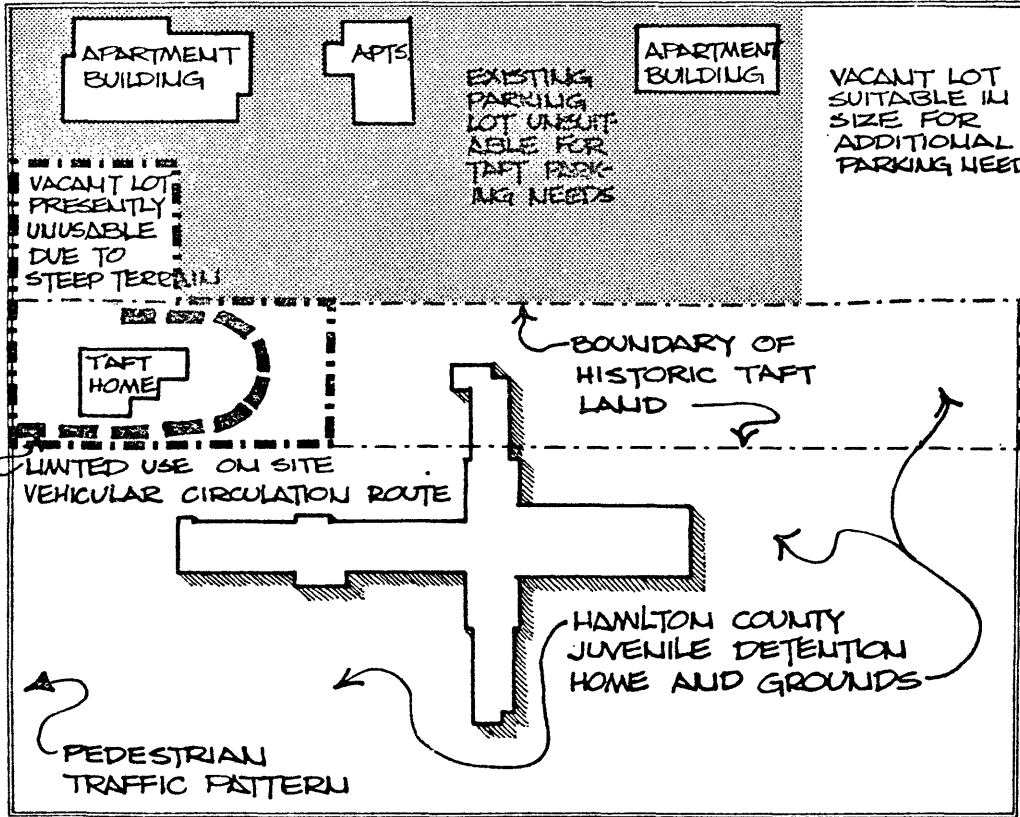





100' 50' 25' 0"

44B	40,010
D.S.C.	OCT. 75

WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

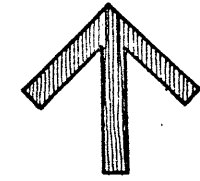
SOUTHERN AVE.



-  AUTHORIZED BOUNDARY TAFT U.H.S.
-  LAND IN PRIVATE OWNERSHIP
-  LAND IN PUBLIC OWNERSHIP

EXISTING CONDITIONS

WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT U.H.S. OHIO  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



100' 50' 25" 0'

448 | 40,000  
D.S.C. | OCT. 75